

INTERVIEW

Kobanê:

A city defending human dignity



Murat Karayılan

COMMANDER OF THE
PEOPLE'S DEFENSE UNITS HPG

About the fight against ISIS in Kurdistan

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Preface

When the so-called Islamic State, or ISIS for short, advanced on the Ezidi city of Şengal (Sinjar) in northern Iraq (southern Kurdistan) in August 2014, crimes were committed that seemed almost unimaginable in this form in the 21st century. The cruelty and brutality inflicted on the members of one of the region's oldest religious communities in the days that followed can hardly be put into words. To this day, the fate of thousands of abducted women and girls remains unknown, and it is believed that not all the mass graves in which the dead were buried have been found. The anger of people all over the world was mixed with a feeling of deep sadness and powerlessness in the face of the situation. The anger was directed at the heinous perpetrators, of course, but also at those who had left the Ezidi population unprotected, and at those who stood by and watched the crimes instead of intervening, despite claiming to be part of a so-called anti-ISIS coalition.

But there were also people who turned their anger into action, who did not fall into impotent grief, but wanted to put an end to the suffering and protect the people from further attacks. While all other armed forces and armies in the region, equipped with the latest weapons technology, left the field to ISIS without a fight, it was true heroes and heroines who stood in the way of this murderous band of jihadists.

They fought to clear an escape corridor in northern Iraq in order to save the Ezidi population from an even greater genocide.

A short time later, they confronted ISIS in Kobanê and did not give up in an almost hopeless situation until they inflicted the first defeat on the battlefield on the previously “invincible” ISIS. A few years later, they ended the territorial rule of ISIS in Baghouz in eastern Syria and made not only the region but the whole world safer. Anyone who remembers the many terrible terrorist attacks carried out by ISIS in the middle of Europe should know that we here in Western Europe also owe a great deal to these men and women. Because they have also made our lives safer here.

But who are these young women and men to whom we owe so much? Where did they find the courage to confront IS in this way and at great sacrifice? And how did their fight unfold?

Murat Karayilan answers these questions in an in-depth interview. He tells the story of this heroic resistance as we have never known it before. He shares with us important information from this period that has rarely or never been made public.

Karayilan is a member of the Central Executive Committee of the Kurdistan Workers' Party, or PKK for short. And to say it straight away: the PKK has played a prominent role in this fight. The same PKK that saved us from ISIS and possibly saved the lives of tens of thousands of people is still listed and criminalized as a terrorist organization in the EU today. That is a disgrace for Europe.

The original interview was published in early 2022. With some delay, we would now like to make it available in English. This important interview has lost none of its significance and actuality. It is the testimony of a man who was directly involved in the fight against ISIS. And we believe that these statements should be heard in order to better understand one of the most defining periods in the recent history of the Middle East. With this in mind, we wish you a good read.

Your editorial team



It is now more than seven years since the Islamic State (ISIS) was driven out of Kobanê and the city was liberated. However, ISIS is still active in northern and eastern Syria. We would first like to talk to you about the circumstances under which ISIS emerged. How do you assess its genesis? What were the fundamental conditions for its emergence and what phases of development has ISIS gone through since then?

Before I answer your question, I would first of all like to respectfully commemorate all comrades and resistance fighters who died in the heroic struggle against the joint attacks of ISIS and the AKP-MHP regime on the peoples of Rojava and North and East Syria. Through their great selflessness and heroic deeds, humanity was saved from a great danger. Their resistance is therefore of great significance not only for the Kurdish, Arab and Assyrian-Chaldean peoples, but for the whole of humanity. Now the 7th anniversary of the liberation of the city centre of Kobanê is approaching. On this occasion, I would like to respectfully commemorate our friends Gelhat and Arîn Mîrkan and all the fallen of the heroic Kobanê resistance and renew our promise to always remain connected to them.

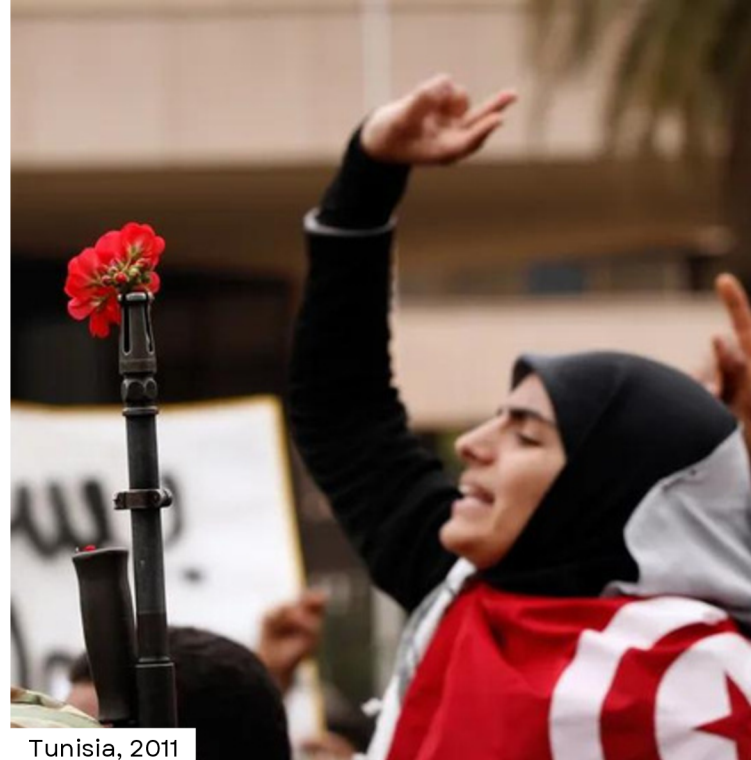
At the same time, the 4th anniversary of the attack on Efrîn is also approaching. On 20 January 2018, the Turkish occupation forces began to attack the region. Everywhere in Kurdistan and around the world, our

people have protested against this attack again this year. In the person of my friends Karker and Avesta Xabûr, I respectfully commemorate all the heroes who fell as Şehîds during the historic resistance in Efrîn. I firmly believe that the memory of these heroes will continue in the form of our struggle for the liberation of Efrîn.

The colonialist-occupying Turkish forces and their fascist-Islamist proxy forces are still committing the most serious crimes in Efrîn: ethnic cleansing, torture, massacres, the targeted expulsion of the indigenous population, expropriations, kidnappings and extortion. The fact that all of this is happening in full view of the world is a disgrace for all of humanity. What the Turkish state is doing in Efrîn today is in no way inferior to the Srebrenica massacre in Bosnia-Herzegovina. The most brutal crimes are being committed in Efrîn. Ultimately, the aim is to expel the local Kurdish population from Efrîn and to annex the region to Turkey. Forgetting the occupation of Efrîn is nothing less than treason. Not a single Kurd can ignore the occupation of Efrîn. The region of Efrîn is also called the 'Kurdish mountain' ['Cebel al-Akrad']. It is a humanist duty to fight for Efrîn in order for it to remain a place where Kurds can live. I would therefore like to take this opportunity to greet our beloved people of Efrîn, who are currently holding out in the Şehba region. At the same time, I greet the resistance of the 'Liberation Forces of Efrîn' (HRE) for the liberation of Efrîn and wish all its members every success.

At the beginning of 2011, a popular movement began in Tunisia and quickly spread throughout the Middle East, particularly to the Arab countries. This movement was referred to as the 'Arab Spring'. However, the intervention of the international hegemonic powers and their partners diverted this popular movement from its original path and turned it into its opposite. This historical phase did not develop into an 'Arab Spring', but rather a 'Dark Arab Winter'.

This led to enormous destruction and huge tragedies, particularly in Syria. The intervention of the AKP-MHP regime intensified this tragedy enormously. And it continues to this day. All of this is well known. Under these circumstances, countless organisations such as Al-Nusra, the 'Free Syrian Army' or the Muslim Brotherhood sprang up like mushrooms. They all orientate themselves on the strategy of Al-Qaeda and describe themselves as Salafi and Islamic. However, they are basically organisations that are mainly characterised by their brutality. It is impossible to claim that these organisations are an inevitable result of this historical phase or a natural consequence of the attempts to resolve it. No, they are structures that were imposed on the peoples of the Middle East in the form of a comprehensive project and a corresponding strategy, and their emergence must be understood in this context. Among all these groups, ISIS was initially just another organisation. But all of a sudden it became bloated and enormously enlarged.



Tunisia, 2011

The floodgates were opened to it. There is no doubt that such a comprehensive development of such an organisation would not have been possible without the appropriate material support and the necessary weapons. This is particularly true of a structure like ISIS, which very quickly gained enormous strength and laid claim to control almost the entire Middle East. This means that there were forces that supported and promoted these developments. In particular, from 2014 onwards, ISIS advanced into numerous areas of Syria and almost officially took over power from other organisations active there.

All of this was clearly a very sophisticated project. The organisations known as the so-called 'Syrian opposition' had liberated Raqqa or had come to power there and now simply handed these areas over to ISIS! How was that possible? In this way, ISIS was made the sole ruling force not only in Raqqa, but in a much larger area. It is clear that a clear plan was being pursued.

The geographical location of the Middle East and the conflicts between the hegemonic powers in the region are likely to create very favourable conditions for the emergence of such organisations.

The geostrategic location of the Middle East, together with its wealth of natural resources such as oil, gas and water, is attracting the attention of the entire world to the region. The Middle East also has a very rich cultural heritage. This is where social life originated. As a result, the social culture in the region is very strong. In addition, the three major world religions originated in the region on this basis. All these factors contribute to the enormous importance of the Middle East. It is a region with a long historical foundation and correspondingly great potential. Consequently, all hegemonic powers and imperialists have always tried to take control of the Middle East.

This is still the case today. Global and regional powers are currently fighting each other for control of the Middle East. As part of this struggle, the powers involved are pursuing a variety of secret and open strategies and tactics, which also form the basis for the emergence of the aforementioned organisations. ISIS is another organisation that has emerged on this basis. An organisation that was able to conquer the city of Mosul in a single day on 11 June 2014. Mosul was protected by 33,000 soldiers at the time. However, ISIS was able to conquer the city within a very short time. The conquest of Mosul was one

of the most significant developments of that phase. It was only through the conquest of the city that ISIS became a leading force. It was then that the speech in the [Al-Nuri] mosque took place. From then on, ISIS made it increasingly clear that an Islamic state would develop from Iraq to Damascus. The Iraqi army practically disintegrated in the face of these developments. Thousands of Iraqi soldiers were captured and executed by ISIS at the time. Shiite soldiers in particular were targeted and shot or beheaded. ISIS pursued the goal of intimidating people and consolidating its power with the help of brutal violence and massacres in all the places it conquered. It became a nightmare for all people. This was not only the case in the Middle East, but also in Europe. In cities like Paris or Amsterdam, ISIS members were able to board planes in groups of 15-20 people and travel to Istanbul without any problems. From there, they travelled directly to the city of Raqqa, which ISIS had declared its capital, in buses and cars specially provided for them. They were therefore able to travel there from all parts of the world without any problems.

Did the police authorities in the respective countries not know that the members of these travelling groups were ISIS supporters?

Of course they knew that, but they simply did nothing. Their attitude was simply: "The further away they are, the better. They'll leave on their own anyway. We'd rather not interfere."

If they had checked the ID cards and passports of these people, they would have easily realised that most of them were fake. But they deliberately ignored this. The same applies to the European countries. They didn't interfere, along the lines of: 'Let them go to Iraq or Syria. The most important thing is that they are far away from us.'. Because these countries were afraid of the ISIS supporters.

How do you assess the AKP regime's relationship with ISIS?

Ideologically, the AKP is practically related to ISIS. Without this kind of relationship, how would it have been possible to travel from Europe to Istanbul or Ankara and from there to Raqqa in car convoys via the Akçakale/Tel Abyad border crossing without any problems? There are numerous documents that prove Turkey's trade and cooperation with ISIS. The employees of the Turkish consulate in Mosul, for example, were held captive by ISIS for a while and were then simply able to return to Turkey without anything happening to them. Countless events and documents prove that the Turkish state maintains extensive relations with ISIS and that the two are closely intertwined.

What kind of strategy did ISIS pursue? In the beginning, it was active in Syria and Iraq. Why did it suddenly decide to focus on Kurdistan?

After ISIS captured Raqqa and Mosul, a kind of model for the caliphate that ISIS was striving for emerged.

It began to expand and grow. But it was precisely at this point that the ISIS leadership made a huge mistake in terms of the organisation's strategy: it followed what the Turkish state told it to do. The Turkish state persuaded ISIS to abandon its plans to attack Baghdad and Damascus, whereupon the organisation began to focus its attacks on the Kurds. This is clear from internal ISIS documents. In particular, ISIS's shift towards Kobanê, which occurred shortly afterwards, can be traced back entirely to corresponding demands by the Turkish state. Suddenly, the target of ISIS was no longer Damascus, but Kobanê. And not only Kobanê, but also the attacks on Şengal, Mexmûr, Hewlêr (Erbil) and Kirkuk were carried out on the basis of these same demands by the Turkish state.



When exactly did you realise the extent of the danger for South Kurdistan? And what exactly did you do when you recognised the danger?

Önder Apo [Abdullah Öcalan] was the first to point out this danger. He had pointed out in detail that our Yezidi people in Şengal were in great danger and accordingly called on us to protect Şengal. We understood this as a clear order.

The Şengal region was under the control of Iraqi and South Kurdish forces at the time. The same applied to Mexmûr and Kirkuk. We had certain relations with the southern Kurdish forces at the time. Consequently, we made the following proposal to both the KDP [Kurdistan Democratic Party] and the YNK [Patriotic Union of Kurdistan]: 'ISIS has occupied Mosul and is now massively threatening southern Kurdistan, especially Şengal. We would like to participate in the defence of these areas and deploy a certain contingent of our forces to Şengal for this purpose. It would be good if you would allow us to do so. But both parties did not accept our proposal. The KDP's answer was: 'No, that is not necessary. There are thousands of Peshmerga with heavy weapons in Şengal. They have taken all the necessary precautions there. Şengal is therefore not in the slightest danger. And even if it were, we have sufficient forces there to defend the region. Our forces will be able to respond appropriately to any attacks. The YNK also rejected our proposal in a - shall we say - friendly manner, telling us: 'This is not necessary at the moment. As soon as there is a need for such measures, we will inform you. “

And what did you do in response?

