FINAL DECLARATION

CONFERENCE ON THE RIGHT TO PEACE AGAINST THE POLITICS OF ISOLATION

A summary of the different topics discussed within the scope our conference, we are honored to share the following results and recommendations of our conference with the public:

A long-standing structural problem in Turkey’s administrative and legal practice, discrimination and marginalization have created a serious crisis of democracy and law in the last quarter century. One of the findings of the conference was that this discrimination is most immediately and severely felt in Turkish prisons and that every change in the law on penal execution over the last 15 years has only contributed to make this situation worse.

Most exposed to discrimination in terms of both the execution regime and the conditions of their detention in prison are political prisoners. Those provisions of the Anti-Terror Law (ATL) and ATL-related provisions of the penal code, procedural law, and the law on penal execution that disadvantage political prisoners should be abolished and problems regarding the implementation of these laws should be resolved as soon as possible to effectively implement the ECtHR’s judgments. In particular, sick prisoners face systematic discrimination as they are being denied release due to politically motivated opinions issued by the Forensic Medicine Institute or on account of vague and unpredictable reasons like the ‘safety of the community.’ As a result, they continue to be held under unlivable conditions or face death in prisons due to worsening health problems.

The conference arrived at the conclusion that the most notable example of extraordinary and discriminatory penal execution practices could be observed in İmralı Island Prison. The isolation of Abdullah Öcalan and the other prisoners in İmralı Prison, where all prisoners have recently been held completely incommunicado, is directly related to the state’s approach to solving (or not solving) the Kurdish Question. Thus, the state of isolation has become aggravated in every period the state pursued a policy that was based on a refusal to solve the Kurdish Question. Conversely, in times when it was possible to discuss a peaceful solution of the Kurdish Question in Turkey and a culture of democracy began to develop, it was also possible for meetings and talks with Öcalan to take place in İmralı Prison.

Opposing isolation is an important step towards peace. The legal and political challenge to the grave state of isolation in İmralı needs to become more widespread and comprehensive. This opposition to the politics of isolation itself has to be rescued from isolation.

Numerous examples from around the world show that states who try to solve their ethnic and identity-related problems solely by military means degenerate into increasingly unitarian and corrupt structures that go economically bankrupt. This is in stark contrast to the level of development observed in countries that solve their problems through dialogue and peaceful means. Therefore, it is imperative to hold up a politics of life against the insistent politics of isolation and against the politics of war and conflict, which is recently proliferated through cross-border operations.

This politics of life and a resolute stand against discrimination demand that all kinds of discriminatory practices in the penitentiary system be ended immediately. Seriously ill prisoners should be released, and treatment opportunities should be provided for sick prisoners. The aggravated life sentence regime, which demands convict’s imprisonment until death, should be terminated in line with the judgments of the ECtHR and the recommendations of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe. İmralı Prison should be closed and the İmralı isolation system should be abolished. It is essential for Turkey to solve the Kurdish Question by democratic means, to approach every problem causing social disintegration based on the idea of equal coexistence, and to implement a holistic project of social peace that is aimed at guaranteeing economic welfare and social justice.