

PJAK

**Free Life Party Of Kurdistan
Partî Jiyanî Azadî Kurdistan**

**The Kurdistan Free Life Party
PJAK**





The PJAK established its liberation struggle in order to find a solution to the Kurdish issue and that of other peoples of Iran. It regards a democratic solution as both central and most effective.

Contents

The social geography of Iran	3
Historical power structures	3
History of resistance in Iran and Kurdistan	4
Classic uprisings in Kurdistan	5
Kurdish parties	5
Continuation of mass struggles	5
The struggle persists through new thought	6
The Democratic Union Movement	7
The formation of the PJAK	7
The East Kurdistan's Defence Units (YRK)	8
The field of legitimate defence	9
The resistance in prisons	9
The Epic of Qendîl	9
The aims of the PJAK	10
The PJAK's relation with the KODAR	10
The structure of the Party	11
The Party's bodies: The Party's organising methods.....	11
The women's branch of the PJAK: The East Kurdistan's Free Women (KJAR)	11
The PJAK's youth branch: The East Kurdistan's Youth Society (KCR).....	12
The committees of the Party	12
The areas of activity in Europe	13
The PJAK's general view	13

The social geography of Iran

History and geography ensure that Iran is a place of world importance: its land area and size of population, its natural resources, its wide-ranging and deep-rooted cultural, national, and religious diversity, and its geopolitical position. The Iranian plateau has gone through many changes in terms of political geography and cultural and ritual mix, but, despite all the transformations in land borders and social structures, Iran has remained important in the region and beyond.

Iran could be described as a mosaic of assorted cultures and religions. Included in that diverse set of ethnic, national, and religious groups are Basaris, Persians, Laris, Kurds, Lurs, Balochis, Mazanis, Gilaks, Tats, Taleshis, Arabs, and Azeris.

Alongside multiple identities and ethnicities, we see diverse beliefs, illustrated by a coexistence of religions and believers that includes, Muslims (Sunni and Shia), Yarsanis, Bahais, Zoroastrians, Christians, Jews, Sabeyeen (Mandaie), and Dervishes (Monks). All of these beliefs also have branches and sub-branches. The existence of such diversity stems from a spirit rooted in symbiosis. This cultural and religious coexistence provides a deep-seated historical background for democratic aspiration.

Historical power structures

The persistence of this diversity, and the Iranian peoples' insistence on maintaining their different identities, have been fundamental obstacles to the realisation of the Iranian nation-state project. They indicate a tendency for peaceful coexistence that provides a suitable context for the establishment of Ocalan's democratic nation within the framework of a confederal system. As opposed to nation-state, which is established on the identity of a single ethnic group, democratic nation is formed by active and equal participation of all ethnic and religious groups in the social and political systems.

The power structure of the Iranian state can be simply portrayed as an institutionalised system of shepherding, where the structure regards itself as the shepherd, and society as flocks of sheep. This despotic power

structure has deep historical roots, and, although its form has changed, it has stayed loyal to its despotic and monopolising character, even extending this further.

This tyrannical, patriarchal, and fascist structure has resulted in a failure to preserve national safety and to enable socio-economic development, the lack of a suitable environment for thought and intellectual activity, severe censorship of all sectors of society and intellectual circles, torture and execution of dissenters, and the extensive and systematic repression of Iranian peoples, including women and youth. To overcome this requires revolutionary change, intellectually, socially and institutionally. The establishment of a democratic and egalitarian system can prepare the ground for coexistence and cooperation among the peoples of Iran, and for their direct participation in the administration of their regions.

History of resistance in Iran and Kurdistan

Historical and cultural traditions tell us that the democratic and liberationist forces within Iranian society have been in consistent struggle against despotic and anti-society systems, in order to protect their values and their cultural and historical achievements.

Not only have the Kurdish people always associated with these democratic resistances, but they have also played a leading role at key historical stages, for which they have paid a heavy price. In the run up to Iran's democratic-national revolution of 1979, the combatant and liberationist forces of Iran's different peoples had a remarkable presence, playing their historic role in the process.

The Kurdish people formed a principle element in the struggle against central authority in the nation-state building period in Iran, and maintained their dynamism and revitalising character. At different historical stages, the expansion of the system of central authority prompted an extensive wave of resistance, as outlined below.

Classic uprisings in Kurdistan

In the period before and after the establishment of a nation-state in Iran, in the early twentieth century, the following uprisings should be mentioned: Sêx Obeydullah Nehrî (1882), Îsmâîl Simko (1914), Dawûdxan Kelhor and Alîxan Loristanî (1911), and Sardar Reşîdxan (1916). This period also saw the foundation of Kurdish societies and associations, including The Society for Development and Moral Illumination of Kurdistan (1909), headed by Ayetulla Mardux, The Kurdish Charity Society (1927), headed by Qerenî Axa Mamiş and Rehîm Neqîşbendî, Kurdish Komele (1927), and JKF Komele (1942).