As the PKK, we cannot be guided by whether other forces give us permission to act - especially when it comes to the defence of our people. We always act on our own initiative and take the necessary measures within the scope of our possibilities. This is one of our central principles. Although the aforementioned southern Kurdish forces, with whom we had quite good relations, did not give us their consent, we put together a few groups according to our own capabilities and sent them to the areas mentioned. Most of these groups consisted of very experienced commanders. Our aim was to be able to intervene with their help in the event of dangerous developments. In this context, we sent twelve friends to Şengal under the leadership of the heroic commander Dilşêr Herekol. This group has been reported on repeatedly in the media in the past. In addition, a group consisting of eight of our friends - all of them commanders - and commanded by our courageous friend Tekoşêr was sent to the Mexmûr refugee camp. We also sent a group to Kirkuk. These three groups immediately began preparations on the ground. They scouted the areas in which they were located, began training several groups of young people and made further preparations for war. Their aim was to resist potential attacks with the help of local forces in these various areas.



Egît Civyan and Dilşer Herekol in Şengal

A certain basic structure already existed in Mexmûr at that time. While all this was going on, we bought weapons on the South Kurdish market and sent them to Mexmûr, Kirkuk and other places as a precaution.

The friends in Şengal provided comprehensive training for a group of nine to ten young people. They also quickly familiarised themselves with the peculiarities of the terrain there. However, three of the twelve friends were arrested by KDP forces stationed in Şengal. One of them was a friend who had been working among the local population for some time. The other two friends were part of the group that we had sent to Şengal shortly before. The remaining friends worked alongside some friends who were active in societal work in Şengal and a certain number of patriotic-minded people in the region. Şehîd Sait Hesên played a very important role in this context. He himself, but also his family and his tribe, provided enormous, truly invaluable help in helping the friends we sent to Şengal, hiding them, showing them the way and doing other work. Sait Hesên really played a very important role in making our intervention in the region possible.

How would you describe the atmosphere that prevailed on August 3, 2014, i.e. at the beginning of the ISIS attack on Şengal?

ISIS was very motivated at the time. Its attacks were carried out from practically all directions. No one had been able to stand in its way until then. Neither the Syrian army, the Iraqi army, the Peshmerga or any of the many organisations in Syria were in a position to stand up to ISIS at the time. Even against the attack on Şengal, the Peshmerga did not hold out for long and very quickly began to leave Şengal. When we say this, we are not doing so to deliberately expose anyone. We are simply describing the true events. At the time, ISIS had a really serious psychological superiority. In all the places it conquered, it first of all captured some people and beheaded them in the most brutal way in order to instil fear in everyone. Because of the fear it spread, many people fled before ISIS even arrived. The fear had reached such a level that ISIS publicly announced when exactly it planned to take over a city or town. As a result, many fled before the announced day, while those who remained handed over the keys to the city to ISIS, so to speak. The majority of these forces fled without even a single battle or the slightest contact with ISIS. Between the cities of Mosul and Mexmûr there are 22 different large villages and small towns in which Iraqi soldiers were stationed at the time. However, ISIS was able to reach Mexmûr without firing a single shot. But in the Mexmûr refugee camp, resistance

was put up against ISIS and its attack was stopped. Even the strongest forces were therefore embarrassed when ISIS became such a brutal force. As mentioned earlier, not even the European states were prepared to intervene and tended to take the attitude: 'That's just trouble. We'd rather not get involved'. And the local forces had nothing to oppose it anyway.

How exactly did the ISIS attack on Şengal take place back then?

At around 9 a.m. on August 3, 2014, our commander and comrade Dilşêr Herekol contacted us and informed us of the seriousness of the situation. We then asked him: 'If we intervene with a few battalions on the ground, can you take over their leadership? Are you now familiar with the characteristics of the terrain? How much control do you have in the region? How great is the danger of difficult situations and losses for our forces? The friend replied immediately and told us that they were ready and knew the terrain well. He also informed us that they were in control of the area to a certain extent and had been working hard since their arrival. I then asked him if there were also people from the local population at their side, to which the friend Dilşêr replied that only the nine young people they had trained were with them. He also told us that the friend Memo was involved in fighting with a group of friends at one end of Şengal Mountain and that he himself was in the town of Sinunê. It was only later that we realised that ISIS was already close by during our

conversation and there was fighting. In short, when he told us that they could take charge of the additional forces we had provided, we informed him that we would be sending several battalions that very evening, one of which was already ready, and that they would have to receive the battalions in the evening. Because one of our battalions was actually already ready in Rojava. So that's how we decided to intervene in Şengal. Of course, we also informed the KCK co-chair of our decision around midday that same day. Our friends there replied that they thought our decision was correct and that we should take all necessary steps. We then set our forces in motion to intervene directly in Şengal. This is how our intervention in Şengal, which was known worldwide, took place. While everyone - civilians and military forces - were trying to flee Şengal as quickly as possible, our forces were advancing towards Şengal at high speed. At that time, a group of four to five friends led by Heval Memo were fighting on the top of Şengal Mountain. The friends did everything they could to get to Şengal as quickly as possible and come to their aid. Along the way, they were repeatedly warned that ISIS was active in the areas ahead of them and were asked why they wanted to go there. But the friends did not let this deter them from their plan and they managed to reach their friends in Şengal within a very short time.

What exactly was your plan when your forces intervened in Şengal?

Our plan was to protect Şengal Mountain first. The mountain itself was surrounded by a vast plain and ISIS had tanks and armoured vehicles, while we had no such means. That's why we decided to defend the mountain rather than the plain, and instructed our forces accordingly. So after they reached Şengal, they took measures to defend the mountain first. Of course, ISIS also wanted to conquer the mountain. It launched several offensives towards the mountain, but our friends attacked ISIS and prevented it from advancing. For three months, ISIS repeatedly attacked and tried to take control of the mountain. But in terms of manoeuvrability and combat capability, our forces were clearly superior to ISIS in the terrain. The ISIS did not have the necessary experience. They had to realise that they could not win the war in the mountainous terrain of Şengal. Ultimately, this led to ISIS controlling Şengal city and the plain surrounding the mountain, while we kept the mountain under our control.

How did the YPG intervene at the time? Did it intervene at the same time as your forces?

When our forces gained control of Şengal Mountain, the people of Şengal were immediately ordered to seek shelter on the mountain. The people then made their way to the mountain. Especially those who lived in the villages and towns south of the

mountain tried to get to Şengal Mountain. But now there were suddenly tens of thousands of people there. As a result, there were problems with water and food supplies. In response, we appealed to the public for help, but unfortunately we did not receive sufficient support. A few sporadic helicopters came and dropped drinking water. But that was nowhere near enough. One of these pallets of drinking water even crashed onto a group of waiting people, killing two of them. Due to the lack of support, a huge tragedy was imminent. Due to the lack of water, the first people were already starting to die at this point, especially children and the elderly.

We then turned to the YPG command in Rojava. They themselves were already following the developments. The friends we had sent to Şengal had also travelled there via Rojava. At the time, we suggested to the YPG command to send support to Şengal and to open a corridor to Şengal near the small town of Cezaa in Rojava. She agreed to our proposal and then set her troops in motion. There was a tower near Cezaa that had previously been controlled by Saddam Hussein. However, this tower was now in the hands of ISIS. Our friends in Şengal told us that capturing this tower could open up a corridor between Rojava and Şengal. As a result, an attack was launched on this area and the YPG forces took control of the tower in question. Several other important locations in the region were also secured in this context. In the end, the corridor was opened and its security guaranteed.

As a result, the people who had previously travelled from Şengal to Rojava on foot were able to make the journey in their cars.

At that time, there were probably no cars in Şengal itself that people could use to get to Rojava?

That is true. The Rojava leadership therefore issued an urgent appeal to its people: everyone with lorries, buses or cars was called upon to rush to the aid of our people in Şengal. As a result, thousands of cars from Rojava did indeed make their way to Şengal. Thus began the evacuation to Rojava of all the people who were suffering from hunger and thirst in Şengal. Of course, all these cars also brought food and water with them on their way to Şengal. In this way, a total of 120,000 people were brought from Şengal Mountain to Rojava between 8 and 18 August 2014.

People of Şengal fleeing from advancing ISIS



The evacuation continued in the days that followed. It was a huge human rescue operation that even many states would not have been able to carry out. However, with the help of the power of the people, the dedication and resources of our people in Rojava, the securing of the corridor by the YPG and Şengal Mountain by the HPG (Hêzên Parastina Gel - People's Defence Forces), as well as the comprehensive coordination on the ground by our extremely intelligent commander Egîd Civyan, this major rescue operation succeeded.

At the time, there were also many people who decided not to leave Şengal and to stay on the mountain with their forces. How exactly did you make that possible?

We were convinced that it would not be good if the entire population left Şengal. Otherwise, it would have been very difficult for all these people to return. We also shared this concern with our comrade Zeki Şengali, who had always taken a leading role in the struggle. He also thought it was advisable that not everyone should leave the region. As commander of our forces, with whose help our intervention had begun, our friend Egîd Civyan coordinated the developments on the ground. We also informed our friends Egîd and Dilşêr about our suggestion that not the entire population should leave Şengal and that as many people as could be cared for should stay on the mountain together with our friends.

As the corridor to Rojava had been opened in the meantime, the supply of food and water could also be guaranteed to a certain extent. If there had been a large number of people, there might have been supply bottlenecks. However, we informed our friends on the ground that we believed that up to 10,000 people could remain on Şengal Mountain and that their supplies could be secured. Our friends in Şengal discussed this with our friend Sait Hesên, who then assured us that he, his family and his tribe would stay. Numerous other families and tribes also agreed to the proposal to stay in Şengal. As a result, just under 10,000 people remained in the 'Serdeşt camp', while the rest of the population travelled from Şengal to Rojava.

After many people had initially entered Rojava via the corridor, it was closed again shortly afterwards. What exactly happened back then?

At the same time as the developments I have described, the ISIS terrorists attacked from various sides. Their aim was to take control of Şengal Mountain. Therefore, there were continuous battles. Our HPG forces had occupied all strategic points on the mountain and were able to repel the ISIS attacks. In response, ISIS launched an all-out attack on the forces securing the corridor. They were furious about our resistance, as not even states had come against them so far. The YPG forces along the corridor were put in a very difficult

position by the ISIS attack and suffered losses. The forces holding the aforementioned tower near Cezaa were also completely surrounded by ISIS. However, thanks to a comprehensive counterattack, all friends in the tower were saved. Ultimately, however, the forces defending the corridor were forced to retreat. This led to the closure of the corridor.

The attempts by ISIS to close the corridor from Rojava mainly took the form of heavy attacks on the city of Cezaa. The YPG put up enormous resistance there. If ISIS had succeeded in conquering Cezaa, it would have been able to close the corridor for good. However, due to the YPG's strong resistance, it was unable to take control of the town. Almost all the houses in Cezaa were destroyed in the fighting. The YPG alone suffered around 80 casualties. However, Cezaa was successfully defended. During these battles, the plain leading from Cezaa to Şengal fell, closing the corridor. The Şengal mountain was then completely surrounded by ISIS. It could no longer be reached by land. Iraqi helicopters came to the mountain a few times. But enough food and water had already been brought to Şengal Mountain. So our friends and the local population held out on the surrounded mountain for three whole months. ISIS had assumed that it would succeed in conquering Şengal Mountain by completely surrounding it. Accordingly, it attacked again and again. However, all of these attacks were repelled, preventing ISIS from gaining access to the mountain.

Was there any contact between your units and the international forces during this phase?

During the first few days of our intervention, a US delegation arrived on Şengal Mountain with several helicopters. The US representatives immediately went to the location of our friends. There was a meeting between the person in charge of the US delegation and our friend Egîd Civyan. He asked our friend Egîd: 'Are you directly or indirectly connected to the PKK? Our friend Egîd replied: 'What do you mean 'indirectly'? We are PKK members. We belong to the HPG.' The US delegation stayed on site for about two to three hours and looked around under the protection of their friends. Then they got into their helicopters and flew away. We suspect that they later told their superiors that Şengal Mountain was being defended, but that the defenders were - in their words - 'forces with direct links to the PKK'. The US must have then decided that it could not enter into relations with these forces, because they simply did not come to Şengal after that.

And did they have contact with southern Kurdish forces during this time?

While our forces were taking control of Şengal Mountain and organising the evacuation of the local population to Rojava, Massud Barzani and Mesrur Barzani contacted us through an intermediary and asked us whether our forces were really active in Şengal. We replied: 'Yes, our forces are in Şengal. We are currently evacuating the population there to Rojava.

So it is true that our forces are active in Şengal. Through the same intermediary, they asked us if we could help them to bring a certain number of their forces to Şengal alongside the HPG. We informed them that this was definitely possible. Our intervention in Şengal was not intended as to us being the only force active and fighting there. We had actually planned to make contact with the KDP immediately after our decision to intervene in Şengal. We had a corresponding communication channel at the time. However, in response to our enquiry, our contact person told us that he could not come at the moment as he had been assigned a task and it would be misunderstood if he left it unfinished to come to us. If our contact had been successful at the time, we would have told the KDP that they should send their forces back to Şengal and that we would have to fight back the ISIS attack there together. But our attempt at contact at the time was unsuccessful. When the KDP approached us with this request, we immediately pledged our support and they sent their forces to Şengal. The KDP forces were first transferred to Rojava, where they were accommodated for a day or two in the city of Cezaa. They were commanded by a person called Aşitî. Today, this very person repeatedly makes completely ungrateful statements about our movement. I suspect that these forces were primarily tasked with gathering intelligence information. But we made sure that they were finally able to reach Şengal Mountain.

How did the population react to the return of the Peshmerga to Şengal?

When the people in Şengal saw that people in Peshmerga clothing were arriving, they could not stand it and some immediately tried to attack them. There were indeed attacks with stones and sticks. However, the quick reaction of the friend Egîd, was in accordance with his very attentive nature and revolutionary principles, which is why he prevented the attacks by the people. He placed the KDP forces right next to our units and thus in a safe place directly under their protection. Unfortunately, however, the KDP representatives thought at the time that the people had been stirred up against them by the PKK. Even though this was only done unofficially, we learnt that they were spreading such propaganda within their own ranks. To this day, the KDP has not properly understood the feelings and reaction of the people. It still assumes that the people are being directed by someone. But that is not true. That the KDP really thinks that we incited the people against them under the war conditions at that time is really wrong and very ungrateful. That is simply not true. The people of Şengal had been abandoned and suffered enormous trauma as a result. That's why people were angry with the KDP. We, on the other hand, tried to alleviate the people's anger. Our friends did everything they could to protect the KDP forces in Şengal.

