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A CONVERSATION WITH TURKEY'S KURDISH LEADERSHIP

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P R O C E E D I N G S

MR. TAŞPINAR: Okay, I think we'll get started. I hope you can all hear me. Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen. Welcome to Brookings. My name is Ömer Taşpinar and I will be moderating today's event.

It goes without saying that the Kurdish question in Turkey is always relevant to Turkish domestic and foreign policy, but perhaps in the last few months this relevance has gained a new level of urgency. When you look at the challenges facing Turkish democracy, from the constitutional question of basically writing a new constitution that will redefine the meaning of Turkish citizenship to questions related to minority rights, and of course to all the foreign policy challenges basically facing Turkey in the region from Iraq, Syria, to Iran, there is always a Kurdish dimension. In that sense, especially with events in Syria, the Kurdish question arguably has gained a new sense of urgency in Turkey.

So, today we are very lucky to have four people, basically, here to talk to us about the Kurdish question, and one of them, Sudon will be the translator, so we will have consecutive translation, but let me briefly introduce you to our panelists today.

Mr. Selahattin Demirtaş is the co-chair of the Kurdish Peace and Democracy Party, which is basically the main Kurdish political party represented today in the parliament. And he has been active in Turkish politics and has visited Washington in the past and is a very important personality as far as the Kurdish question is concerned in terms of his ability to explain the problem to not only the Kurdish minority, but also to the Turkish majority in the country, so we're very lucky to have him here as the co-chair of the party.

Another co-chair of the party, we have Gülten Kişanak, who is also a frequent commentator on Turkish TV and often has to answer critical questions regarding

where the Kurdish question is, what do the Kurds want in Turkey. And we are very happy that she is here, in a way, breaking the kind of patriarchal scene here, and we have now someone who represents the party at an equal level and a female member of the Turkish parliament, so welcome, Gülten Kişanak.

And Ahmet Türk, who is a veteran of the Kurdish movement, whose political career goes back to the CHP, the Turkish Republican Party, Atatürk's own party. And he is also a very important leader, a community leader, an activist, who has been very active in Turkish politics since the 1970s. And we're very lucky that we have this important group here for you to discuss not only where the Kurdish question is today in Turkey, but also the relevance, as I said, of the Kurdish question as far as foreign policy is concerned.

The plan here is basically to give the co-chairs, Mr. Selahattin Demirtaş, about 10 minutes for opening remarks, and then we'll open it up to a Q&A. I'll ask a few questions and then we'll take questions from the audience, and our two other participants, Mrs. Gülten Kişanak and Ahmet Türk, will also be participating during the Q&A, and Sudon will be translating, as we said, consecutively.

MR. DEMIRTAŞ: I want to start with thanks to all of you for coming here today and specifically thank Mr. Ömer Taşpinar and Brookings Institution to provide us this opportunity to be able to talk to you today. Thank you.

We are here to talk about the Kurdish conflict, of course, but the Kurdish conflict today is not only a matter that is important in Turkey, but it is also a regional problem, and in that sense, it becomes an international problem.

Kurds dispersed among four countries in the Middle East. A nation of such magnitude is not only involving the specific countries that inhabit them, but it also becomes an issue that involves the whole region as Middle East. We are, as elected

representatives of the Kurdish people, taking this matter into consideration not only within the framework of Turkey, but also we consider it as a regional issue and we will discuss it in that sense. Of course, we are not only going to be talking on every question that we discuss on the Kurds, but there will be others involving related questions that will be considered as well, so we are going to be looking at this from our perspective and our window.

We define the Kurdish problem in Turkey as an economic, political matter and we define it in that sense and we look at it from that perspective. Of course, we believe that this question should be taken into consideration as a matter of people that have a right to govern itself as well.

From our perspective, Kurdish conflict in Turkey is not a problem between Turkish people and Kurdish people; it is a conflict between a state and Kurdish people that wanted to be able to define in that sense. Of course, this issue is not only a state versus Kurdish people. Other elements, agents of the state, citizens of the states, are also sensing some sort of problems with the state, with the legal definition of the citizenship in Turkey, but however, the Kurdish people because of them being heavily oppressed and assimilated, so they become as representing at the larger level.

We are talking about an historical problem. This didn't happen just recently, it's a 100-year-old issue beginning with the end of the Ottoman Empire. I don't want to take so much of your time taking you back to the history; however, we wanted to concentrate on recent matters and see what is our perspective on this to produce an alternative or solution to this conflict, so we will try to provide you perspective on that.

