

Ten years of YPJ

The history and role
of the Women's Defense Units
in North and East Syria and beyond



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1. Women and Self-defense

No society, no human, and no living being can live without a system of self-defense. It is inherent to live and the systems of self-defense are as numerous as life itself. The rose, for example, is protecting its beautiful flower with thorns – not to attack, but to defend its life. From the very beginning of human life, self-defense had to be organized to guarantee the existence of life. It was a task naturally belonging to the society itself.

It is not a coincidence that the first armies emerged at the time when wealth was accumulated. It is also this time in history that marked the institutionalization of patriarchy and the predecessors of the nation-state. From this point on, self-defense was co-opted and turned into a male task, organized in armies. Instead of protecting their people, armies would become a tool of the nation-state, causing war, oppression, slavery, colonialism, and genocides following the equation that has been consolidated for thousands of years: war = man = power. With the institutionalization of armies filled with a dominant male mindset that seeks to amass wealth by looting, societies and especially women were left without self-defense, completely dependent on the state.

With the developing patriarchal system, women and their achievements were erased from history. This is why there is little knowledge about women's role in self-defense until today. But there always have been women who were defending democratic values and were challenging the patriarchal system that left women defenseless. A closer look in history reveals women who had led armies, took leaderships of tribes, participated in wars, carrying swords and shields while defending their land and people. In closer history, examples can be found in the *Mujeres Libres* who fought in the Spanish Civil War protecting

the social revolution, the female Partisans who fought fascism during the Second World War, the Vietnamese women who fought as part of the guerrilla to defend their land against occupation and many others who fought colonialism, slavery and oppression around the world.

Also today women are participating in armed self-defense forces defending revolutionary projects. Examples can be found in the New People's Army in the Philippines, the Naxalite movement in India or the Zapatista Army of National Liberation in Mexico. We inherit the bravery of all these women and the YPJ sees itself as a continuation of their struggle.

Despite all these valuable experiences, no wider successful, long-lasting efforts are known in which women built up their own autonomous army. Due to the specific history of women's identity, the YPJ sees a key element of women's self-defense in organizing themselves with their own autonomous women's army. To understand the importance and role of YPJ within the democratic revolution in North and East Syria, it is important to understand its history and ideological framework. This brochure intends to inform about the historical foundation of the YPJ, our role and impact in North and East Syria, our achievements that have been reached within 10 years, as well as our inspiration that was given to women all over the world.

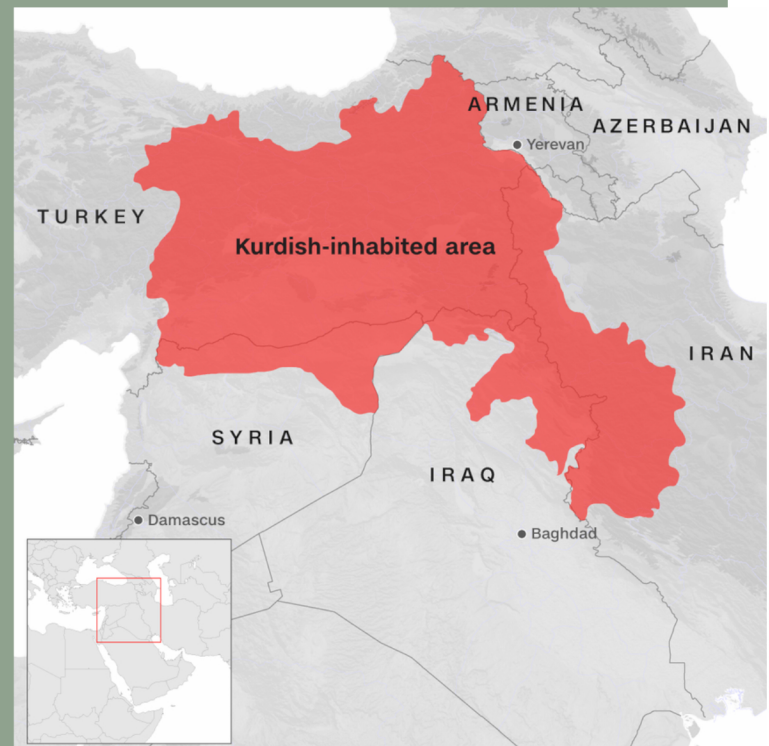


2. Women's role in Kurdish resistance

Kurdistan is the indigenous land of the Kurds. It is a territory that they share with various other indigenous groups which makes it a land of a multi-ethnic and multi-cultural society. Kurdistan lies in the middle of the ancient area of Mesopotamia, which is also known as the cradle of civilization. During history, Kurdistan was colonized and oppressed by different Empires and nation-states, resulting in Kurdistan being divided until today into four pieces, split through the borders of Turkey, Iran, Iraq and Syria.