Kurdish parties

The list of Kurdish political parties includes The Kurdistan Freedom Party (1929), headed by Ezîz Zendî, The Leftist Social Democrat Party (1914), headed by Mîrza Mehdîxan Firepûr in Kirmaşan (1914), The Kurdistan Democratic Party (1945), headed by Qazî Mihemed and founded The Kurdistan Republic of Mehabad in 1946, and Komala of Revolutionary Toilers of Iranian Kurdistan (1969/79).

Outside these resistance groups, too, the Kurdish people of East Kurdistan have been a dynamic opposition force, with an active and productive presence in political and cultural spheres.

Continuation of mass struggles

The Iranian peoples' revolution

The Iranian Revolution of 1979 occurred with active participation by the Kurdish people. But, Islamist circles, headed by Khomeini, soon took over the revolution. They adopted a counter-revolutionary position, and started to confiscate what the revolution had achieved. When negotiations between the Kurdish parties and the central Islamic government failed to bear fruit, the Kurds withdrew from the urban centres to rural, mountainous areas to launch guerrilla warfare throughout the 1980s.

However, this did not succeed in forcing the government to accept the demands of the Kurdish people. In fact, the Islamic Republic intensified its waves of clampdown, forcing the Kurdish parties and the pioneering forces of Kurdish society to move to South Kurdistan (Iraqi Kurdistan), where they settled in camps. As a result of this exodus, taking place in the mid 1990s, the Kurdish liberation movement in East Kurdistan was dealt a heavy blow, and the determined resistance of our people was undermined.

The struggle persists through new thought

The relocation of East Kurdistan's political parties to South Kurdistan, along with the spreading power and influence of the Islamic Republic in all spheres of the country, resulted in political vacuum and passivity in East Kurdistan. However, the growing process of guerrilla warfare in North and South Kurdistan revitalised the revolutionary spirit of the youth and the freedom-seeking masses of East Kurdistan, leading many to support and join the Apoist Movement (the movement led by Abdullah Ocalan, nicknamed as Apo).

It was at this stage, under the influence of Ocalan's ideology, that an organised core of Kurdish students took shape - especially at Urmiye and Tabriz universities. In the late 1990s, many of these freedom-seeking young people and revolutionary activists, who had joined the Apoist Movement, travelled to the urban areas of East Kurdistan and wider Iran. To attract the youth and intellectuals into the movement, they initiated extensive and serious campaigns at the universities and other educational centres.

Alongside this, MED-TV, established in 1995 as a platform from which to publicise the ideology and development of the Apoist Movement, provided a medium for integrating our people and supplying them with information that transcended the boundaries of nation-states. One result of these activities was the mass uprising in East Kurdistan in 1999, in reaction to the international conspiracy against the Leader Apo. On 22 February 1999, the apex of the uprising, a large number of peaceful protesters were killed by the Iranian security forces. Attraction to and participation in the Movement increased significantly, especially among students and

intellectuals. These events prepared the ground and highlighted the necessity for the establishment in 2002 of The Democratic Union Movement, which took place in the Qendîl Mountains.

The Democratic Union Movement

In 2002, the Democratic Union Movement entered the field of resistance to develop and organise the struggle and the emerging activities as the first independent Apoist organisation in East Kurdistan. Their programme included the slogan “Democratic Iran and Free Kurdistan”. The Iranian authorities reacted violently to their emergence, and the regime’s military forces instigated a wave of sporadic confrontations. The Movement had deep influence in the media and in intellectual spheres. When their media centre was established in 2003, they were already publishing *Welatî Azad* (free country) and, in that year, they added another weekly gazette, *Alternative*. At the same time, the translation team was busy translating Ocalan’s publications into Farsi.

Ocalan’s writings were widely distributed in the different regions of East Kurdistan, and made available to the masses. In addition, cadre training courses were organised by the Movement in order to provide members with essential knowledge about organisational development and party formation. The Movement was pursuing two fundamental aims. The first involved transition to political mobilisation, the revival of direct struggle in East Kurdistan, and the beginning of party formation. The second consisted of the legitimate defence of itself and its people against the regime’s assaults, which were increasingly militarising Iranian society. Pursuit of these two aims led to the formation of the Kurdistan’s Free Life Party (PJAK).

