



DEMOCRATIC SOCIETY PARTY

TO INTERNATIONAL PUBLIC OPINION

On 20 November 2007, a lawsuit was opened at the Constitutional Court demanding the closure of the Democratic Society Party (*Demokratik Toplum Partisi – DTP*). On 8 December 2009, the Constitutional Court will meet and issue a decision regarding the closure case, which has been continuing for two years. If the case - which has been hanging over our party like Democles' sword for two years – ends in a decision in favor of closure, it won't be the first time it's happened to parties doing politics in the name of the Kurds of Turkey. As HEP, DEP, OZDEP, and HADEP were closed, DEHAP decided to dissolve itself as its own closure case was pending. The reason for the demand to close these parties has been their approach to the Kurdish Problem.

The closure case against DTP conflicts with universal legal principles. Likewise, despite the 10% election threshold intended to obstruct the representation of Kurds in parliament, the DTP succeeded in electing 22 parliamentarians by fielding independent candidates in the 22 July 2007 elections, and subsequently formed a parliamentary group with 21 deputies. Our party has made big contributions to Turkish democracy through our effective opposition in parliament, active participation in legislative activities, and introduction of a democratic struggle for the country's democratization. In order to solve the Kurdish problem in a democratic, peaceful and conciliatory way, by submitting extensive projects in the Turkish Grand National Assembly, our party has spearheaded the development of debate on a solution to the Kurdish problem.

With its presence and active opposition, DTP has exerted great effort to overcome the authoritarianism and narrow-minded mentality in Turkey. It has expressed the importance of the self-expression of different identities and cultures at every turn. It's struggled to bring democracy to a pluralistic point. The current basis of the Constitution of the Turkish Republic is "one language, one nation, one culture". This approach is stated in the constitution. The state's evaluation of all identities and cultures other than "Turkishness" as "the other", "enemy", and "separatist" has caused many tragedies and created much pain since the establishment of the republic. The massacres in Dersim, Maras, Sivas, Corum, and Gazi are a few examples. The policies of denial, destruction, and assimilation imposed on Kurds during the Republic's 86 year history have resulted in 29 Kurdish rebellions. Kocgiri, Sheik Said, Agri, Dersim and various other Kurdish rebellions were suppressed in a very bloody way. Believing that their painful history is not destiny, that democracy and peace will eventually be established on the thousands of years old land of Mesopotamia, and that different nations will definitely live equally and freely together, Kurdish people have never given up the struggle for freedom, democracy, and peace.

After the 29 March 2009 local elections, debate of the Kurdish Problem in Turkey – called by its true name for the first time -- caused hope to grow among Turkish society. Discussions about the resolution of the Kurdish Problem stating that the process would be democratic and peaceful and not based on repression, destruction or denial generated hope. The belief in the existence of an option other than "dying and killing" and the possibility of a diplomacy based on the idea "to live and to let live" affected not only Kurds but all other communities positively. Notwithstanding the AKP's insistence on excluding our party from the process, our party always shared its opinions and suggestions on turning the process into peace and democracy with public opinion. Despite our party's efforts for democracy and peace, the AKP government defended waves of repression and arrests against our party and also prepared the ground for attempted lynchings against us through its statements. While intensifying repression of our party, AKP also increased military operations and granted approval for cross-border operations. Using the slogan "may the mothers stop crying," policies the government carried out during the democratic opening process have caused many mothers to cry.



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Even if the AKP's arguments about the Kurdish issue are different, substantially it has imposed the state's policy of solution-less deadlock without taking into consideration the will of Kurds and has striven to stifle the Kurds' democratic opposition. This mentality is the fundamental reason for the closure against our party, which does political work on behalf of the Kurdish people. The subject of the closure case is our party's perspective on the solution to the Kurdish question. At every opportunity, our party has defended the idea that the Kurdish Question is not a "terror" issue as claimed by Turkish state, but rather a question of a people's freedom and exercise of legal, democratic rights. Our party believes that PKK is a result of the Kurdish issue and not a cause of it. Additionally, our party believes that the PKK and its leader Mr. Abdullah Öcalan must be included in the process in order to provide a permanent, democratic and peaceful solution. We have clearly submitted our perspectives on this issue to Turkish and international public opinion because of our responsibility regarding it. Demanding closure of a party because it doesn't support the official state ideology and criticizes the state's policies is incompatible with any democratic perspective, morality or law.

In this context, it is clear that main aim of AKP government's project – first called the "Kurdish Opening," later the "Democratic Opening" and later the "National Unity Project" -- is the elimination of Kurdish democratic opposition. The government's long-imposed policies of refusal, denial and annihilation have become a fine-tuned approach of elimination with the so-called democratic opening. The emergence of our party's closure case during this opening is a result of this approach.

During the closure case against the AKP, the head of the Constitutional Court stated the need to revise current legal provisions regarding closure of political parties and to bring existing procedures for closure of parties into line with modern democratic norms. To do this requires a majority in parliament, and this was the duty of the AKP government, which had a majority in parliament. AKP has stayed aloof to the closure process and hasn't fulfilled its responsibility. Additionally, it's tried to provide suitable conditions for DTP's closure through its statements and conduct.

Despite all pressures, anti-democratic practices and inequalities, DTP pooled more than 2,500,000 votes and won 98 municipalities in Kurdish-inhabited areas in the 29 March 2009 local elections. DTP also has the fourth-biggest party group in parliament. The aim of our party's closure is to push Kurds out of democratic politics, and closure wouldn't express any other meaning. The possible closure verdict of 8 December won't be a legal verdict; it will be a political one.

Finally, pushing the Democratic Society Party out of democratic politics would deepen the chaos and process of crisis in Turkey. It would weaken the Kurds' belief in parliamentary politics. The 1994 removal of DEP deputies from parliament and their subsequent imprisonment for tens of years is fresh in the memory of our people. Closing DTP wouldn't bring any benefit to democracy in Turkey and would have negative effects on Turkey's EU accession process and foreign politics.

We call on all of international public opinion to stand in solidarity against the closure of the Democratic Society Party in order to prevent closure of the democratic political channels which have been developed by the Kurdish people and to develop democracy in Turkey.