While all this was happening, ISIS continued to advance at great speed towards southern Kurdistan. What happened in the other places outside Şengal that were attacked by ISIS at the time?

Yes, that is true. A few days after the attack on Şengal, ISIS began to advance towards Mexmûr and from there to Hewlêr [Erbil]. At the same time, it also advanced towards Kirkuk. At this point, the southern Kurdish forces no longer had any military posts. After the fall of Şengal, they had entered a phase of confusion and vacuum. They were leaderless at the time. We transferred friends to Hewlêr and Mexmûr at the same time. We brought other friends to Kirkuk in pick-ups. At the same time, many people from Şêxan and Duhok came to the Garê and Metîna regions and settled in the villages there. We received many urgent calls from the population to defend Duhok and push even further south.

We suspected that ISIS might also attack Laleş. Because with its attacks, it was pursuing the goal of completely destroying the Yezidi faith and society. At the suggestion and with the participation of our friend Şehîd Zeki Şengalî, we therefore moved a regiment of our forces to Laleş. This regiment took up position in the immediate vicinity of Laleş. A short time later, the regiment set up positions at suitable locations to provide military protection for the sacred religious centre of Laleş.

We moved another regiment to Duhok. Our forces were not stationed

in the city centre of Duhok, but on a mountain peak behind the city. We feared that the arrival of our friends in the city would only exacerbate the existing worries and panic among the population. The friends stationed there were ordered to take up positions on the said mountain near the city, but to immediately take up frontline positions further ahead if they observed ISIS advances on Şêxan and Duhok. At the same time, one regiment each of our forces had also been deployed to Mexmûr and Kirkuk.

How strong were the forces that you tasked with protecting the South Kurdish population at the time?

We deployed four regiments to defend southern Kurdistan. Two regiments were initially deployed to Şengal, which were later reinforced as required. So we positioned our forces in the area from Kirkuk to Şengal, establishing a front line to stop the advance of ISIS.

When our people in South Kurdistan and the Peshmerga forces saw this, they clearly gained courage and confidence. Our intervention played an important role in helping the Peshmerga to regroup. The Peshmerga then managed to organise their forces themselves. We can even report the following: Our friends had reached Mexmûr and occupied the mountain range behind the refugee camp. At the same time, Peshmerga forces were in the town of Mexmûr further south. In response to the ISIS attacks, the Peshmerga withdrew from Mexmûr City two or three times.

But when they saw that our forces were not retreating and were holding their positions, they returned to Mexmûr. That is indisputable. If ISIS had succeeded in taking control of the Mexmûr refugee camp as well, it would have attacked Hewlêr [Erbil] next. At that time, ISIS had already approached Hewlêr from another flank. In order to occupy the Mexmûr refugee camp, it attacked the Karaçox mountain range behind the camp. He wanted to conquer the peaks of this mountain range.

HPG/YJA STAR fighter in,Şengal



This led to heavy hand-to-hand fighting. Our friend Deniz Fîrat, who was working there as a journalist at the time, was killed by ISIS terrorists' bullets in the course of these battles. This happened when ISIS units had reached the mountain range unnoticed. Nevertheless, our forces did not give up their positions there and continued to put up resistance. As a result, ISIS had to realise that it would not be able to make any progress on this front line. So the resistance in Mexmûr played a central role in the defence of Hewlêr. In short, during its attacks in August 2014, ISIS was brought to a halt in Mexmûr.

What were the reactions to the resistance of your forces at the time?

The international forces drew courage from our resistance. Because everyone had fallen into a kind of state of shock in the face of the ISIS attacks. None of them knew how ISIS could be stopped. However, the defence of Şengal and the prevention of the ISIS conquest of Şengal Mountain and Mexmûr ensured that the Peshmerga forces became increasingly active in their defensive positions. The heavy fighting in Kirkuk also meant that ISIS was unable to advance any further there. As a result, the aforementioned front line became increasingly clear. We can therefore say with absolute certainty that our guerrilla forces acted as a catalyst for the resistance of our South Kurdish people and the Peshmerga. This was due to their refusal to withdraw from Kirkuk, Mexmûr or Şengal despite the ISIS attacks and also due to the determined defence of the city of Cezaa by the YPG forces. The HPG units did not retreat from ISIS in any single place, but resisted everywhere with the forces at their disposal. Even if they were only ten people, our friends resisted attacks by hundreds of ISIS fighters.

In response to these developments, ISIS tried to take revenge. It recognised that a line of defence had emerged in South Kurdistan. In addition, under the leadership of the USA, the International Anti-ISIS Coalition was founded, whose members deployed their air forces in Iraq and South Kurdistan.

When ISIS realised that it would struggle in South Kurdistan, it began planning an attack on Kobanê. ISIS wanted to take revenge for Şengal on the Kurdish people and, of course, on our movement - the PKK.

Before we talk in more detail about the encirclement of Kobanê and the war there, which lasted several months, we would first like to talk about the emergence of the Rojava revolution, the founding of the YPG and the relationship between your movement and the forces in Rojava. Your movement is often associated with the revolutionary forces in Rojava, especially by the Turkish state. The latter seems to be trying to put these relations on the agenda to the detriment of the forces of the Rojava Revolution...

First of all, the Turkish state itself maintained direct relations with the YPG and PYD in the past. The then co-chairman of the PYD, Salih Muslim, travelled to Ankara several times in public. Everyone knows that. And the Turkish state also had relations with the YPG. The YPG representative at the time, who was responsible for the YPG's external relations, was brought to Ankara by the Turkish state. We know that. And we even know that he received medical treatment and surgery there. As far as I know, this surgery was also successful. There is no doubt that the Turkish state was not really pursuing any good intentions with its relations at the time. It wanted to use its relations with the YPG and PYD to alienate them.

from the other Kurdish structures, make them part of the so-called 'Free Syrian Army' (FSA) and thus involve them in the war against Syria. While the Turkish state undertook these attempts, it also carried out attacks against the YPG with the help of the FSA in 2013. These attacks lasted five to six months, but they were unsuccessful and the FSA forces suffered a clear defeat against the YPG. Therefore, the AKP government tried to bring the YPG and the PYD under its control and make them part of the FSA in a very mendacious way and with the help of special warfare methods. We know, for example, that representatives of the AKP government openly told Salih Muslim at the time: "If you expel the Syrian forces from Qamişlo, we will support you. Just get rid of the Syrian soldiers at the border crossing there, then we can provide you with support."

Turkey's actual strategy was to prevent the Kurds in Syria from gaining recognition of their identity and participating in the reorganisation of the region. During the chaos phase at the time, Turkey tried hard to prevent the Kurds from benefiting from the developments and participating in the reorganisation of the region. Later, the Turkish state also ensured a unified stance on this issue within its own ranks and made this strategy its main concern from 2015 onwards. However, there were already signs of this before 2015. As a result of all this, the Turkish state representatives themselves know very well that their claim that the YPG and PYD are part of the PKK is simply not true.

Instead, the following is correct: Our chairman Abdullah Öcalan lived in Syria and Rojava for around 20 years. One of his most striking characteristics is that he built up close relationships with the population everywhere. He simply could not stand not talking and discussing with the people. Without that, he quickly became bored. That is why Öcalan still has an enormous influence on Rojava today. The YPG, PYD and numerous other structures there have emerged under the influence of our chairman's ideas.

However, it was a certain number of friends who directly suggested going to Rojava themselves in 2011, when developments in Syria were gaining momentum. They included Xebat Dêrik, for example, who was later involved in building the YPG. All of these people were friends from our own ranks. At the time, they told the leadership of our organisation that there would be upheaval in Rojava and expressed their desire to go there to support and organise the population. Our organisation agreed to their proposal and informed them that they could go there. As a result, a group of friends separated from us and went to Rojava. There they established relations with the local circles that were close to us, as well as with some people who had left our ranks in previous years but later regretted it themselves. They organised these various circles and people and founded the YPG together with them.

How exactly did the YPG obtain weapons back then?

I know very well that the YPG sent its own representatives to South Kurdistan shortly after it was founded and that they asked Massud Barzani for support in the form of weapons. Shortly afterwards, this YPG delegation came to us and also asked us for weapons. We then promised them support in the form of weapons and complied according to our possibilities at the time. But as far as I know, the KDP did not give a clear answer to the YPG's request and did not provide any support later on. It may be that the KDP opened its border with Rojava for a short time and thus provided support in a certain way. But when the YPG was re-established, it asked the KDP for a total of 1,000 Kalashnikovs. They also asked us for the same kind of support and we provided the YPG with these weapons according to our means. So the contacts between the YPG and us at that time were based on such friendly relations. In a very similar way, our relations with the YPG continue to this day. Of course, it must be emphasised that the YPG also maintains very similar friendly relations with many other Kurdish organisations.

As soon as the Turkish state realised that it would not succeed in instrumentalising the PYD and YPG for its goals, it adopted a 100% hostile stance towards them. Once it had fully decided in favour of this stance, i.e. from 2014 onwards, the Turkish state began to mention us whenever it spoke of the YPG or the PYD. So they started talking about the 'YPG-PKK'.

Until 2014, the Turkish state's stance was completely different. But today it is determined to regard the YPG and PYD as offshoots of the PKK. But that is not true in the slightest.

In response to these developments, ISIS tried to take revenge. It recognised that a line of defence had emerged in South Kurdistan. In addition, under the leadership of the USA, the International Anti-ISIS Coalition was founded, whose members deployed their air forces in Iraq and South Kurdistan.

But ideologically, the YPG and PYD already resemble your organisation...

Well, Abdullah Öcalan is a personality who has an ideological-philosophical idea, i.e. a paradigm, that corresponds to our era. This idea was developed not only for the PKK, but for the entire population of Kurdistan, and even for the entire Middle East and humanity as a whole. It is of course undeniable that Öcalan is also the central leader of the PKK, but the paradigm he has developed goes beyond this framework.

Just as parties can be founded on the basis of this paradigm in all four parts of Kurdistan, this can also happen in Iraq, Syria, Egypt or Europe. As far as I know, such groups already exist. Even in Argentina, some groups are making such efforts. We are aware of this. I don't know what their current situation is, but in the past there were also such groups in Pakistan. In Iraq, too, a party consisting purely of Arab members was originally founded on this basis. However, due to certain

resource constraints, these people are now working as a group rather than a party. They are people from Basra and Baghdad, but they are orientated towards Öcalan's ideas. Öcalan's thoughts. The YPG and PYD were also founded within this framework. It is true that all these organisations are ideologically close to us, and even form an ideological unit with us. But there is simply no organisational unity between us and them. Yes, it may be that we support each other. And not only with them, but with many organisations in Rojava, but also with left-wing democratic organisations in Turkey, we maintain such solidary relations. It is the same with Kurdish organisations in South Kurdistan. But none of these organisations can therefore be described as PKK. Just as they are not PKK members, the PYD is not part of the PKK either. But the Turkish state is using these relations to try to destroy the achievements of our people in Rojava and especially in North and East Syria and to put the YPG and PYD on the terror list.

So should we understand you to mean that there are no relations between the PKK and these organisations?

No, we are not saying that there are no relationships at all. We are fully transparent on this point. Our answer is very clear: there are relationships, but they are not of an organisational nature. All these organisations exist separately from us. They have their own leadership structures and we have ours. If they get into difficulties, we support them. But that is different

from an organisational connection. It's more about solidarity between revolutionaries. In our opinion, all revolutionaries and democrats in Kurdistan, Turkey and the Middle East should unite anyway. The Arab and Kurdish populations must form a unity. Then there are the most oppressed people, the Suryoye, and other Christian groups. All these different peoples must form a unity together. Turkmen, Chechens and Armenians also live in northern and eastern Syria. Öcalan's paradigm is a paradigm for all societies.

This is precisely the meaning of the Democratic Nation: the democratic unity of all nations and their free and equal life under a common roof. It would be completely nonsensical to call all organisations that orientate themselves on this ideological-theoretical framework and unite under this common umbrella the PKK. That would be a distortion of the facts. At the same time, it would mean downplaying Öcalan's ideological strength, i.e. giving the impression that he is only the leader of the PKK and that the PKK is building up all these different organisations as its own offshoots. But these claims have absolutely nothing to do with reality.

Let's come back to Kobanê. What was the situation in Kobanê, or in Rojava as a whole, before September 15, 2014? What was the atmosphere on the ground when the ISIS attacks began on September 15? Why did ISIS decide to attack Kobanê?

The last of your questions in particular can be answered in many different ways: Kobanê has always been an area that has been closely associated with the struggle for freedom. In addition, our chairman Öcalan lived and worked there for a while. But a more direct and obvious reason for ISIS' decision was that Kobanê was completely surrounded at the time. The area had nowhere to draw support from and was therefore the weakest link in the chain. The land connection between Kobanê and Cizîrê, but also to Efrîn, was interrupted as these areas were under the control of ISIS. Kobanê was therefore surrounded by ISIS and the Turkish state. Turkey was on one side and the other three sides were surrounded by ISIS. As a result, there was no access to the area. Kobanê was literally like an island in the middle of a sea of terror. As far as I know, the area was defended by around 1,000 YPG fighters at the time, but they did not have heavy weapons. The ISIS commanders knew this very well, but they were equally aware that the YPG did not simply run away like all the other forces, but resisted. This is why ISIS launched a major attack on Kobanê from three sides on September 15, 2014, in which it also deployed tanks and other modern US-made weapons. It had previously captured these weapons in Iraq.

ISIS could just as easily have attacked Cizîrê, but it decided against it. Why? Because the YPG had significantly stronger forces there and also better weapons in some cases. ISIS therefore attacked Kobanê because it had identified the area as the YPG's weak point.