We are going to try to provide you alternatives that we believe is the solution from our perspective on two principles. Our first and foremost principle is that these matters should be taken into consideration without any elements of violence in this

sense. This matter has to be communicated with dialogue, collective and constructive dialogue. And the second principle will be to look at the Kurdish conflict in Middle East, in the respective countries, without bringing the state integrity, their territorial integrity, into the questions. So, in that sense, their territorial integrity will be out of discussion.

We are proposing a solution in democratic and transparent societies' constitution. For that we want to be able to see every agent in the society, every ethnic group, as well as faith groups. They have a right to an opportunity to express themselves. Of course, we defend these people and all these diverse communities and faiths; they should be able to express themselves in their own native language. For that matter, Kurds, they should be able to be -- able to use their language in every area of the society and life.

And, of course, second, we are proposing a constitution that recognizes every different community in the state, within the borders of the state, different communities. For that sense, ethnic minorities and faith groups should be recognized within the framework of this democratic constitution.

And the third one will be from the perspective of the human rights issue that we believe that every citizen of the state should have a right to express and assemble an organization, for that matter, to exist within the states.

And the fourth one will be that we want them to see that this constitution protects and preserves the right of every different ethnic community and individual participating in the democratic system. And for that we are proposing regional, I will say, autonomous elements that exist within the borders of the state.

I wanted to specifically open up this last comment on regional autonomy. We are not talking about the specific -- when we talk about autonomy, we are not specifically talking about the Kurdish people and the Kurds that live in region called

Kurdistan.

Turkey, with 72 million of its population, with large geography, is one of the most important countries in the Middle East and Europe. And for that we don't believe that a centralized system of government that manages all these different ethnic groups and communities from one center, we don't see this as a viable and productive system of justice. And with that, we think that decentralized government, some of the responsibilities of the federal government to be allocated or shared with the local and regional governments, and we see this as the most viable alternative to this problem.

Matters involving national security, of course, the economy, for that matter, and they can be managed from the central government, but other less significant societal or governmental issues can be divided and shared with the local and regional governments. We do believe that there can be some sort of allocation of power for that.

Within every region that we define, there can be three to six subdivisions defined to sort of define sharing this or extending or yielding this power from the central government to the local areas. And we believe that we are doing this. It is possible to have about 20 regional autonomous areas where they can self govern themselves within the existence and federal government's control. And these subdivisions, of course, they will be democratically managed and they're assemblies will be democratically elected. And just like the United States or other federal systems, these people can exist and form their own local governments.

We also believe that with Turkish being the federal language, all these subdivisions and divisions, they can have an associated language that is spoken by the local people and, if necessary, even Turk language can be adopted as a spoken language or written language in these regional governments.

While we believe that this model will be able to contribute to the solution

to the Kurdish conflict, will resolve that matter, we also believe that this will enhance the society and make the society as Turkish -- a more democratic and more open and transparent democratic system.

At this juncture, we believe that 90 percent of these concerns that we articulate, these matters can be taken into consideration by the government and can be communicated with the representatives of the Kurdish people.

And when a state, such state, that in peace with its own Kurdish minority will be stronger and will be able to emerge as a more powerful, more respectable system in the region as well. Because Kurdish people do not have any animosity with other people of the region, for that matter, Arabs, Turks, and Persian people, or any other minorities that live in this area.

And we also believe that these nation states that house these Kurdish minorities within their country, and with this solution that we propose, they will refrain from producing a sort of seeing Kurdish people as a threat and put these policies that see Kurds as a threat in the region and see them as an enemy. Today, Kurdish leaders who represent their people in these respective regions, they give a peace message to the world. And Kurdish leaders in the KRG area, autonomous Kurdish regional government in Northern Iraq, their leaders as well, wherever they go in the world, they give a peace message to the world and envision a society and region that peacefully coexists.

President Talabani and President Barzani, while they propose and they defend a peaceful society for Iraq they also envision a same peaceful, coexisting, tolerating system for the Middle East and the world. So wherever they go, they're involved, they give this message to the world.

And also, Kurdish leaders in Syria, they also, while they defend the rights of Kurdish people in Syria, at the same time they give peace message to the world.

And for that, we tell our government that Kurdish people are not a threat within Turkey and outside of Turkey. And we communicate this and we try to achieve that this communication has been understood well, that we are not in any way to be perceived as a threat.

