

# Scottish TUC President and Glasgow Councillor Roza Salih join European Civil Society call for EU to act for Öcalan

After 28 months with no contact with Öcalan, and in the wake of claims about poison threats, representatives from European civil society gathered outside the European Parliament in Brussels last week to demand that the EU and other European institutions abide by the principles that they claim to stand by – of democracy, human rights, and the rule of law – and put pressure on Turkey to comply with international law in their treatment of Abdullah Öcalan. They demanded, too, that he be given freedom and the opportunity to negotiate a peaceful solution to the Kurdish Question, and they spoke of his importance as a thinker and how his ideas have inspired their own organisations. You can watch the whole event [here](#):

After a welcome from Xanum Ayu from Rojava, the first speaker was Simon Dubbins, co-convenor of the Trade Union Freedom for Öcalan campaign in the UK, who demanded to know what is happening to Öcalan. He pointed out that no other prisoner is kept in such conditions and that Öcalan holds the key to peace.

Antonio Amoroso spoke on behalf of the CUB, the Confederazione Unitaria di Base, which is part of the Italian tradition of grassroots trade unionism. He explained that his union applies Öcalan's principles of democratic confederalism, and that these ideas could help the European institutions too.

Michela Arricale, an Italian human rights lawyer, demonstrated how passion can be combined with legal detail as she explained how the Council of Europe's Committee for the Prevention of

Torture (CPT) are ignoring a vital paragraph in their own rules when they claim that they can't divulge information on their visit to Öcalan's prison. The CPT are the only people outside the Turkish authorities to have visited İmralı prison since 2019.

Amedeo Ciaccheri is president of the Municipality of Rome VIII. He made clear that his message continued the tradition of support for Öcalan shown by the Italian people when Öcalan tried to claim asylum in Italy – though Ciaccheri himself was only young at that time. Italian cities, he explained, see the freedom of Abdullah Öcalan as their freedom.

(The organisers also received messages of support from the former mayor of Naples, where Öcalan was made an honorary citizen in 2016, and the mayor of Fossalto – also in Italy – where Öcalan was made an honorary citizen in 2020.)

Laura de Bonfils brought the support of her comrades in the ARCI – Associazione Ricreativa Culturale Italiana, a million-member Italian cultural and social association – and the ARCI's demand for respect for Öcalan's human rights.

Txente Rekondo spoke on behalf of the Basque trade union, LAB, Langile Abertzaleen Batzordeak or Nationalist Workers' Committees. He stressed the importance of a strong leader in a peace process; and he stated that the Basque trade unions support freedom for Öcalan and for all Kurdish political prisoners, and call for the Kurds to be free to decide their own future.

**Mike Arnott is President of the Scottish Trade Union Congress, and brought solidarity from the Scottish trade union movement. He stressed that the people of Europe demand that the European Union stand with the oppressed and not with the**

**oppressor.**

**Roza Salih came to Scotland as a refugee from Iraq when she was a child, and is now a councillor in Glasgow City Council. She spoke of Scotland's history of international solidarity – including giving an honorary life membership of Strathclyde University to Abdullah Öcalan, 'a leader and philosopher and great thinker'.**

Before a final word from Hakim Abdul Karim from Başur (the Kurdistan Region of Iraq), Jürgen Klute spoke as a former member of the European Parliament. He reminded the European Union of the need to increase pressure on the Turkish government to stop their war against the Kurds inside Turkey and beyond the border, to make peace with the Kurds, and to release Abdullah Öcalan.

Sarah Glynn, compering the event on behalf of the Permanent Vigil for Öcalan, observed that politicians are bombarded with different issues, but what had been discussed is a simple concrete campaign that can make a big difference.

(You can find the event briefing paper with a list of recommendations [here](#).)

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