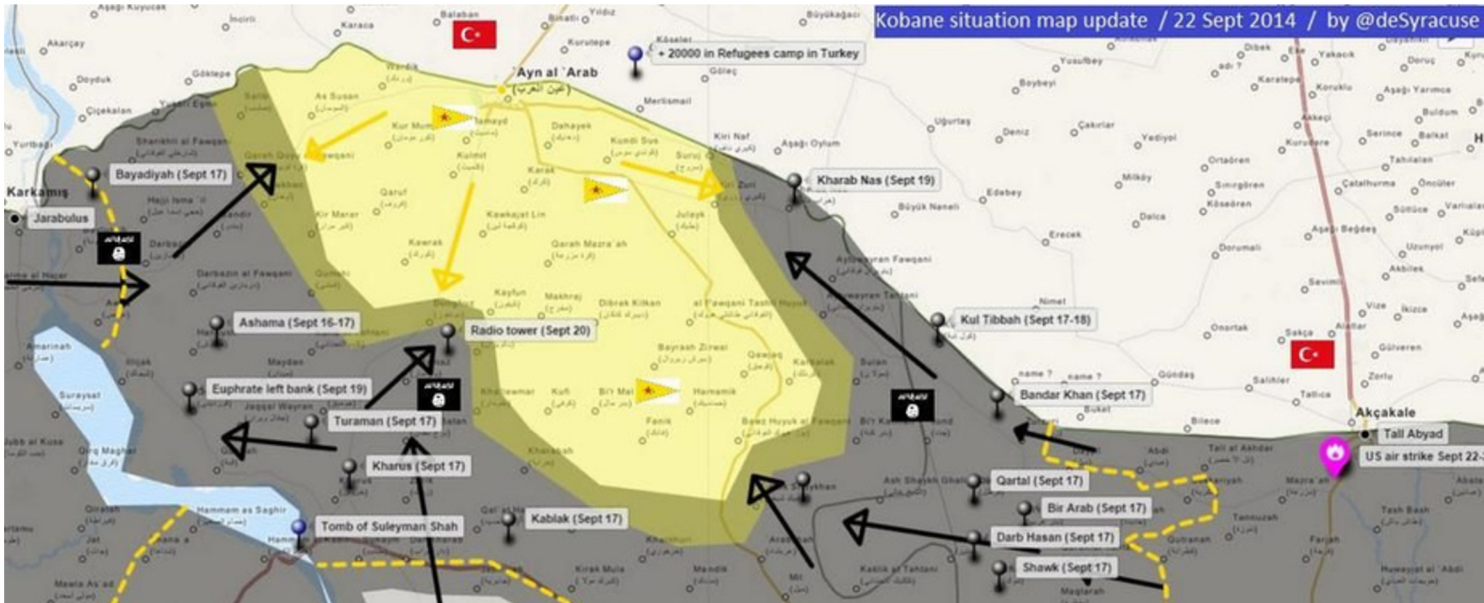
As soon as the Turkish state realised that it would not succeed in instrumentalising the PYD and YPG for its goals, it adopted a 100% hostile stance towards them. Once it had fully decided in favour of this stance, i.e. from 2014 onwards, the Turkish state began to mention us whenever it spoke of the YPG or the PYD. So they started talking about the 'YPG-PKK'.

And what happened next?

At this point, it is important to emphasise the following: While we were taking measures to defend southern Kurdistan in July/August 2014 and were involved in heavy fighting there for months after the attacks began, we sent a certain number of our forces to Kobanê as reinforcements at the request of the YPG. This was because the YPG itself was unable to send any reinforcements from Cizîrê to Kobanê. We sent a group of our fighters from the Amed area - both newly joined fighters and experienced commanders - to Kobanê as reinforcements. At that time, we were not only supporting the defence of South Kurdistan, but also Rojava and Kobanê in particular with our units. There had already been an ISIS attack on Kobanê in July, which - as far as I remember - lasted one to two weeks.

Our forces reached the area at the time, which led to the first clashes with ISIS. ISIS made some territorial gains, but was ultimately stopped. That's when the first practical contacts between us and the YPG took place.

become members of the local command. They supported the commanders in various ways. In short, the YPG forces resisted the heavy attacks by ISIS from September 15 onwards. The attack was really very extensive.



At that time in Rojava, not only was the city of Kobanê completely surrounded...

Yes, Efrîn was also in a very similar situation. There were repeated battles there too. At the request of the YPG, we sent reinforcements to Efrîn via the Amanos area. A group of very experienced friends like the Amanos commander Masîro, but also Şehîd Vedat and Şehîd Şiyar Malatya went to Efrîn together, took part in the battles there and supported the YPG. At the same time, ISIS also attacked Kobanê. Some of the friends who had previously travelled to Efrîn secretly entered Kobanê through ISIS-controlled territory. In this way, the Kobanê command received reinforcements. However, these newly arrived friends did not immediately

There was very significant resistance, such as in Serzorî, where some friends were surrounded by ISIS in a school building and put up fierce resistance until they finally fell. Despite this, ISIS continued to advance on the city of Kobanê from three sides. This was because it used armoured vehicles in its attacks and carried out very heavy assaults. ISIS used the following tactics, for example: it continuously rotated its forces during the fighting. The ISIS forces that fought at night rested during the day and were replaced by new forces. In this way, ISIS was able to wage war 24 hours a day without interruption. This naturally put the YPG forces under great pressure, as they did not have this option themselves. As a result, ISIS managed to advance further and finally approach the city centre of Kobanê.

What did you do about these attacks?

At the request of the YPG command, we sent additional reinforcements to Kobanê. Without these reinforcements, it is very likely that ISIS would have succeeded in advancing very quickly into the centre of Kobanê. But we sent reinforcements while the YPG command also ordered more forces from Cizîrê to Kobanê. We had realised that the land route between Kobanê and Cizîrê had become somewhat easier to pass. This meant that some of our units were able to reach Kobanê in civilian clothing without any major difficulties. The YPG command also took advantage of this opportunity and repeatedly sent reinforcements from Cizîrê to Kobanê. However, all these reinforcements were not enough to stop the heavy ISIS attacks. At this point, we must mention one point that was decisive at the time: Öcalan's urgent call for mobilisation from the prison island of Imrali. His call gave the phase a decisive turn. At the time, Öcalan stated that Kobanê had to be defended at all costs. He also called on the young people of northern Kurdistan to join the resistance. It was this call for mobilisation that strengthened us and made it clear that we were on the right path. After the call, our people in northern Kurdistan became active and everyone came to the border near the city of Kobanê to keep watch. In addition, many young people went directly to Kobanê and joined the YPG there. The population also overcame the border fortifications once and

entered the city. The decisive force that gave a decisive turn to the developments at that time was therefore the person of Öcalan. This brought the Kobanê resistance to a very important point. These developments also ensured that we as the HPG recognised the need to send even more extensive reinforcements to Kobanê and ultimately realised that we would have to take significantly greater risks.

What was the attitude of the USA and the other international powers at the time?

The ISIS attacks were also on the agenda of the international powers. Nevertheless, the US Secretary of State at the time, John Kerry, said that the USA could no longer do anything for Kobanê. He was clearly saying that nothing more could be done for Kobanê, that ISIS would take control there and that all the people living there would be murdered.

And then there was Erdoğan's statement during a speech in the city of Antep: 'Kobanê is as good as fallen'...

Yes, that's true. Tayyip Erdoğan wanted to create the impression that Kobanê would definitely fall. But these words ultimately stuck in his throat.

After the attacks began on September 15, 2014, ISIS advanced very quickly towards Kobanê. Practically everyone expected the city to fall. What were you doing while all this was happening? And what was the atmosphere like in Kobanê itself?

Because we were wondering exactly what the situation was like on the ground, we contacted the YPG command centre in Kobanê directly. We were informed by the local command that ISIS had approached within five to six kilometres of the town in the south. There was a tourist resort there called Methan Seyran. Fighting was taking place in this area at the time. The YPG command indicated that this place would also fall soon. I asked them directly: 'Ok, you say that the place will fall. If that happens, the enemy will advance into the centre of Kobanê. What will you do then as a command? The friend from the YPG command replied: 'Then I will use all my hand grenades against ISIS and the last one against myself. This clearly showed that the belief in being able to stop the ISIS attacks was becoming weaker and weaker. Because ISIS was advancing practically unstopably. In short, both some of the friends in Kobanê and some international circles assumed at the time that Kobanê would fall. Meanwhile, the people of Kobanê were collectively fleeing with a great deal of pain and grief in their hearts and were following the events from up close. Something had to be done about these developments. We could not simply stand idly by and watch.



While all this was going on, we were gathered as the HPG Command Council for an extraordinary meeting in which we also discussed the current situation in Kobanê. After all, we had previously sent some of our units to Kobanê as reinforcements and a certain number of these friends had fallen in the meantime. In addition, the city was now in a really critical situation.

What did you decide to do as a result?

We had two options: Either we would accept, like everyone else, that Kobanê would fall into the hands of ISIS, or we would intervene and find ways to defend the city. Preventing the fall of the city would only be possible if we accepted great sacrifices and put up fierce resistance. Both options were really not easy. So accepting that Kobanê would fall into the hands of ISIS would have been really difficult. It would also have led to many other very serious problems. It was also clear that successfully resisting in Kobanê would lead to many casualties, as the city was already on the verge of falling at the time. We also realised that inexperienced fighters would not be able to hold out against ISIS. Only battle-hardened forces from northern Kurdistan were suitable for this fight.



Kurdish youths cross the Syrian-Turkish border

In the end, we discussed Öcalan's call for mobilisation in detail at our meeting and decided the following: 'Kobanê must not fall. As PKK and HPG we must intervene in Kobanê. As a first step, this requires the deployment of 400 fighters from Northern Kurdistan. We made this decision on October 1, 2014, and on the same day the order was forwarded to our operational areas in northern Kurdistan to take the necessary measures immediately. We also informed the KCK co-chair of our decision. The leadership of our movement agreed with the decision and, like us, considered it appropriate to take all necessary risks. During this phase, we as the Central Command repeatedly used our own initiative. Of course, it gave us great strength to know that both the mobilisation call and the KCK co-chair, the General Secretariat of the PKK, the coordination of the women's movement and the leaderships of all our other institutions were behind our decisions. This made it possible for the war against ISIS to be coordinated from a single centre. This created a system that was able to make unbureaucratic and quick decisions regarding all combat zones, for example Kirkuk, Mexmûr, Şengal or Kobanê. This really brought many advantages. In this way, we decided to prevent the fall of Kobanê while the city was about to fall and everyone was just waiting for it.

How did the YPG react to your decision?

Of course, the YPG command was of the same opinion as us that Kobanê should not fall under any circumstances. They were therefore very positive about our decision to support Kobanê. The YPG command had already developed its own plans to send reinforcements from Cizîrê and had already actively begun to implement them. However, there were heavy losses in Kobanê itself, which is why the reinforcements were not enough to stop the ISIS attacks. Due to this situation, some of the commanders in Kobanê harboured certain doubts. They themselves took part in the fighting unconditionally, but at the same time doubted the resistance's chances of success. There were also signs of disintegration in the ranks of their forces. In the course of the extensive reinforcements that were sent to Kobanê at the time, there were certain changes to the local command and the reinforcement of the same. For example, our friend Çekdar Amed, who had come to Kobanê from the Amed area of operations, was given the task of reinforcing the command centre. The friend fell in 2016 after returning to Amed. The command in Kobanê also made some changes to its own ranks. In short, there was an intervention in Kobanê, with reinforcements arriving very quickly from northern Kurdistan and Cizîrê. At the same time, there were major ammunition problems on the ground. As a result, we emptied all our ammunition depots in the Botan

region. Ammunition was supplied to Kobanê from there, but also from many other areas. However, the war in the city was so intense that there was a constant need for further ammunition supplies.

How did you manage to reverse the course of developments at the time?

The reinforcements reached Kobanê at that time without any serious problems. On October 3 or 4, ISIS began a heavy offensive against YPG positions located only 200 to 250 metres from the border crossing to Turkey. There were losses on the YPG side, which significantly weakened the defence positions there and threatened to cause them to fall. At the same time, we were informed that a significant number of forces that we had sent as reinforcements had reached Mürşitpınar. They were planning to cross the border into Kobanê in the evening. The Kobanê command was told that they should hold out until the evening and then they could expect reinforcements. However, the commander there said that it might be too late by the evening. We then immediately contacted our friends in the village of Etmanekê, just behind Mürşitpınar, and told them that they had to start moving in daylight, otherwise the town could fall that same day. If this front were to fall, ISIS would be able to take control of the border crossing. As a result, it would no longer be possible for anyone to enter the city and Kobanê would fall. At that time, our people were keeping watch on the northern side of the border.

The friends mobilised the people who had gathered there and everyone flocked to the border. The people attacked the [Turkish] soldiers there with stones, creating chaos along the border. Meanwhile, a total of 63 friends dressed in civilian clothes mingled with the people, scaled the border fence and reached Kobanê in broad daylight. The whole thing was even captured on camera and later broadcast on television. But nobody except the friends themselves knew at the time that they were highly experienced, selfless fighters who had dedicated themselves to fighting for their people. The soldiers stationed at the border did not attack the population or the friends while they were crossing the border. This is how all these friends finally reached Kobanê.

The advantage in Kobanê itself was that there were weapons on site. All newly arrived friends simply took one of these weapons and immediately rushed to the front. This made it possible to reinforce and secure the positions at the front there.

You already mentioned that there were fewer checks by land at the time, which made it easier to send reinforcements to Kobanê. From which regions and how exactly did friends come to Kobanê back then?

At that time, we transferred forces from the regions of Botan, Amed, Garzan and even Erzurum to Kobanê. Our friend Cemşit, for example - a truly heroic commander - traveled a long way from Erzurum and arrived in Kobanê. He himself had grown up there as a child of Kurdistan.

He went on to play a very important role in the liberation of Kobanê. All the friends traveled by car from the regions mentioned to the border. At the time, only one group of nine friends was briefly detained by the Turkish police, but then released after a short while.

Did Turkey support the fight against ISIS in this way back then?