Kurdish people, the region that they inhabit today, that is their ancestral let. They have been living over there for a very long time. So they want to exist in this land that has been left to them by their ancestors within the integrity of the states that they live, in a peaceful way, and coexist.

If Turkey wanted to be a stronger player in the Middle East and continue to be a leader in the Middle East, Turkey has to deviate itself from an idea that sees Kurds as a threat in Turkey and outside of Turkey. And we believe that not only in Turkey and regionally, Kurds, with these ideals that they promote, and if this is taken into consideration, we will be taking steps rather fast.

And with that, Kurdish leader, Mr. Abdullah Ocalan, who has been captured in a one-man prison in Imrali, from his prison cell, he has been giving peaceful messages to the world. He wants constructive dialogue and wanted to make sure peace -- that this matter is resolved in a peaceful manner. So we wanted to see that the world sees us, that people and leaders of Kurds try to bring peace to the region and Turkey.

I wanted to end with this last portion of the first sentence that I -- we wanted to call on that with all these things that have been said, if any initiative has been taken by our government as Kurdish leaders, we are open to negotiate on this, communicate on this, and discuss all these matters.

I thank you so much.

MR. TAŞPINAR: Thank you, Mr. Demirtaş. (Applause)

You gave us a quite comprehensive overview and a good idea of the

policies of your party, so I think we have a clear idea about what the BDP, as the representative of an important part of the Kurdish population in Turkey, wants to be implemented. And if I understand correctly, the essence of this Kurdish demand that you expressed can be summarized as a more multicultural Turkey, a Turkey which changes its definition of citizenship from an ethnic-based citizenship concept to a more civic-based citizenship, and, in more concrete terms, a more decentralized Turkey. You avoided the term "federalism" and you used "autonomy," a more decentralized Turkey with a number of regions that are less dependent on Ankara.

All these seem to be quite rational demands. However, the 800-pound gorilla in the room is the PKK. And there is a perception in this city that the relationship between your party and the PKK is pretty much like the relationship between the IRA and Sinn Fein. So, could you help us understand the nature of your relationship, the relationship your party has with the PKK? Because the threat perception, it seems to me, in the eyes of the Turkish government is not necessarily the Kurdish people, is not necessarily the BDP, but the PKK? And in what ways right now this cycle of violence, which involves the PKK and the Turkish military, can be broken with your proposals? This, I assume, requires a certain distance that you may have to take to the PKK and that's exactly what the government seems to want.

So, there seems to be a kind of impasse.

MR. DEMIRTAŞ: Now, when it comes to defining PKK, PKK is a struggle -- people's struggle organization. It has been, you know, continuing this struggle for more than 30 years in the Middle East. And since the 1990s, none of the Kurdish parties has been established. None of them actually call PKK a terrorist. They refrain from this term specifically. So, we see PKK as an organization that defends Kurdish rights, however means that they use. They use violent terms as a way of achieving this

goal. However, we do not want to see this, we refrain from using this term and we don't see violence as a way of achieving this objective. So, since 1990s, we are a political party that defends Kurdish rights without using any violent means.

And we also know that a very important portion of people that they vote for us and they are also sympathizers with the PKK. However, there was no organic relationship between us and the PKK.

You cannot compare Sinn Fein and the IRA example because they were more interrelated organizations, but that organic nature does not exist between us and the PKK. Directly or indirectly, by no means we represent PKK. We are representing people who vote for us as a political party that legally exists within the jurisdiction of Republic of Turkey.

However, at the same time, we believe that PKK is a reality and part of this conflict and it should be considered when alternatives for solution are produced. We believe that they should be taken into consideration and, if necessary, to be communicated with. And when we continue this dialogue discussion and working towards a peaceful solution to this issue, we believe that PKK should be also consulted and they should be brought to senses, so violence should be stopped as well because when the violence continues, we are unable to step further.

As it is, we don't see PKK as a problem. We see it as a result of a problem.

MR. TAŞPINAR: As a follow-up to that and maybe Gülten and Ahmet can also partake, are your demands overlapping with the demands of the PKK? There is a perception of the PKK as a separatist movement, basically that they're not interested in just autonomy, but in creating an independent state, at least that's the perception. Do you think the demands that you have outlined overlap with the demands that, let's say,

Abdullah Ocalan would make in terms of what the PKK wants? How close are our positions to the political demands of the PKK?