The formation of the PJAK

In the late 1990s, in parallel with increasing political change, the militarisation of society by the Iranian state reached a new stage of organised terror and violence. The Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) expanded well beyond its initial militaristic framework to become an octopus-like institution that interfered in economic, political, and social

spheres. The Democratic Union Movement regarded the trajectory of events as so serious that they were concerned it might even be a prelude to a political-military coup. They had to change their approach and tactics to respond to this new stage. Despite this, the impact of their presence and activities in East Kurdistan was noticeable, especially in civil society and intellectual circles.

Under the influence of the Movement's ideas and activities, this period saw a comprehensive burgeoning of social institutions, and of participation in activities such as the formation of organisations to defend human rights, the environment, women, and youth. As a result of these developments, a decision was made to form a more cohesive organisational-political system to manage the forthcoming phase of struggle; a system which would be capable of defending our people's values against the state's militarism and its potential military coup. It was in this context that, in 2004, the Kurdistan's Free Life Party (PJAK) was founded, and entered the field of struggle.

The East Kurdistan's Defence Units (YRK)

As the freedom struggle faced vicious assault by the Islamic Republic, it was necessary to take steps towards legitimate self-defence. Therefore, the PJAK's first Congress, held in 2004, announced the establishment of the Party's armed branch, the Kurdistan Freedom Forces (HAK). In 2006, organisational development and consolidation required a structural change. The armed branch changed its name to the East Kurdistan Forces (HRK), and the women of East Kurdistan established their own distinctive armed branch, the Women's Forces of East Kurdistan (HJRK).

During the PJAK's fourth Congress, held in 2014, the HRK changed its name to the East Kurdistan's Defence Units (YRK), and the Women's Forces of East Kurdistan changed their name to the Women's Defence Forces (HPJ). Both the YRK and the HPJ carry out their activities within the KODAR's legitimate defence committee, which monitors all military activities. Established in the PJAK's fourth Congress, the KODAR (Democratic and Free Society of East Kurdistan) is an umbrella organisation for East Kurdistan's political parties, civil societies, and individuals.

The field of legitimate defence

For greater effectiveness, the East Kurdistan's Defence Units (YRK) coordinate their actions within the framework of legitimate defence. While maintaining their military fortifications in East Kurdistan's mountains, they launched a wave of successful attacks against military positions of the Islamic Republic. These attacks ranged from Mako to Îlam, and responded to military and cultural attacks by the Islamic Republic in East Kurdistan. Acting precisely, they launched these attacks through a new form of guerrilla warfare that went beyond classic resistance methods.

The resistance in prisons

As a modern party, the PJAK believes in a comprehensive, dynamic and persistent struggle in all areas without distinction. This means in every area that the regime has used to launch its war against society. From the perspective of resistance method, the PJAK tries to turn threats into opportunities, and push the field of struggle into the regime's bodies and institutions. Among these institutions, prison serves as a good example. The PJAK has turned prison from a state institution for the destruction of will to a new front for resistance against, and ideological victory over, the state.

The struggles that have taken place here include extensive hunger strikes and perseverance against systematic torture, which were pioneered by Ferzad Kemangir, Elî Heyderyan, Ferhad Wekîlî, and Şîrîn Elemholî. These led to the formation and institutionalisation of a new culture of prison resistance. With the effort and dedication of our comrades, and of freedom campaigners from other Iranian peoples, this process is continuing towards success. Furthermore, the prison resistance resulted in social cohesion and ensured the PJAK's place in political history.

The Epic of Qendîl

One of the high points of the resistance by the East Kurdistan Defence Units (YRK) is the Epic of Qendîl, which took place in 2011. Coordinated by the martyred commander, Simko Serheldan, the Epic won a historic

victory over the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC) who had invaded the Qendîl Mountains in the hope of conquering it, but, withdrew after they faced a shameful defeat.

The aims of the PJAK

The PJAK coordinates all its activities on the basis of Ocalan's democratic nation and sees the solution of the Kurdish issue in the framework of democratic self-administration. It is responsible for the promotion and development of political ideology and democracy. At the centre of its activities is the protection of the people's and the Party's values, and the formation of a free and democratic life in East Kurdistan and wider Iran.

Within this context, the PJAK endeavours to

- 1) Achieve the rights and freedoms deserved by all sectors of society, so as to accomplish the organisation of a democratic society.
- 2) Struggle against all mentalities and social and political relations that stem from patriarchy, in order to liberate women and enable them to find their true identity and place in society.
- 3) Develop democratic relations with the Kurdish population in other parts of Kurdistan.
- 4) Establish free relations with all the peoples of Iran, and cooperate with democratic movements in Iran, the Middle East and the world.

The PJAK's relation with the KODAR

The PJAK is a pioneering party within the social and political system of the KODAR (Democratic and Free Society of East Kurdistan), where it promotes democratic politics. It is responsible for the development of free life and democratic society. It promotes its activities within the framework of its charter and internal regulations.