No, definitely not. The Turkish state's intention was to turn Kobanê into a cemetery for us, i.e. for the PKK guerrillas. They wanted to turn the city into a human slaughterhouse. The Turkish state was counting on the fact that it could now have all the guerrilla forces that it had been unable to drive out of the mountains of Botan, Amed, Garzan and Erzurum for years killed in Kobanê. Therefore, he simply ignored it when guerrilla units crossed the border into Kobanê. The Turkish state followed developments in the city very closely. The MIT [Turkish secret service] was informed about practically everything. At that time, up to 50 people were killed or injured in Kobanê every day. I say that very clearly: 50 people were killed or injured every day. The Turkish state knew this very well. Because all the wounded were sent to the city of Suruç for get treatment there. Even some of the casualties were taken there. Only later did they refrain from bringing the fallen to Suruç. The Turkish state was therefore very well aware of the situation. According to the plans of MIT and the Turkish state, all of our forces that came from the

areas in northern Kurdistan, as well as the YPG forces from Cizîrê, would be killed by ISIS as soon as they reached Kobanê. In this way, they wanted to dry us up at the root and turn Kobanê into a cemetery for us. This is the only reason why they ignored the fact that our forces crossed the border into Kobanê.

What did you do in view of the high losses and in view of this obvious objective of the Turkish state?

At a certain point, we recognized this intention, but the die was already cast and the only way left for us was to take this one. Accordingly, we focused on winning at all costs and thus thwarting the plans of the Turkish state. Today everyone knows that Kobanê became a cemetery not for us, but for them. After the first reinforcement of around 400 people, we therefore sent more forces to Kobanê. This ended in very heavy face-to-face fighting in the city and correspondingly intense resistance.

They compared Kobanê to Stalingrad back then...

Yes, I said at the time that Kobanê would not fall, but would become a new Stalingrad. I promised that every single house in the city would be fought over and that Kobanê would become the beginning of the end of ISIS. And exactly this came true. ISIS may not have been completely destroyed, but the end of its empire was definitely heralded in Kobanê. The events there clearly showed that our analyses were not simply propaganda.

What can you say about the attitude and actions of the people during that phase?

The people understood the developments at that time very well. This is why the famous resistance of our northern Kurdish people took place, which is often referred to as the 'resistance of 6-8 October', but in reality lasted a whole week. During this phase, our people continuously guarded the border to prevent the Turkish state from sending its Islamist proxy forces to Kobanê as reinforcements. Along the entire border, people stood guard together day and night. Our people from Northern Kurdistan went to the border of Kobanê during these days. Both west and east of Mürşitpınar, the border was practically guarded by the people. The Kobanê resistance had thus turned into a social, national and democratic resistance. Northern Kurdistan was in uprising for a whole week. There was a huge mobilization. At the same time, Erdoğan ordered the police to shoot at the protesters, resulting in almost 50 deaths. This spirit and attitude of the people had a huge impact on the resistance fighters in Kobanê itself. Without any misunderstandings our people made through their resistance clear, that they would never allow Kobanê to fall. This attitude of the people had a very positive effect on all those who resisted in Kobanê. At that time, the state had partially withdrawn from Cizre and other places. Yes, there were police attacks and deaths in Amed, Kızıltepe and some other places, but in cities like Cizre and Nusaybin, the state withdrew after its

initial attacks. As the state forces retreated to their barracks, the people took control of the streets. All these developments naturally had a major impact on the resistance in Kobanê.

Today, certain HDP members are being charged in connection with the resistance at the time. Many of them are even in prison...

The HDP had absolutely nothing to do with these events. The resistance was solely a result of the social dynamics of the time. This social reflex came about when Erdoğan said that Kobanê was as good as fallen and ISIS began its attacks on the city center at the same time. So it was Erdoğan's patronizing statement that Kobanê would definitely fall that caused the people to take to the streets. This statement simply provoked the people. As a result, the people took to the streets and we, the HPG, deployed guerrilla forces to Kobanê at the same time. Together, this represented the greatest possible form of support from Northern Kurdistan for Rojava, which was under massive threat from the brutality of ISIS.

While all this was happening, ISIS was advancing further and further. It had already entered the city and was also advancing there step by step. As mentioned, it had come within 250 meters of the Mürşitpınar border crossing. If he succeeded in bringing the border crossing under his control, the city would fall. In Kobanê itself, only a very small area was left to defend against ISIS. Up to this point, around 100 people had held out in the city alongside the resistance fighters. It is likely that the leadership of the

societal works there had lost their hopes of success against ISIS, which is why they sent all these people to northern Kurdistan. This decision was made without first informing the command in Kobanê. In short, many had doubts, but we always believed that our forces coming from far away Amed or Botan - friends like Gulan, Arîn Mîrkan, Hebûn, Cudî and Cemil - would resist to the bitter end and prevent the fall of Kobanê.

In previous interviews, you mentioned that Gelhat Gabar played a very important role in the Kobanê resistance. Can you tell us a little about how Gelhat Gabar came to Kobanê and what influence he had on the war in the city?

The friend Gelhat was the commander of the Cûdî region at the time. In a written report, he himself had previously suggested joining the resistance in Kobanê. Shortly afterwards, he repeated his suggestion by radio. However, we told him to wait a little longer. Our friend Gelhat had taken part in numerous attacks, particularly during the war in Botan, and was therefore an experienced and courageous friend. When the situation in Kobanê became increasingly critical, we informed him via our command center in North Kurdistan that he could go to Kobanê together with a group of friends. As a result, our friend Gelhat from the Cûdî region made his way there.

The situation at the time was as the following: ISIS was advancing further every day and there were repeated



Gelhat Gabar

signs of weakness on the part of the defenders. We therefore began to monitor developments on the ground even more intensively, i.e. on a daily basis. In particular, ISIS continued to advance until 5, 6 and 7 October. At the time, we compared ISIS to our friends with a bicycle. A bicycle doesn't fall over as long as its pedals are operated and it is in motion, but as soon as it comes to a standstill, it falls to the ground. This is exactly how we compared the situation of ISIS. We said the following to our friends in Kobanê: "If you bring the ISIS attack to a halt, it will fall to the ground and you will have the chance to counterattack." Our friends took this very seriously. We asked every morning, but each time we were told that ISIS had succeeded in advancing again. In one day, ISIS had not succeeded in advancing on a single front. Our friends had successfully resisted everywhere and were able to break the ISIS attacks with their offensives. ISIS had only managed to conquer a single house on a single section of the front.

Despite these developments, we insisted to our friends that - based on the comparison with a moving bicycle - the enemy should not be allowed to take control of a single house.

I will talk about the role of my friend Gelhat in a moment, but before I do, I have to talk, albeit briefly, about the resistance that took place under the leadership of the heroic commander Destina. The friend Destina was a southern Kurdish friend who had come to Kobanê from Botan. She commanded a group of eight friends who together defended a five- to six-storey building in Kobanê. Their resistance there was truly impressive. ISIS managed to penetrate the ground floor of the building, which led to fight in the building itself. However, ISIS was unable to drive its friends from the upper floors and was therefore unable to advance any further. ISIS then loaded a huge quantity of explosives onto a lorry, drove it in front of the building and detonated it there. There was an enormous explosion that must have felt like an earthquake. Even the people of Suruç heard and felt it. The building collapsed completely and all our friends there lost their lives in the battle. But the other friends who were in the immediate vicinity rushed to the collapsed house and continued to defend the area against ISIS. The enemy was therefore unable to capture the area. They were unable to advance a single meter. At the same time, the ISIS attacks on the other fronts were repelled with the help of a tightly drawn defense system and counterattacks began. These counterattacks resulted in casualties during the first few days.

It was precisely at this point that my friend Gelhat played a very important role. He had taken part in many armed actions in Kurdistan and was therefore a commander with very extensive experience in carrying out such actions. He was a selfless and courageous friend who was a member of our special forces. When the counter-attacks were launched, he himself took charge of one of the units and made it clear to everyone how these attacks would take place. He had understood exactly how ISIS was taking up positions and used this to enable the resistance fighters there to advance bit by bit. They advanced house by house, street by street. In this way, the resistance moved from a phase of increasing retreat into a mode of continuous territorial gains. The few remaining positions in Kobanê were extended further and further. A new street was now being conquered every night. Of course, we do not have the right to leave the achievements of all the other friends unmentioned, but the friend Gelhat played a really important leading role in establishing this mode of resistance.

And how did the international anti-ISIS coalition become active during all these developments?

It was probably the case that then US President Obama and many other leading representatives of other countries regularly followed the developments in Kobanê via satellite, as if they were watching a film. During these days, it became increasingly clear that the Kobanê defense forces were able to wrest small areas from ISIS every day,

enabling them to abandon their defensive position and go on the counterattack. In short, all the state leaders understood at the time that the resistance fighters in Kobanê were putting up enormous resistance against ISIS with their Kalashnikovs and hand grenades despite all the adversity. As a result, Obama probably called Erdoğan and told him that the resistance in Kobanê was continuing, could gain strength if weapons and ammunition were supplied and that the resistance on the ground needed to be supported accordingly. However, Erdoğan probably replied that it was not the YPG but the PKK that was fighting there, that the PKK was an even more dangerous terrorist organization than the ISIS and that Turkey could therefore not accept support for the resistance in Kobanê.

So, Erdoğan had opened the way for your forces to Kobanê and did not object to their arrival in the city, but now he took a clear stance against their support from outside in this way...

Yes, Erdoğan did this because - as I mentioned earlier - he was pursuing the plan to turn Kobanê into a cemetery for the PKK. That is why he raised these objections. And for the same reason, he instructed his forces on the ground to close their eyes so that our forces would go to Kobanê and all die there. It is clear that his plan was to carry out a brutal massacre there. At the same time, negotiations were taking place on Imrali, supposedly with the aim of reaching a ceasefire and a solution!

The phase at that time, which is repeatedly referred to as the 'solution phase', was ultimately nothing more than a tactical measure in the context of the war. This became much clearer later on. The Turkish state saw the transfer of PKK forces to Kobanê as a one-off opportunity. It ignored their arrival in the city and later had them all murdered in Kobanê. Today, it has been clearly proven that the Turkish state was pursuing this plan together with the ISIS.

But despite all of Erdoğan's efforts, the international anti-ISIS coalition finally announced that it would take action on the ground...

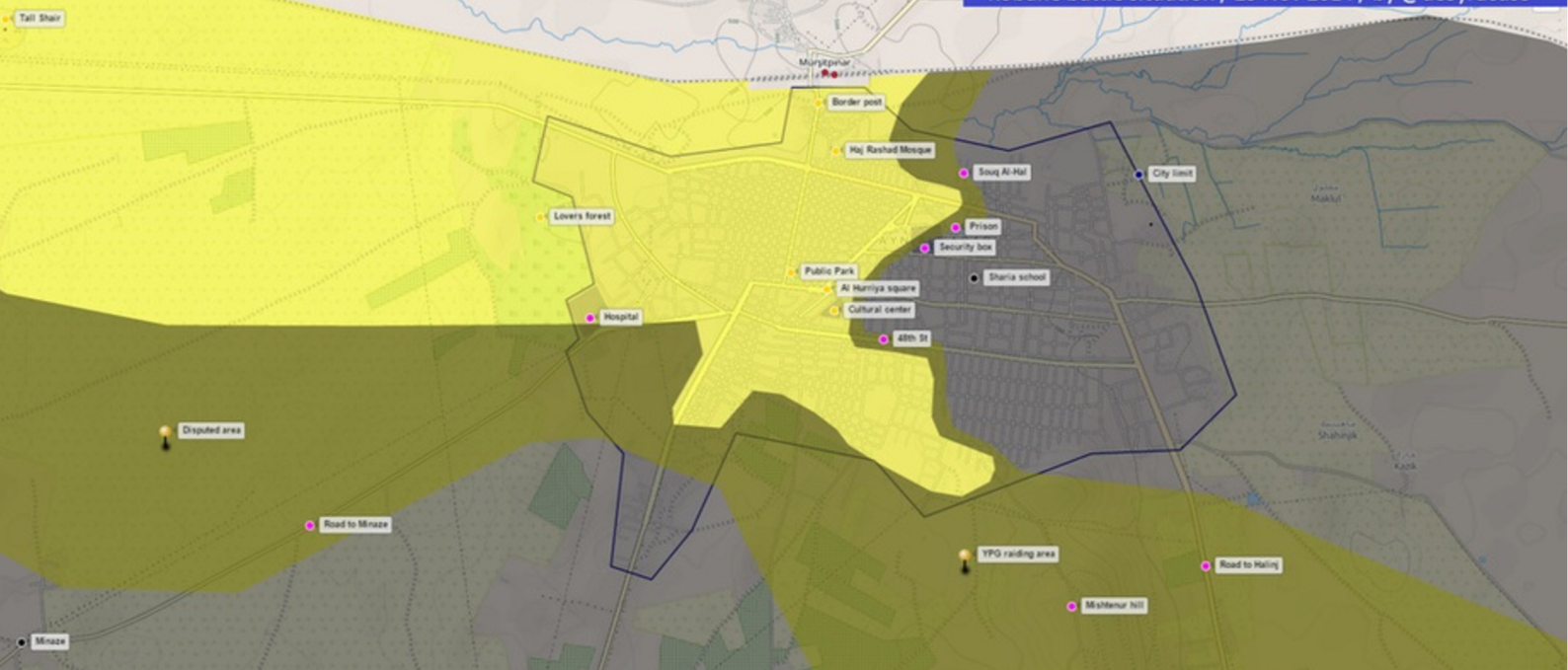
Despite Erdoğan's aforementioned response to Obama's call, the US president did not believe him because he was following the developments with his own eyes. Perhaps he also took the stance that 'no matter who it is, they are fighting ISIS' and preferred to support the resistance there in light of US interests. Because at the time, no one else had the strength to resist ISIS. Under US leadership, the forces of the international anti-ISIS coalition made the decision on 16 October 2014 to support the resistance fighters in Kobanê. However, this did not materialize immediately. The airstrikes against ISIS did not begin until a later date.

How big was the contribution of these airstrikes to the resistance in Kobanê?

First of all, we must realize the following: Even before the airstrikes began, the resistance fighters in Kobanê had recaptured part of the city from ISIS. So they were now on the attack. The USA and the other forces of the international anti-ISIS coalition recognized this, of course. With the help of their drones, they directly followed how the resistance in Kobanê was becoming more successful from day to day and how ISIS was getting into more and more trouble in the city. It was only after these developments that these forces decided to support the resistance in Kobanê.