MS. KIŞANAK: I wanted to first thank every one of you. Thanks for being here today and I'm so glad that we are having this discussion here today.

I wanted to first say that specifically autonomy, recognition of identity, and use of mother tongue in the 21st century should not be seen as a demand. This is a natural right. These are unavoidable components of democracy and they should be seen in that sense. A language that is spoken by 40 million people in the Middle East should not be banned from political life within the state and in education and in all parts of the society. This, in the 21st century, seeing this is unacceptable.

And also, we believe that original autonomy is one of the components of the democratic society today. When this issue is brought to the table and the governments, they see these as only demands of Kurdish people. And when this is perceived like this, of course, it does not help the overall solution. I believe that we should not have any more discussions on this and this issue should be resolved so quickly.

And we also believe that when we are able to produce alternative solutions to these specific issues, and the means of violence that is being used in the Kurdish struggle, they will vanish itself and eventually all these involving parties will deviate -- refrain from using violence. We believe that the violence became a toll here because of the denial of Kurdish identity, oppression of Kurdish people, and extreme assimilation measures that have been employed by the government, and, furthermore, use of state violence against people that have these sort of demands.

We believe that democracy is the medicine, a cure for violence. That is the only way that we can cure this illness will be democracy.

And I wanted to emphasize this question as well, when we talk about this one and whether we deal with the states on this and the initiation is that when we extend these rights to the Kurdish people, will that mean that we recognize or we give up to the violence, or if we don't give these rights, will the violence continue? And seeing from this perspective, we believe it's wrong.

Of course, some of these problems have been brought to public domain by PKK and Mr. Ocalan as well, so we believe that whoever does something for the dignity of mankind, for that matter, does a good thing for democratic society. We applaud that, that's a good thing.

Yes, Mr. Ocalan also talks about autonomy. He talks about the right of Kurdish people to speak Kurdish. He talks about a representative society that every part of the society coexists together. Regardless of who says all these good things, we believe that these are good things and they should be said.

I hope that you find an answer to your question.

MR. TAŞPINAR: I would like to open it up to the floor for Q&A.

However, let me underline a paradox that emerges and something that I think needs to be understood. The Turkish government considers the PKK a terrorist organization, yet up until recently -- up until a year and a half ago -- the Turkish government was engaged in a dialogue with the PKK. Yet, as far as I know, the Turkish government and the prime minister refuses dialogue with your party, has been refusing dialogue with your party. And this seems to be a paradox because if the threat perception is the PKK and if the main enemy is the PKK, how come Ankara, the Turkish government, was willing to talk to the PKK, but up until recently -- and there are signs that this is changing -- they have been reluctant to engage with your party, which is obviously much more legitimate and represented in the parliament? How can we explain this paradox, in your opinion, and

the behavior of the Turkish government?

MR. TÜRK: I want to say a couple short things on this issue.

I believe that if the government truly wanted to resolve this issue, not only in the context of Kurds, but citizens of the state, the issues involving whole citizens of the state, if the government is willing to resolve these issues -- and I believe that all these paradoxes should not exist in the first place. Yes, there is violence used in Turkey, sometimes even, I will say, low-level war continues. However, if the government truly wants to find a solution to this matter and resolve this issue, we believe all these things will vanish itself.

The means of violence that is being used has to be understood correctly. This is not a simple, you know, terrorist definition that can be used here. This is a 100-year-old conflict, so the state must go -- the root of this problem, you have to diagnose this matter correctly from its origin. And so as long as you are unable to do this, and this -- the wrong definition will cause into this a sort of misunderstanding and paradox.

We encourage the government to mediate, to communicate with PKK to refrain from using this violence. But, at the same time, we believe that the government has to engage with political leaders, with us, to resolve other matters involving this conflict, matters involving with the human rights and all other issues. So, political leaders should be seen as the actors here to be engaged with.

MR. DEMIRTAŞ: Now, this matter is very important and a big matter. When we look at the world, there are political parties that exist in other parts of the world who later employ violence as a means of achieving a goal. So, from that sense, we cannot just see this matter a very simple matter.

And in Turkey, because Kurds are not recognized and the doors to a democratic dialogue and solution have not been opened, so this creates a sort of

pressure on the Kurdish issue and Kurds are unable to find a way to express themselves. The matter -- the heart of the matter lies right here, when you see Kurds, you don't provide Kurds an opportunity to express themselves, so PKK emerged from here as a violent -- an organization that uses violent measures to force a way -- to open a way to have Kurds to express themselves.