The structure of the Party

The Party's fundamental decision-making body is the Congress, which convenes once every three years, and requires the participation of two-thirds of the Party's elected representatives.

The Party's Co-chair system

The Party has Co-chairs, one woman and one man, elected in the Congress from a list of candidates by majority vote.

The Party's Assembly

In between Congresses, the fundamental body for decision making and coordination of activity is the Party's Assembly. The Assembly is elected by the Congress, and gives a report of its activities to the Congress and to the Party's Co-chairs. The Party's Assembly is accountable to the Party's Co-chairs.

The Party's bodies:

The Party's organising methods

The PJAK promotes democratic politics in East Kurdistan, Iran, and beyond, based on the paradigm of democratic nation; a paradigm which requires active and equal participation of all ethnic and religious groups in society. It establishes its centre and its subsidiary branches and committees in order to promote its social politics, grounded in this democratic understanding.

The women's branch of the PJAK:

The East Kurdistan's Free Women (KJAR)

The women's branch of the PJAK has its own distinctive form of organisation. It has a pioneering role in the materialisation of the Party's

charter and aims, and is responsible for the sound promotion of women's liberation in all the Party's branches. In order to overcome patriarchal mentality and promote democracy, it leads a comprehensive campaign in all areas of Iran and East Kurdistan, and mobilises women on a wide scale. The PJAK's women's branch functions within the East Kurdistan Free Women (KJAR), an umbrella organisation and women's democratic confederation. All activities are carried out in unison with the KJAR, with the aim of promoting a democratic society based on women's liberation. The PJAK's women branch and the KJAR share projects, planning, and management, and divide up the tasks to be carried out.

The PJAK's youth branch:

The East Kurdistan's Youth Society (KCR)

As society's most dynamic sector, the youth form the most influential force for the realisation of social change. The PJAK's youth branch mobilises the youth according to the aims and politics of the Party. It takes the initiative in mobilisation efforts and in internal affairs. The PJAK's youth branch coordinates activity with the East Kurdistan's Youth Society (KCR), which is a democratic confederation of youth organisations. It addresses youth issues through providing direction to the resistance, and joint mobilisation with the KCR.

The committees of the Party

In order to organise its internal activities and plan its strategy in Iran, the Party has structured itself via the committees listed below. The ways in which these committees are to function are thoroughly explained in the Party's charter.

- The Committee of the Party's Media and Publications
- The Committee of Diplomacy
- The Committee of Education
- The Committee of Organisation
- The Disciplinary Committee

The areas of activity in Europe

The launch of the PJAK's activities in East Kurdistan created an atmosphere of hope among the migrants and refugees in Europe, and this revitalisation prompted many to join the ranks of resistance in the diaspora. At the European level, the PJAK has mobilised this newly emergent force in order to confront and isolate the Islamic Republic and its conservative politics. The PJAK is mobilising people in all European countries.

To solve the Kurdish issue, and keeping with its democratic principles, the PJAK cooperates with international institutions and adheres to international standards. It has signed the Geneva Convention and has established relations with human rights institutions.

The PJAK's general view

The PJAK established its liberation struggle in order to find a solution to the Kurdish issue and that of other peoples of Iran. It regards a democratic solution as both central and most effective. The Apoist paradigm of a *democratic-ecological society based on women's liberation* constitutes the foundation of its programme. It regards the approach of the democratic nation as the most viable solution, which will allow the Kurds and other peoples of Iran to overcome the current waves of ethnocide. To this end, it mobilises all its power and capacity to realise aspects of democratic nation and democratic self-administration. It suggests a democratic and non-statist interpretation of the self-determination of peoples for all peoples of Iran as the solution to their national issues.

Since there are demographic and cultural crosscuttings, it is not possible to draw clear borders between the peoples of Iran such as would be required by a nation-state model. This is not the way to solve national problems. For example, even though the Kurds are mainly centred in the provinces of Sine, West Azerbaijan, Kirmaşan, and îlam, there is also a Kurdish population in Khorasan, Sistan, Fars, Mazandaran, Kerman, Tehran, and Qom. Other peoples of Iran are in a similar situation. Democratic confederalism, which supports flexible cultural boundaries

and the system of self-administration, has the potential to respond to these situations and provide a solution.

Alongside their increasing development in political and democratic awareness, and their insistence on a democratic approach, the Kurds have rejected the futility of state-centred solutions and dependence on foreign approaches. The traditional methods, which deny reality, have been proved inept. The Kurdish people have taken the leading role in the movement towards democratic self-administration in Iran. As a country that rules over large areas of Kurdish habitation, if Iran were to adopt a democratic solution to the Kurdish issue, this would be a move in the direction of stability, and a help towards overcoming increasing crises.



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