So they had made this decision, but how were they supposed to implement it? Because they had no contacts with the YPG. Accordingly, they had no one in Kobanê itself who could provide them with the coordinates for the airstrikes. This led to a very interesting situation: there was a friend in Silêmanî in southern Kurdistan who acted as a kind of YPG representative. A commander of the US special forces contacted him via the YNK. This friend then spoke to the YPG command in Kobanê and asked them where exactly airstrikes should be carried out. The YPG command was therefore forced to designate points for the airstrikes further behind the actual front line rather than directly in the front line. If they had named the positions of the Islamist proxy forces that were directly on the front line, i.e. in the immediate vicinity of their friends, the airstrikes could have hit

them. They were only able to pass on the approximate coordinates of the targets. It even happened twice that the YPG forces were bombed by coalition aircraft due to a mistake. So in order to avoid further accidents, the YPG commander informed the friend in Silêmanî about potential targets for air strikes in the following way: 'There are positions so far away from this building that can be bombed from the air. The friend then always passed this information on to the US representatives, whereupon air strikes were carried out on the respective locations. The air strikes were therefore not particularly effective and did not play a directly supporting role in the actual war on the ground. The airstrikes undoubtedly had an impact, but the war in Kobanê was won through house-to-house fighting. It was only much later that the YPG commanders in Kobanê and our friends there received GPS devices. The YPG fighters used these devices to mark their own positions. At the same time, they passed on their positions and possible locations for airstrikes via the aforementioned friend in Silêmanî. The airstrikes therefore had no real impact on the course of the war in Kobanê. If it had been possible to request air strikes using precise coordinates, this would have had a much greater effect. However, until the liberation of the city of Kobanê, the forces on the ground unfortunately did not have this option. They only described possible targets approximately, thus enabling the airstrikes by the international anti-ISIS coalition.



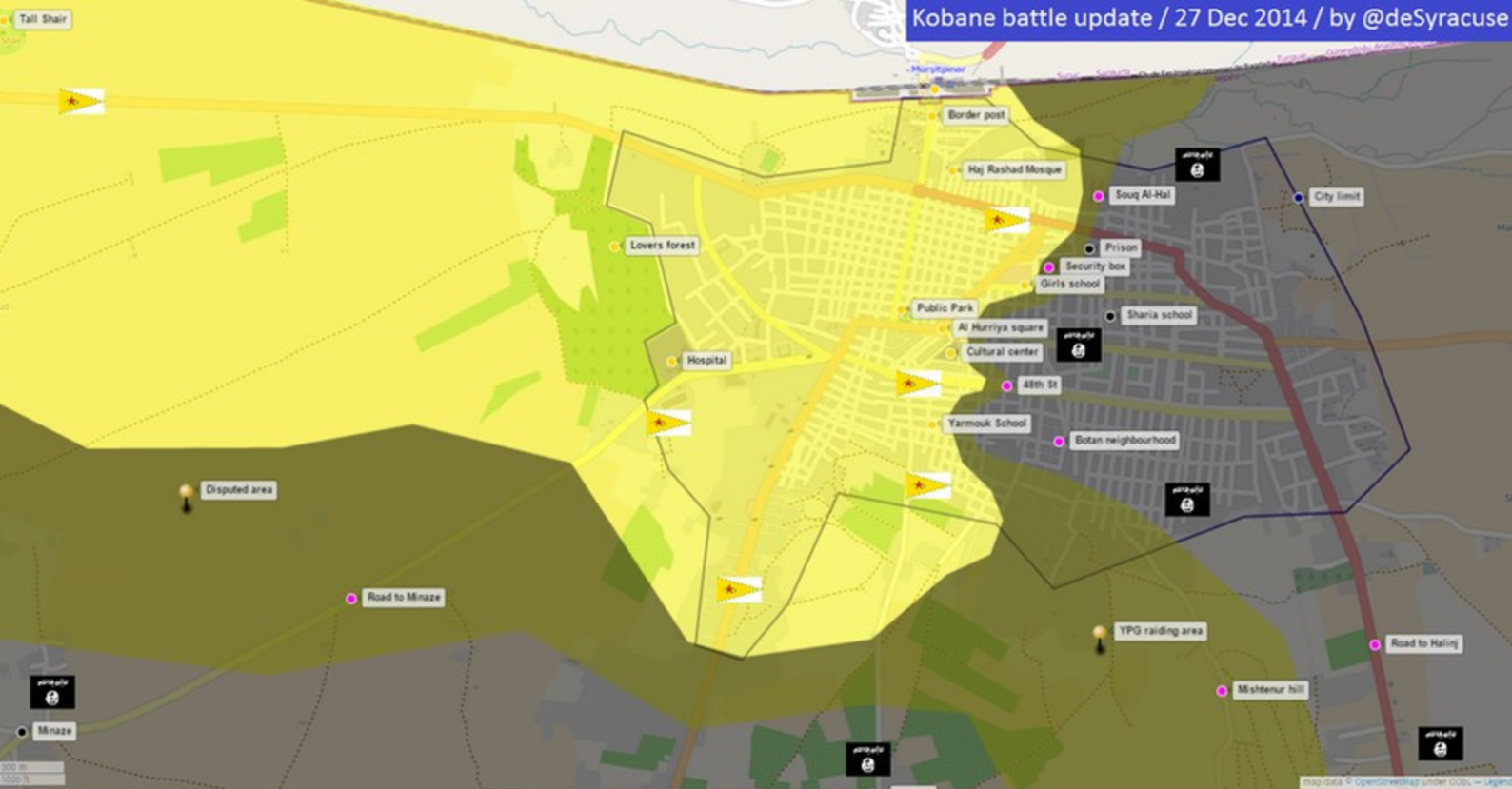
Of course, these air strikes had a certain effect during the fighting in the city. But it was only later, after the liberation of the city, that US special forces were deployed on the ground. With their help, coordination between the air and ground forces was ensured from then on. These US forces probably only played a more active role during the later offensives in Minbic, Tabqa and Raqqa. The Kobanê resistance was based almost exclusively on the local forces' own strength. The international anti-ISIS coalition only decided to attack ISIS in Kobanê at a very late stage and then began its airstrikes. However, for the reasons I have mentioned, these airstrikes were not particularly effective and not very well targeted. They tended to take place on the basis of approximate locations, which of course could not make a decisive contribution to the war.

So can we say that the people on the ground had a greater influence on the war than modern technology?

ISIS had a large number of tanks and armored vehicles at its disposal.

And yet the statement you made is definitely correct. We can characterize the war in Kobanê as a war of willpower between ISIS and the PKK. In the end, ISIS was defeated in this war by the ideology and willpower of the PKK. This is exactly what happened in Kobanê. The international forces did not play a particularly large role in this. The most decisive phase of the war were the days from the beginning of October until around 25 October.

The developments during these weeks ultimately decided the outcome of the war. It was precisely during this time that our forces reached Kobanê, joined forces with the YPG to bring the ISIS attacks to a halt, launched a counter-attack, recaptured the ISIS-controlled parts of the city street by street, continued to expand the liberated areas and forced ISIS to retreat accordingly. All of this was decisive for the final outcome of the war. ISIS fought with the attitude 'whoever dies goes to paradise'. In doing so, it practically willingly walked to its death.



But with its determined and selfless resistance, the PKK stood like a wall against the attacks and destroyed ISIS. That was the decisive development in the war at the time.

The resistance in Kobanê was therefore a very important resistance. The members of the YPG and HPG resisted there in a very impressive way, as did the YJA-Star forces, for example the fallen friends Gulan and Zehra. YPJ members such as Zozan and Rêvan Kobanê sacrificed themselves through their actions. Their stance became known worldwide. Overall, the YPG/YPJ and the HPG/YJA-Star showed enormous willpower during the urban struggle in Kobanê. All this is really very significant and valuable. It clearly demonstrates the enormous capabilities and strength of human beings.

Because in Kobanê, resistance was put up against tanks with light weapons. The resistance fighters' strongest weapons against these armored vehicles, which were used for suicide attacks, were their heart and selfless courage. Apart from that, they only had Kalashnikovs, hand grenades and B-7 bazookas. The resistance fighters who defended Kobanê fought with their hearts and courage. On this basis, they demonstrated the willpower to launch counterattacks against ISIS and ultimately defeat it. As we know, it was this willpower that led to the counter-attacks and the liberation of Kobanê. So it was the willpower of our movement that defeated ISIS.



You mentioned that you were in dialogue with the commandant's office in Kobanê and the fighters there at the time. What were your conversations about? Were you in charge of the war there?

Of course, it wasn't me or us who led the war in Kobanê. That was done by the local command. It was largely made up of friends of the YPG. Because they knew the city and the area very well. The friends from the HPG joined this resistance and supported it. I myself have known Kobanê since I was a child. I used to spend a lot of time in the city back then. I knew the city well, but of course it had grown considerably in the meantime. The neighborhoods and streets had also been given new names. I called my friends there from time to time and asked about the current situation. They described the developments to me using specific buildings, i.e. well-known places such as Hemê's house, the doctor's house, the Hecî Reşid mosque, the 'black school', Şahin Beg Square, the Asayiş, the bakery or the neighborhoods towards Aleppo. This allowed us to see where ISIS had advanced and where the front line had to be secured. This allowed us to share our suggestions and opinions with our friends on the ground if necessary. In order to provide support, we also spoke to the command from time to time and, based on our experiences, informed them about how to respond to ISIS attacks, what precautionary measures were necessary or how the moral of the fighting forces could be boosted.



The success of the Kobanê resistance was of enormous importance for our entire population. Both for us and for the defenders of the city, the war had reached a very important phase with strategic significance. Developments on the ground reached a point where the war in Kobanê became entirely a war of people who were selflessly willing to sacrifice themselves. Because in the logic of the phenomenon known as ISIS, there was no retreat. They never gave their forces the order to retreat. Yet retreat is also a tactic of war. Forces often use this tactic to carry out an even more extensive attack or to win the war completely. But on this issue, as on many others, ISIS followed a one-dimensional logic. Retreat was completely out of the question for them and they were constantly striving to advance further. It was therefore not easy to drive ISIS out of Kobanê. It was necessary to proceed house by house in order to defeat the ISIS fighters inside. Particularly at the beginning, it was simply not possible to force ISIS to retreat in any other way. In many places, there was at most a wall between our friends and ISIS. Both our friends and the ISIS fighters punched holes in these walls. Whoever succeeded first and whoever was able to eliminate their opponent first won. This is the kind of selfless, self-sacrificing war that took place in Kobanê.



As far as we know, the guerrillas - apart from a few special units - do not use the telephone, internet or other means of communication for security reasons. But you mentioned that you made contact by telephone. Did this not cause any problems or dangers for you?

No, I didn't experience any problems myself at the time. But all the telephone conversations I had with the commanders in Kobanê were probably recorded by MIT and passed on to the USA in the form of reports. The MIT probably told the US that the war in Kobanê was not being waged by the YPG, but by the HPG and directly by me. US representatives probably also inquired about this with the YPG representation in Silêmanî. I received this information in a telephone conversation with the YPG command in Kobanê. When the friend told me this, I asked him where he was at the moment. He then told me where he was and I learned that he was near the village of Koralî. I asked him to go to the village and told him that I wanted to say hello to the people there. He agreed, called me again half an hour later and told me that he was now in the village and that most of the villagers had gathered. I then spoke to

some of the villagers on the phone. The friend turned on the speaker function on his phone, which allowed me to say a few words to all the villagers gathered there. People also shared their own views with me. They all knew me and we gave each other very emotional greetings. So in a way, it was a meeting of the people over the phone. Shortly afterwards, I said the following to the friend on the phone: "MIT, the CIA and all the other intelligence agencies that are listening to us right now need to know the following: I am in contact with you because I have kinship and social connections there. My aim is to share my military experience with you on the basis of these relationships and to support you. Nobody can object to that. Those who listen to us and pass on these telephone conversations as reports to various forces must also take this information into account. They should also mention this in their reports." I assume that the CIA and other secret services also listened to this conversation. Because all the reports from the Turkish state remained inconsequential. After that, nothing was ever brought to our attention about this issue again. In short, Kobanê had already developed into a national issue.

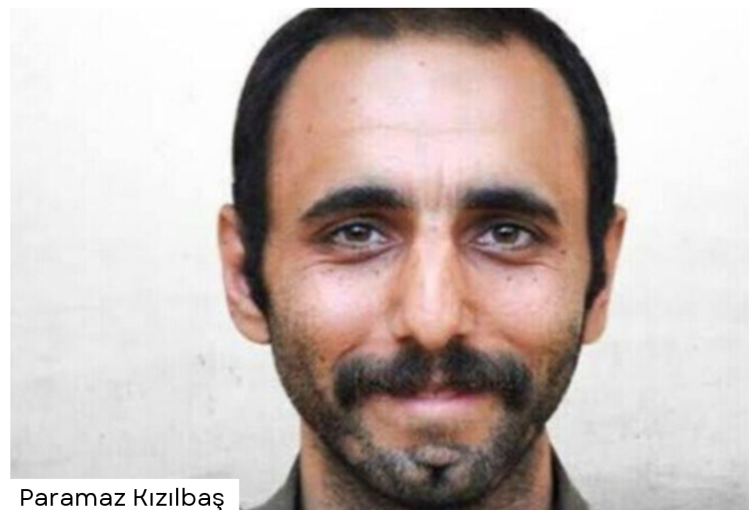
As you know, it was in this context that a group of Peshmerga came to Kobanê

When you mention the arrival of the Peshmerga there, I would like to ask you how you assess this issue? In connection with this, I would also like to ask whether there were other forces besides the YPG, HPG and the Peshmerga that took part in the resistance in Kobanê?

Of course, the fact that Peshmerga came to Kobanê had a special significance. This created a national image. The Peshmerga forces that came to Kobanê were rather small in number and focused on providing support in the use of heavy weapons. They therefore did not participate directly in the actual fighting. Even if it was more of a symbolic nature, it was good that they came to Kobanê. Above all, it made a political, moral and psychological contribution to our population. Before the Peshmerga arrived, I understand that various friendly groups of Arab origin had already joined the YPG.

As far as we know, there were several other groups that took part in the war in Kobanê from the beginning to the end. These included, for example, the organization 'Şems El Şîmal'. Its leader, Abu Leyla (Faysal Ebdî Bîlal Sadun), was later killed during the Minbic offensive. He continuously took part in various attacks together with his friends. There was also the 'Sûwar El Reqa' organization. Even though it was repeatedly characterized by internal instability, some of its members very often worked together with the YPG fighters.