And, of course, the world change today, PKK also is giving a message of being ready to use dialogue to have this communication and find a way to resolve this matter. So we believe that the world will understand that PKK is ready for this.

And at this juncture, both Kurds and the government believe that this matter should be resolved in a non-violent way. Violence should not be a considered method or an application to find a solution at this junction, so both sides are proposing and defending the same ideals.

However, unfortunately, until today, we were unable to step further, we have been unable to. And what is -- so, what is it missing here and why we are unable to step further? I think we should be able to talk on this one.

And Kurds, as one of the conglomerates of these major civilizations in Middle East, they have been assimilated and oppressed and denied, so they have not been given a chance to express themselves within the states that they exist. And, yes, the states say that, yes, there's a people such as Kurds exist, but we do not accept their rights as -- and their right of practicing their culture or using their language and exist with their identity. With this, we are unable to refrain ourselves from this measure of violence, we are unable to create a sort of circumstances that no violence is used.

As our friends expressed today, and actually if we look at it from a perspective and context of individual and societal rights and responsibilities, I think we will be able to find a solution to this issue. We should be looking at -- we should be able

to understand whether it is Kurds using violence or it is the government denying the existence of Kurds is the heart of this conflict. What is causing this conflict to turn into a hot matter and why is it still continuing?

I believe from my heart, if we refrain from this unrecognizing -- rather, recognizing Kurdish people with their identity, language, and culture, Kurds and Turks, they will exist -- co-exist peacefully and they live next to each other. The most important part of this is that, you know, not recognizing a nation of distinct character, language, identity, and culture -- if steps are taken in that direction and alternatives and solutions are produced to achieve this goal of recognizing these people, we believe that violence and all other related issues will vanish gradually.

I want to say one last thing. I just wanted to clarify this, is that when we talk about the dialogue, dialogue has to be defined in a correct way. If a dialogue that truly started to resolve the Kurdish conflict, it would be responded by Kurdish people right away. And we believe that dialogue today that has been talked about -- we talk about, per se, dialogue, but in reality it just tries to use other elements within the regions that the Kurds live, use those elements against Kurdish people, and then declaring that, well, we are trying to do something, but Kurds are preventing. And this is not helping the overall solution and this is not a dialogue.

So, we have to understand this fact that we have to define and redefine correctly the means of dialogue.

MR. TAŞPINAR: We have a Brookings tradition of usually including a counterpoint and you may question the absence of someone from, maybe, the government, the AKP party or the state, here on the podium. And let me just say that what we're facing is probably -- from what you just heard, is this heightened sense of Kurdish expectations in Turkey. Because if we had someone from the AKP today, he or

she would probably point out at some of the reforms implemented in the last 10 years, especially in the form of, for instance, the opening of a Kurdish TV channel and some rights along the lines of basically Kurdish education, so the situation, they would argue, is much better than in the 1990s.

However, what we see here is that probably the BDP as an organization, and the views we have seen, consider these changes as cosmetic and not enough, not enough of a recognition of the Kurds ethnic existence. And on top of that there is the whole political dimension of the problem that can be summarized as autonomy, decentralization, that is also not being addressed, obviously.

So, in my attempt to basically prevent what the Turkish government would probably say, we can now open to questions that you may have and, hopefully, address also the regional dimension of the Kurdish question beyond just Turkey with some questions related to Syria, Iraq, and Iran.

Carol? Wait for the microphone and please identify yourself.

MS. MIGDALOVITZ: Thank you. Carol Migdalovitz. As you know, President Barzani of the KRG was recently in Washington and even more recently in Turkey. I wonder if you could convey to us a sense of your relationship with Mr. Barzani as well as your understanding of what kind of role he might play to help Turks and Kurds find a solution to the situation in Turkey. Thank you.

MR. TÜRK: We believe, yes, Mr. Barzani has recently -- he did some tours. And from our understanding, what has been made public is that he has engaged some sort of dialogue regarding the Kurds in Syria and in the region, and these meetings, as we understand, have taken place in Syria and Baghdad.

Mr. Barzani is, of course, a very important figure that -- who is not only a leader of Kurdish people in KRG area, but he is also an individual that can provide a very

important contribution to the resolving Kurdish conflict in respective regions of the Middle East.

Of course, we do have a very good relationship with the Kurdish parties in the region, and we do also have a very good relationship with Mr. Barzani's own party in KRG area, in autonomous Kurdistan.