Other groups tended to remain in the background during the fights. But all the organizations that did not leave Kobanê made a major contribution to the resistance there. Some of their members also fell there. People from the ranks of the revolutionary socialist movement in Turkey also joined the resistance. For example, comrade Sarya, a very important personality and valuable commander, who joined the resistance a little later from the ranks of the MLCP and fell in Kobanê as Şehîd. His friend Paramaz Kızılbaş (Suphi Nejat Ağırnaslı) also fell during a very difficult phase of the resistance. Comrade Paramaz had previously been active in the MLCP, but had then joined the guerrillas in Amed. So he came to Kobanê as an HPG member and fell there. For us, he is a heroic internationalist comrade. He was a very determined internationalist revolutionary and is of enormous importance to us.



Paramaz Kızılbaş

In short, on the basis of international solidarity, a resistance emerged in which Arab, Turkish and Kurdish fighters participated in a variety of ways. However, at a certain point, only the most selfless forces were able to fight on the front line.

As a result, these various organizations were not all able to fight at the forefront. At this point, it is important to mention that the members of our special forces in particular played a very important role. Some of these friends fell in Kobanê. One of the most outstanding fighters among them, for example, was our friend Cemil (Veli Yaşar). He was the nephew of the friend Delil Halfeti, who was a commander in the Garzan area in the 1980s. Medeni Ronahî and other friends also made a very important contribution to the fighting through their selfless actions. In the phase when our forces began their counterattacks, friends like Gelhat played a very active role. Just like him, there were hundreds of other friends who selflessly took part in the fighting. Their commitment and heroic attitude led to the resistance and ultimate success in Kobanê.

So everyone there fought with full commitment...

Absolutely! In this context, we have to come back to comrade Gelhat. Because immediately after his arrival in Kobanê, our friend Gelhat was assigned to take his place in the local command center. And yet he immediately took over the practical management of the attacks. As a result, the other commanders and fighting comrades fought even more actively, confidently and resolutely. The fact that a commander consistently took part in the attacks himself can also be seen as a mistake in some aspects. However, under the circumstances at the time, such a

strong fighting spirit might not have been able to develop without the leading involvement of a senior commander in the fighting. It therefore strengthened the spirit of selflessness, invincibility and aggression throughout Kobanê that the friend Gelhat and many other commanders took an active part in the attacks.

There is no doubt that the will to win and the willingness to sacrifice of all our friends stems from the ideology of Abdullah Öcalan.



Abu Leyla

This resistant, militant attitude, based on his ideology and philosophy, has brought ISIS to a halt and subsequently liberated house after house from these brutal gangs. All of this came about primarily through the forces of the YPG and HPG, but also through the great efforts of certain heroic figures such as Abu Leyla. For all of them, Öcalan's ideology was the key source of inspiration.

Our friend Gelhat fell on 29 October 2014, and the fact that he fell so early was a great loss for all of us. He was particularly important for Kobanê. But he had managed to establish his way of carrying out attacks among the forces there. After he fell, his friends therefore continued the attacks and the phase began in which the city was liberated from ISIS house by house.

Is there a specific event or moment from this phase in which Kobanê was liberated from ISIS that you would like to share with us?

There are many events from this war that we have heard about. But I can share one of these most important events with you here: From a war tactical point of view, it was very difficult to advance at the front. It was very arduous at the time and took a lot of time. That's why we suggested to our friends in Kobanê that they should focus more tactically on surrounding parts of the city individually and taking them. The plan was then drawn up to move certain forces to the Miştenur mountain and attack the city center from there, while at the same time friends should attack from the direction of the city center. In this way, the neighborhood in between was to be surrounded and taken. The aim was to connect Miştenur and the city center. We had repeatedly suggested such a tactic, but the local commandant's office was not convinced for a long time. They said it would require stronger forces. Reinforcements were then sent once again.



At the same time, however, there were repeated casualties, which meant that new forces were needed again. The commandant's office responsible for the war in Kobanê told us that certain forces could abandon their positions and be moved to Miştenur Mountain, but that it could then be difficult to hold the positions in the city itself in the event of an attack. These concerns of our friends were well-founded.

But advancing house by house, street by street, would have meant that the war would have lasted months, if not years, with very heavy losses. The tactic of surrounding parts of the city and conquering them in this way, on the other hand, would lead to quicker results. That's why we took this approach. New reinforcements were sent in an attempt to fulfill the need for additional forces expressed by our friends. We sent some of these reinforcements, while other reinforcements were transferred from the YPG command from Cizîrê to Kobanê. At the same time, friends like Masiro, who had experience with encirclement tactics in rural areas, were transferred to Miştenur Mountain.

It was agreed that the operation would take place on the night of 28-29 November [2014]. On this night, the friends were to advance from Miştenur Hill towards the neighborhoods further down, while the friends in the city center were to advance towards Miştenur in order to capture the ISIS forces there by morning, recapture the area from them or surround it.

But interestingly enough, ISIS had made a similar plan together with the Turkish state - organized directly by MIT - for the same day. It is absolutely obvious that the MIT had organized this plan. On that very day, a meeting with Öcalan was even organized and the delegation scheduled for this meeting was informed about it. This was also made public, which was intended to put our supporters in a wait-and-see attitude that would make protests unlikely. This was clearly a deliberate plan. At the same time, ISIS and the Turkish state were planning to bring down Kobanê on the night of the 28th to the 29th and had made preparations accordingly. They were therefore counting on the fact that they would be in a stronger negotiating position vis-à-vis our leaders if the people's protests were curbed and they were able to achieve their goal through the aforementioned plans.

You are talking about a very comprehensive plan...

Yes, that's true. The other side had also forged a very comprehensive plan.

In the name of the Turkish state, the AKP government had taken a huge risk with this plan. According to this plan, a car loaded with explosives was to be brought to Kobanê via the official border crossing at Mürşitpınar and detonated at the border crossing in order to initiate the complete destruction of the military forces there. After the explosion, certain forces were to attack and take control of the border crossing. At the same time, ISIS forces were to cross the railway line running along the border, advance to Mürşitpınar and attack directly from the north. In this way, this front was to be brought down. Some of the attacking forces were to cross the border directly from Turkey and take over the front line there. At the same time, the much stronger main attacking forces from both directions of the Aleppo Road in the south of Kobanê were to go hunting in several groups. In this way, the ISIS gangs were to advance from both directions, destroy the forces of the YPG and the other resistance groups between them, then unite and take control of the city center through this surprisingly attack. If this plan had been successful, the weak forces in the west of the city would not been able to hold their positions. They could very easily have been destroyed. So the plan was to surround the strong forces in the east of the city center, then attack them from all fronts and bring Kobanê down in this way. In short, the plan of the friends and that of the enemy clashed both in terms of timing and the method chosen.

Did you not know about this plan [of the Turkish state and ISIS]?

No, nobody knew about it. But we had been informed about the YPG's plan. Because we wanted to find out what the current situation was, we called the Kobanê command center at around 3am. Just as we were talking on the phone, there was a huge explosion. The friend I was talking to on the phone was obviously not very far from the border crossing. I asked him what had happened and he replied that there had probably been a big explosion nearby. To make it possible for the friend to find out exactly what had happened, we interrupted our conversation and told him that we would call back in ten minutes. When we did, it became clear that an armored vehicle had advanced from the north [Turkish territory] via the official Turkish border crossing to the border controlled by the YPG forces. The vehicle also managed to cross this point and finally blew itself up very close to Kobanê. At this time of day, of course, both the YPG forces and the ISIS gangs were already on the move.

While the YPG forces were advancing west of the Aleppo road towards Mištenur, they encountered the ISIS forces. Close-range fighting then began in many places. Very heavy fighting began in the south of the city. At the same time, heavy fighting also began at the border crossing. Due to the explosion that had occurred there, friends were killed. Fortunately, the casualties were not that high. The friends acted immediately, sent reinforcements to the border

crossing, responded directly to the ISIS attack and were thus able to hold the positions there. But in some buildings in Mürşitpınar [Turkish territory] and in the grain silos there, ISIS fighters had taken up positions. The fighting continued until the morning. We had three casualties at the site of the explosion, while ten friends were get martyred in the fighting in the south of the city. But ISIS had not succeeded in advancing as planned. Of course, our plan had also failed and had to be postponed. Because it had collided with the enemy's plan. The fighting continued the following day. The YPG forces crossed the border for the first time, advanced to Mürşitpınar and attacked the ISIS gangs entrenched in the buildings there. Video footage of the ISIS fighters advancing from the north and fighting in Mürşitpınar was also broadcast in the media at the time. The forces that had crossed the border and were involved in battles with ISIS there cleared the buildings there of ISIS fighters. Heavy hand-to-hand fighting started there. Abu Leyla was also involved in these battles and was probably wounded there. After a while, the ISIS gangs abandoned the buildings in the city [Mürşitpınar], took up positions in the grain silos on the outskirts of the city and continued their fight. They stayed there all day. The ISIS fighters only withdrew from there the following day. The Turkish state representatives there probably sent a message saying: 'Neither you nor they are allowed to fight on our territory.'

What was the actual plan of the Turkish state and ISIS?

It was a joint plan by MIT and ISIS. There is no doubt that this plan was developed with Erdoğan's direct knowledge. After all, it involved the official Mürşitpınar border crossing. This naturally raises questions, such as how the armored vehicle was able to cross this heavily secured border crossing. It was very obviously a joint plan. At the time, video footage of the ISIS gangs in the vicinity of the grain silos had been recorded and disseminated in the media. These recordings left no room for doubt. Moreover, the meeting with Öcalan took place on the same day as the one I reported on earlier. For this reason, people did not know what to do. Should they take a stand in Northern Kurdistan against the ongoing attacks in Mürşitpınar or wait for a message from Öcalan? All of this was very obviously deliberately arranged in this way. Therefore, there were no serious reactions from the population. Throughout the day, battles with ISIS took place in the vicinity of the grain silos in Mürşitpınar. Most of the ISIS forces that had attacked Kobanê from the south had been killed and defeated. As a result, the ISIS forces that had attacked from the north also withdrew. So these were the battles that took place on 29 November [2014]. There is also very clear video footage of this. So these battles were documented very precisely.

What overall influence did these battles have on the war in Kobanê?

The resistance forces there had of course originally developed a plan, which they wanted to implement. However, due to this attack, it did not materialize. This failure also weakened ISIS's belief in its own success and in the complete fall of Kobanê. On the contrary, the moral, motivation and belief in victory on the part of the resistance forces had grown significantly. Therefore, the resistance of 29 November [2014], i. e. the selfless attitude of all those who fought there on behalf of the YPG, ushered in a new phase of the Kobanê resistance. It is highly likely that these developments also had an impact on the forces of the international anti-ISIS coalition. Because from then on, they increased their air support a little, which strengthened the attacks against ISIS. Of course, the resistance forces' plan to connect Miştenur and the city center did not succeed either. This plan could only be realized later. Once this was achieved, the phase of Kobanê's liberation finally began. It also became clear that the tactical suggestions we had made from the beginning had been corrected. So when the YPG forces gained complete control of Miştenur Mountain and took up positions there, ISIS could no longer hold out in the neighborhoods further down. As I mentioned earlier, ISIS did not have the posture to retreat. But from that point onward, all the ISIS forces that came under pressure fled. This clearly showed that the collapse had already begun in the ranks of ISIS.

As continuation of time, the Kobanê Freedom Forces advanced step by step and drove the ISIS gangs out of all districts of Kobanê by 26 January [2015]. In this way, the comprehensive attack on Kobanê, which had been carried out jointly by ISIS and the AKP, was repelled.

What developments took place after the liberation of the city center of Kobanê?

The war in Kobanê did not end easily. The war also continued for quite some time in the neighboring villages. As we mentioned earlier, ISIS aimed to provoke fighting in every single village. If they had had a proper military logic, they would have withdrawn all their forces from the plain there, regrouped in the higher area behind the village of Karamu, developed a new plan and set about implementing it.

But ISIS did not do this. Instead, it fought in every single village, which not only prolonged the fighting, but also resulted in the defeat of the ISIS forces. So after the liberation of the city center of Kobanê, there was fighting for quite some time aimed at liberating the villages in the region. But ISIS was already broken by then and had lost all motivation. It had lost many of its weapons. The remaining ISIS fighters were no longer able to put up any resistance and simply fled.

During these battles, there were also casualties in the ranks of the YPG. For example, our highly esteemed commander Zehra Goyî was killed by a booby trap in a house in a nearby village immediately after the liberation of Kobanê.

She had come to Kobanê from the Botan region. There were other casualties during this phase.

The war shifted more and more to the rural areas. However, the YPG had already gained control of the fighting.

How do you assess the loss and the profile of ISIS during this war?

It is reported that almost 5,000 ISIS gang members have died there. Even if it is not quite 5,000, based on the information provided by the commanders there, we can safely say that more than 4,000 ISIS members were killed in Kobanê. Because many of their bodies have been collected.

The majority of the ISIS fighters who died in Kobanê were the strongest members of ISIS. The most selected ISIS cadres - both commanders and ordinary fighters - came to Kobanê to fight. In particular, non-Arab fighters from Chechnya, Europe, Africa, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan - ISIS itself labeled them as 'foreigners' - died in Kobanê. They were fully prepared for the war, had received extensive training and were particularly skilled in the use of explosives and mines. If ISIS had not attacked Kobanê with this enormous force, but any other city, it would definitely have conquered it.

Can you also give us information about how many defenders of the city fell in the fight against ISIS in Kobanê?

485 of our cadres fell in Kobanê. A large proportion of them were commanders. They were fighters from the areas of Botan, Amed, Garzan and Erzurum. This is a very great loss for us. These losses are nothing ordinary for us. Important fighters from the ranks of our people have lost their lives in the battle. They all had extensive experience in Northern Kurdistan and were accordingly professional. Every single one of these friends was very valuable to all of us. In addition, roughly the same number of YPG and YPJ fighters fell in Kobanê.

The city of Kobanê and the surrounding rural region could therefore only be liberated by accepting heavy casualties. That was not easy. This success was only possible with the great commitment of our population, the solidarity of our international comrades, but also thanks to the heroism of the fighters on the ground.

I respectfully commemorate all our comrades who died during the resistance in Kobanê and Rojava. They are all PKK and YPG militants who sacrificed themselves not only for the people of Rojava and Kurdistan, but for the freedom and security of all humanity. It is very important that the whole world recognizes this fact. Later we withdrew all our forces from there, apart from the war wounded and our friends undergoing treatment.

Because the successes we had achieved had strengthened the YPG comprehensively. Its forces had become more professional in terms of their ability to fight. In addition, relations with international forces had developed enormously. For all these reasons, our forces were no longer needed there.



Why were the Kurds in particular attacked? Why were Kobanê, Şengal, Hewlêr, Kirkuk and Mexmûr attacked?

The Kurds are an oppressed people. It is a people that has been groaning under the tyranny of the regional states for years. So why, after the conquest of Mosul and Raqqa, were the attacks not directed against the centers of these states, but against the Kurds? There is clearly a plan behind this. The Turkish state plays a clear and decisive role in this plan. Perhaps this decision was also their biggest mistake. If ISIS had known that we were such a resilient, selfless force with our goals, perhaps they would not have attacked us in this way. But ISIS came to Kurdistan and hit a hard rock. That is why it lost. This is why we said at the beginning of the Kobanê war that this war would be the beginning of the end of ISIS. After the cleansing of the rural parts of Kobanê, we began to discuss the withdrawal of our forces. Because we had lost a lot of our cadres in Kobanê.

Despite your great sacrifices, some circles are questioning your movement's relations with Rojava. There are even certain Kurdish circles that are calling for a certain distance to be created between your movement and Rojava. How do you assess these attitudes? I would also like to ask you what forces you have at your disposal in all the places where you have fought against ISIS?

Yes, certain circles are of course waffling around.

They discuss whether the PKK is in certain places or not, demand their withdrawal and that the forces in Rojava should end their dialogue with the PKK. These circles have not made the slightest effort for Rojava. All these people are a herd of empty chattering people. But everyone has seen very clearly who stood against ISIS when everyone else fled and who defeated ISIS. Today, people are deliberately trying to make us forget that. This success was achieved by accepting heavy casualties in Kobanê, Şengal, Mexmûr and Kirkuk. In South Kurdistan alone, we lost around 500 friends in the fight against ISIS. At the time, certain people claimed that the PKK would never retreat and would never leave a place where it had once established itself. There were certain circles that deliberately created confusion in this way. But when the situation calmed down again, in other words when ISIS began to lose strength and it became clear that it was no longer in a position to launch new attacks, we first withdrew our forces from the area around Dohuk. Shortly afterwards, we also withdrew our forces stationed in Laleş.

Did you also withdraw from the other areas?

Yes, we also reduced our forces in Kirkuk when there was no longer a need there. Later, we also withdrew our forces from Şengal. At first, only a few friends remained there to advise on the ground. Of course, the Yezidi youth resistance units that had been organized by our friends during the war already existed at the time.

The young people who had resisted together with the friends in Shengal organized themselves and formed the YBŞ. Friends of Yezidi origin who later lost their lives, such as Şehîd Berxwedan, Şehîd Dijwar, Şehîd Zerdeşt and Şehîd Sait, took part in the resistance from the very beginning. But none of them were PKK members! Nevertheless, they had undoubtedly gained strength and willpower through the philosophy of our chairman. They organized themselves during the resistance, from scratch. This process was a real re-foundation, something really significant.

And what did the YPG and YPJ do?

The situation of the YPG was somewhat different. It was a structure or organization that had already been founded before. It is true that there were some friends in its ranks who had previously been in our ranks and had fought, but who later broke away from us to join the revolution in Rojava. They played a leading role in the YPG. But the number of these friends was small. It was only a small group. The YPG was formed primarily as an organization of young people and independent people from society. They were particularly concerned with empowering society to defend itself. After all, the population was under constant attack. There was therefore a great need for self-defense and organization. These were the key aspects that characterized the YPG at this time. The fact that the HPG forces provided support in Kobanê and fought there

selflessly gave the YPG a lot of strength and professionalized their way of waging war and organizing themselves. That is a fact. But to conclude from this that the two organizations are one and the same is complete nonsense and simply not correct. The YPG and YPJ - which later evolved into the SDF - achieved worldwide acceptance on the basis of their own identity. All we did was support them in difficult moments. The Turkish state constantly equates the YPG and PYD with the PKK. The main reason for this is its unwillingness to accept that the Kurds in Syria are gaining their rights. For this reason, the Turkish state wants to put the YPG and PYD on the terror list and thus crush the legitimate struggle of the Kurdish population there. This is the main goal of the Turkish state. The fact that it insists on designations such as 'YPG-PKK' illustrates the Turkish state's real intention: hostility towards the Kurds.

All these successes, which were achieved in quick succession, made an important contribution to the fight against ISIS...

This war saved humanity from a brutal and murderous terrorist organization like ISIS. If ISIS had succeeded in conquering Kobanê with its enormous forces, it would definitely have brought the other parts of Rojava under its control. Then it would also have succeeded in conquering the whole of Syria and perhaps even controlling even larger areas through renewed attacks on southern Kurdistan.

The aim of ISIS was to firmly establish an empire stretching from Iraq to Damascus. It might have succeeded in doing so. However, it lost 5,000 of its best cadres in Kobanê. This broke the back of ISIS. That was a very important development. And it also succeeded at a time when no force was able to stand up to ISIS.

After these successes, all the players regained their strength. The Iraqi state and the Peshmerga managed to regroup. As a result, everyone began to fight more effectively against ISIS. It is true that the air support of the international anti-ISIS coalition was important in the fight against ISIS because it led to practical results. The organization of the Hashd al-Shaabi (Shia-dominated militia in Iraq) and the recapture of Mosul by the reorganized Iraqi army were also not everyday events. In addition, the Peshmerga forces fought against ISIS. The Syrian state, Iran and Russia were now also waging a war against ISIS. All of this was very important. But without the intervention of the PKK in Şengal against ISIS, which ignited the fire of resistance, and without this spirit of resistance reaching its peak shortly afterwards in Kobanê, it would have been very difficult to wage such a comprehensive fight against ISIS.

The Western powers, for example, did not risk deploying their ground troops in the fight against ISIS. It is true that they had certain contingents of ground troops on the ground, but these were protected by local forces. The locations of the US units, for example, were protected by YPG forces.

The Western powers therefore deployed their soldiers under the protection of local forces.

The actual war waged by the Western powers was an air war. But no enemy force can be destroyed by air warfare alone. Without waging the actual war on the ground and only by attacking from the air, a force cannot be crushed. This fact has recently become clear in Afghanistan. In short, our resistance made it possible for us to raise the flag of resistance against ISIS before anyone else and to lead this fight accordingly.

As a leading member of the forces that defeated ISIS, what do you feel? What can you say about the secret of your success and its influence on the dynamics in the region?

I would first like to emphasize the important role of our president Abdullah Öcalan. Because he has made a great contribution to this success. His foresight, efforts, calls and perspectives were the decisive source of our strength in the fight against ISIS. Therefore, he deserves a prominent role in the victory over ISIS. Back then, he was not as completely isolated as he is now. Delegations could regularly travel to Imrali and talk to him. Through these delegations, Öcalan shared his perspectives on Şengal, Kirkuk and South Kurdistan. In the same way, he also called for a general mobilization for Kobanê. He thus showed our people the way and at the same time created the basis for the selfless struggle of our forces.

This is a great service to humanity. It was his efforts that brought about the defeat of ISIS. Our chairman and our martyrs played a decisive role in this. Through the perspective of the democratic nation developed by our chairman, the unity of the Kurds, Arabs, Suryoye, Turkmen and Armenians in North and East Syria was established. The basis for this is the ideological-philosophical paradigm of Abdullah Öcalan and the perspective of the democratic nation that he developed. He has mobilized the Kurdish population against ISIS, as well as the Arabs, Suryoye and other peoples. The ISIS and organizations similar to it hold very dogmatic views that are hostile to women. In contrast, our president has developed a perspective that is based on women's freedom in the Middle East and opposes all reactionary ideas in the region. He has therefore come up with a very strong, enlightened and revolutionary-democratic response. It is obvious that both we and humanity as a whole owe him a debt on these issues. As a movement, we are concerned with practical realization. As members of this movement, we are ultimately only concerned with ensuring that this general perspective is properly known. But Abdullah Öcalan has laid the crucial foundation for this. And our martyrs are those who have realized his perspective.

As the PKK, we are proud that we have put up this resistance. And we are happy that we were able to realize the perspectives of our president to a certain extent.

There is no doubt that this resistance was successful thanks to the efforts of our martyrs. So we owe them something above all. We have lost very significant and important people in this struggle.

I would like to take this opportunity to remember them all once again. It is because of them that we are able to talk about all of this today. It was through them that the destruction of the reactionary ISIS empire began. The PKK sees itself as a party of all humanity; as a party orientated towards democracy and freedom, which has a perspective appropriate to the era. For this reason, the PKK has shown this willingness to make sacrifices and would do so again if necessary.

Abdullah Öcalan



Should ISIS or similar organizations gain strength again, how will your movement react?

Even today, the PKK is prepared to accept the same sacrifices once again in order to defend all the liberal and democratic values of humanity, especially the freedom of women. Accordingly, we are currently continuing our struggle against the terror of AKP-MHP fascism, which is nothing other than the disguised form of the ISIS mentality.

ISIS represents a new high point for the reactionary and brutal forces of this world. You made an extremely critical decision and played a role in defeating ISIS and pushing it further and further back. Yet despite all this, in November 2018, the US government of the time decided to issue an arrest warrant for three leading members of your movement and authorize their assassination. A bounty was also placed on your head. What do you think of this decision?

The USA's decision to put a bounty on the three of us proves the hypocrisy of capitalist modernity. I don't want to go into too much detail about this decision. But declaring the very people who played a role in the victory over ISIS as targets in this way and offering millions of dollars in bounties on their heads has absolutely nothing to do with conscience, morality and justice. This decision was only made to further their own economic interests and to satisfy the Turkish state.

Even though people like James Jeffrey and other leaders from that time were involved in the decision, it is ultimately a system. We have to realise what the mentality of the current system is. This system is supposedly fighting against ISIS, but at the same time it declares the very people who are leading the fight against ISIS as targets. Such a decision has absolutely nothing to do with human values, morality, honesty and other principles. It is much more an attitude that tramples on all human values in favour of its own interests.

In addition, the CIA has always taken an anti-Kurdish stance. This is well known. Everyone knows that the CIA is particularly hostile to the PKK and has an almost allergic reaction to it. Today, these forces are also active in Rojava and are following the most diverse developments there themselves. But how much they accept the truth is another question.

Why are Russia and the USA silent on the ongoing attacks on Rojava? What does their stance have to do with Turkey?

Russia is trying to capitalize on the current situation. Moscow knows very well about the attacks and their background, but is deliberately keeping quiet. The USA is openly pursuing a hypocritical policy. It is closing its eyes because it sees this as favorable to its own interests. These hegemonic superpowers monitor even the smallest part of the world and have very extensive intelligence and technical resources at their disposal.

They therefore know exactly what Turkey is doing together with ISIS in Efrîn, Serêkaniyê and Girê Spî. Where was ISIS leader Baghdadi tracked down and killed? Did this not happen in an area controlled by Turkey? Turkey is carrying out operations against passive members of ISIS on its own territory and exaggerating their impact to fool others. But the majority of these reports are not true. And then they claim that those arrested have been brought to justice. But what kind of sentences do these courts give these people? Either they let them go or they deport them. If they have committed a crime that cannot be concealed, they give them a light sentence. All this is just to fool others. Basically, the fascist AKP-MHP regime is trying to gain control of the Middle East with the help of forces such as ISIS, al-Qaida, the Muslim Brotherhood and al-Nusra. In this way, the regime wants to weaken and destroy the Kurds. It is pursuing a policy of terror and genocide against the Kurds in order to become an imperialist superpower in the region. By using organizations like the ISIS, the AKP-MHP regime wants to become a great power. This policy is generally referred to as Neo-Ottomanism. Is it possible that the international forces are not aware of this? No, they know all this very well, but remain silent because of their own interests. They also ignore the open terror used by Turkey against Rojava and Şengal. They are silent about the inhumane measures in Efrîn. These facts show the true face of all these forces. We are very aware of all this, but the general public and our people must also know this.

Currently, the AKP-MHP regime itself is pursuing a policy of state terrorism against the peoples of the region, especially the Kurds, in various ways and is terrorizing the entire region with the help of the jihadist organizations we have mentioned. All active forces in the region know this.

How can we put an end to ISIS for good?

As long as the Turkish state is not prevented from providing jihadist groups with bases in Syria and various parts of Turkey, the complete destruction of ISIS will remain impossible. That is a fact. ISIS is reorganizing itself in the areas currently occupied by Turkey. It is now closely interwoven with other jihadist organizations. It is gathering its cadres in these areas and thus has the opportunity to gather new strength. Turkey must withdraw from Syria if ISIS is to be crushed once and for all. At the same time, Turkey and Qatar must stop supporting all these organizations. As long as they do not stop their support, all these terrorist groups acting in the name of radical Islam will continue to exist. In this case, the mentality of ISIS will also continue to exist, even if ISIS is destroyed as an organization.



Is there anything else you would like to say at the end?

The entire population of Kurdistan, especially the people of Kobanê and Rojava, have played a very important role during this war. The Arabs, Suryoye, Armenians, Chechens, Circassians and Turkmens living here have also united against the reactionary forces and have thus become one of the best examples that the paradigm of the democratic nation is correct. In particular, practically all influential tribes in the region have kept their word during the conflicts, especially in the fight against ISIS, and have made very important contributions to all the successes. As a result, today we are making even greater efforts for the freedom and well-being of all our peoples and are waging an even stronger struggle.

We must realize very clearly that we, as peoples of the Middle East, can only build a free and democratic life in this region on the basis of our own strength, without depending on external forces and expecting much

from them, by strengthening our relations with each other and on the basis of friendship between peoples. That is the only way. There is simply no other way. It would be a mistake to think that anyone has a magic formula to solve our problems. So we must close ranks on the basis of friendship and unite the peoples, on the basis of democracy and freedom and on the basis of the paradigm of the democratic nation developed by our chairman. Then we can solve all our problems and build a system characterized by democracy, freedom and well-being in the region. We firmly believe that if all the forces active here, especially our people and their representatives, fulfill their responsibilities, we will definitely win. With this in mind, I greet our people and all our international friends.