Of course, the problem of -- the Kurdish problem in Turkey, Kurdish problem can be only resolved with the Kurdish people itself in Turkey. And the Kurdish problem in Syria can be only resolved with the Kurdish people who live in Syria and their contribution with -- dialogue with them.

Of course, Mr. Barzani and Mr. Talabani, they initiated to mediate among Kurds in different regions to help them to find a solution to these issues, and they advise us, they encourage us, and they provide alternatives to us.

JADA: Hello, my name is Jada. I'm a student at Georgetown University and also an intern at TUSIAD, Turkish Industrials and Businessman Association. Thank you for being here. It's a pleasure to listen to your suggestions.

We talked about one paradox and there's another paradox that your party is calling for peace and still vocally repeatedly supports the leader of a terrorist organization, which has been causing violence for all peoples, Kurdish, Turkish, both sides of the conflict, not just the PKK. But don't you think your calls for democracy would be more legitimate if you vocally dismissed violence altogether and anyone who's advocating violence? Thank you.

MR. TÜRK: We have publically said many times, and let me say here again, we do not believe that violence is a way of resolving this conflict. Yes, we are saying, again.

MR. DEMIRTAŞ: (Speaking Turkish)

MS. KIŞANAK: There is an entertaining way of answering this question when it comes to explaining that in terms of what do you mean with violence is a space between us and PKK and there is a very big distance from Kandil to Ankara. And this is, of course, the entertainment of it, but politically we can say this answer to this issue.

I can say this, Kurds, since 1991, they have formed legal political organizations to find a solution, peaceful solution, and democratic solution to the Kurdish problem. And since 1991, the past 20 years, 7 of the Kurdish parties have been banned by the government and our party, Peace and Democracy Party, is the eighth party right now. So, lifetime of each of these political parties in Turkey is only about two years that they can tolerate or they can be tolerated by the government.

And when it comes to PKK, PKK has not been able to be closed down since 1978, so they are still continuing. And according to the data provided by the Turkish chief of staff, since 1978, 40,000 Kurds have participated in PKK and fighting this struggle that they lost their life, 40,000.

I believe these numbers cannot be just simply seen as a terrorist in that sense. You cannot define this in that context. Forty thousand people have participated and lost their life. We should be able to see this in a more serious matter.

MR. TAŞPINAR: We have many questions and a diminishing amount of time, so I want to take three questions in a row. At the very back.

SPEAKER: (Speaking Turkish) Although the United States and EU countries, international organizations and justice systems define PKK as a terrorist organization, but your party does not. Why does not your party recognize PKK as a terrorist organization? What a terrorist organization mean for your party? Thanks.

MR. TAŞPINAR: Can you bring the microphone to the middle of the room? Yes, this gentleman over there. Just on your right.

MR. SAULI: Yeah, my name is Joseph Sauli I'm a Kurd from Iran, a Washington businessman. It looks like the Turkish government, for the last 30 years, is hiding behind the word "terrorism." I wish they would just stop saying that and somehow get along or talk to PKK to solve the problem.

I also see the Turkish government is going into a jihad mode again with Syria. I see a close parallel between the Turkish action towards the Kurds bombing them and what Assad is doing. I am no fan of Assad. Thank you.

MR. TAŞPINAR: One more question. Here. Wait for the microphone, please. We'll try to take one more round if we can have quick answers.

SPEAKER: (inaudible). I'm a historian teaching at Georgetown University. I'm going to ask something about political because everybody is asking about PKK, but I'm going to talk about the process in the TBMM, in the parliament, about the new constitution.

So, two things. To what extent can you participate, are you allowed to participate to contribute to the new constitution? And second, what do you think -- how much do you think that it's going to solve the problems that you -- I realize that these are not going to solve all the problems on the table, but to what extent do you hope that some of the problems you've mentioned are going to be solved by a new constitution?

MR. TÜRK: There are different definitions of terrorism, you know, physical, psychological measures of this. But terrorism is a form of violence that has been applied by some parties to, you know, bring these people against each other to achieve a certain goal. However, what we see from the very beginning that the matter has to be defined and diagnosed correctly. When you simply define this issue of violence in Turkey within the context of Kurdish conflict, and then you will be preventing or avoiding all other matters, the real matters that cause this issue, and you prevent them

all. So, when you do that, actually you are avoiding the real issue and you are not helping the solution.

Once again, what we say is that the problem should be defined correctly from its heart, from its origin, and then the definition of terrorism will be correctly, perhaps, stated. And we believe that in this case, terrorism definition is correctly defined.

MR. TAŞPINAR: On the question of Syria, what's the relationship of your party, with the Kurds of Syria?

MS. KIŞANAK: At this very second there is a demand for -- by the people in Syria to find a just and democratic solution to the problems in Syria.

In the 21st century, there is -- no longer states are able to solve the issues of people with violence with extreme decentralized systems. We believe that the people who live in Syria, that they demand a just society and we find their demands very, very correct.

At this point we find the demands of people, Kurdish people who live in Syria, their demand for justice; we find that very close to our heart. So with that, we support the demand of every other community who seek for justice and democratic solution to their problems.

We don't believe that a measure of sort of violence can be used by government to achieve law and order. We disagree with this notion that governments have a right to use these measures to sort of install or reinstall law and order. To be able to have the control of the government in hands of specific people does not or should not be given a right to use the extreme measures to maintain authority or maintain rule of law in the territories that they govern. Unfortunately, in this sense as well, there is a paradox that exists. And when there are states that we like, we find their violence as okay, whereas if a state that we don't like, whatever measures they have been taking, we find

that as illegitimate or illegal.

Turkish prime minister may call every day on the government of Syria asking them not to use violence, oppression, and all other measures to oppress people to try to maintain their status quo. He says that if you use measure of oppression and extreme measures to justify this, your authority on these people, you will lose your legitimacy.

We applaud that, we agree with that. These are great words, but we call on Prime Minister Erdoğan to employ the same measures in Turkey as well.

MR. DEMIRTAŞ: If there was no Kurds living in Turkey --

MR. TAŞPINAR: Or other minorities.

MR. DEMIRTAŞ: -- or other minorities, perhaps we would not need a new constitution for Turkey. So, the reason that actually there is a need for a new constitution is because Turkey employed different ethnic background -- people with different ethnic and social backgrounds. So, when you produce this constitution, in a sense, as far as I cared, that the measures have to be taken into consideration that all these agents of the society at the communal level should be recognized.

Of course, we find this very important. We believe that drafting a new constitution is very, very important in this sense, in order to provide a foundation and alternatives that can be resolved within this constitution. So, we believe that this is very important. We wanted to participate and contribute to this process.

However, if you are not at the level to accept, as far as your state of mind is unable to accept this, it is a notion of a new constitution that will be just, an instrument to resolve this conflict, then it doesn't matter whether you create a new constitution or not because it will not help.

And I wanted to say this in terms of calling PKK a terrorist. I want to

define once again that PLO, Palestinian Liberation Organization, as well as Hamas was defined as a terrorist organization by the world as well. But what we see today on the world stage is that both people and governments are engaging with these organizations and trying to find a way to resolve this matter.

For brotherhood and to be able to solve this issue, we Kurds are open to face our mistakes that we committed in the past, but we want government, as well, to face these injustices and wrong things that have been committed by the government in the past. We're talking about 4,000 Kurdish villages have been burned down; we're talking about 17,000 extra-judicial killings carried out by the state. And we are talking about 3 million Kurds that have been misplaced, taken from their homeland, and moved or forced into migration to other parts of the country. And most recently, human rights organizations have declared to the world that there are 213 mass graves concentrated in the eastern and southeastern part of Turkey, and those mass graves exist in Kurdish regions. We're talking about 213 mass graves.

So, we're expecting, we're hoping that our government, as well, turn back and face these facts, these realities, these criminal acts that they commit in the past.

MR. TAŞPINAR: Well, I don't want to end on a very negative tone, but, unfortunately, we ran out of time. And my apologies for all the questions that were not being asked, but I guess we can safely assume that we failed to solve the Kurdish problem in the last hour and a half, but no one can blame us for trying.

And let me thank you and please join me in thanking our delegation.

(Applause)

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CERTIFICATE OF NOTARY PUBLIC

I, Carleton J. Anderson, III do hereby certify that the forgoing electronic file when originally transmitted was reduced to text at my direction; that said transcript is a true record of the proceedings therein referenced; that I am neither counsel for, related to, nor employed by any of the parties to the action in which these proceedings were taken; and, furthermore, that I am neither a relative or employee of any attorney or counsel employed by the parties hereto, nor financially or otherwise interested in the outcome of this action.

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