Having been subjected to attempts that tried to erase their identity and culture, the national sentiments of the Kurds were awakened in the early 19th century. Kurds were resisting forced assimilation and various massacres, insisting on their legitimate right of self-determination. At all stages of Kurdish resistance women played crucial roles, like Kara Fatima Khanum known as Fatima Rash, leader of the Mara'ash tribe, who was leading a battalion of 300 men during the Crimean War in 1845. In the early 20th century, Adile Xanim helped bring together 56 tribes in a confederation in modern day Iran before her death in 1924. In 1946, women like Gulazer and Mîna Xanim played a key role in the establishment of the first Kurdish socialist state, the short-lived Mahabad Republic.

Stories of brave Kurdish women are passed until today from generation to generation, like the story of Zarife Xanî who fought alongside her husband Alişer to whom she referred to as "friend" or "comrade" during an uprising against the Ottomans in Koçgirî in 1921.



Also the story of Rindêxan is well known in Kurdistan. She threw herself from a bridge, choosing her own death rather than living an enslaved life after having been captured by an Ottoman commander in 1926, during an uprising in Sason. In 1937 the Kurds in Dersim rebelled against the repressive politics of the Turkish government of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk. The uprising was violently crushed with 70,000 Kurds being massacred. The Kurdish woman Besê Xane from the Alan tribe was fighting until she run out of ammunition. After defending herself with stones, she threw herself from a cliff to avoid being captured. Many women choose to end their life like Besê did, choosing to live a life of freedom or not at all. It is said that around 1,500 Kurdish women threw themselves from cliffs to escape being captured.

Taking these historical uprisings as a basis, an important step in the history for Kurdish self-determination and women's struggle was the creation of the Kurdistan Workers Party in 1978. It was founded in Amed, Northern Kurdistan by Kurdish intellectual and revolutionary Abdullah Öcalan. He was inspired by the history of Kurdish resistances as well as the worldwide student uprisings in 1968. He had been organizing students on the basis of socialist principles and his conclusion was that Kurdistan is a colony, and he aimed to build an independent socialist state. From this time forward, he gave great importance to women's liberation, stating that without women's liberation, society can not be free.

The Kurdish demands for identity and freedom were harshly answered by the Turkish military junta. Following a military coup in 1980 the Kurdish language became prohibited, Kurdish political leaders were imprisoned and tortured and extrajudicial executions were carried out against Kurds. PKK members inside the prison achieved strong resistance against the systematic torture. Sakine Cansiz was one of the two founding women members of the Kurdistan Workers Party. Although being confronted with brutal torture in the prison of Amed, she did not surrender. The prison resistance and especially the strong stance of Sakine Cansiz led to big support of the party from the population. More and more people, especially women, were joining the party and in a short time the party had become a peoples movement.

Due to the increasing attacks of the Turkish state, Öcalan first traveled to Lebanon in 1979 and then to Syria, where he would remain until 1998. In this time, Öcalan educated thousands of people on democratic and socialist principles, especially focusing on women's education.

Through his work he became loved and respected by the people, who acknowledged him as their leader. Many Kurdish women from all parts of Kurdistan traveled to see Öcalan and to learn about his ideas. This laid the foundation for the Rojava Revolution.



Abdullah Öcalan welcoming a mother who came to visit him at his academy in Damascus



Guerrilla fighter who changed history: Bêrîtan (Gülnaz Karataş)

To confront the human rights violations by the Turkish State, the systemic destruction of thousands of Kurdish villages, the torture and extrajudicial killings, the movement started its armed resistance on August 15th, 1984. With this action the formation of the guerrilla was announced publicly. Today they are active under the name of People's Protection Forces (HPG).

At the end of the 1980's and the beginning of 1990's, popular uprisings took place in Northern Kurdistan, in which women were playing the leading role. One of the women was Bêrîvan Cizîr who in 1992 bravely confronted the Turkish tanks that attacked the Kurdish people in Cizire Botan who were peacefully celebrating the ancient Kurdish Newroz holiday, the beginning of spring. She inspired other women to join the uprising and became a symbol of women's leadership in the resistance of the early 90's.

Also in 1992, Bêrîtan (Gülnaz Karataş) became a symbol of the willpower of Kurdish women. During this time the Turkish Army attacked guerrilla areas in the mountains in Southern Kurdistan. Turkey, supported by the USA and Iraq, were attacking guerrilla positions in coordination with the Peshmerga fighters of the two local South-Kurdish parties KDP and YNK. In Xakurke, guerrilla fighter Bêrîtan was

encircled by Peshmerga fighters who tried to convince her to surrender.

Bêrîtan, standing on the edge of a rock, threw herself off the cliff, choosing death over surrender to the enemy. Her action soon became a legend and the Peshmerga fighters who tried to capture her laid down their weapons, refusing to fight the guerrilla forces after what Bêrîtan did. With this action, she followed the path laid out by Rindêxan and Besê and created an even stronger succession for Kurdish women whom bravely choose death rather than a life that is not lived in freedom.

Following Bêrîtan's action, Abdullah Öcalan proposed the creation of an autonomous women's army.

Therefore, in 1993 first women's units were established within the guerrilla in the mountains of Kurdistan. Until today, the Women's Army YJA-Star is considered the first experiment of its nature in world history that has reached this high of a level of organization. YJA-Star aims to give women the spirit with which they can fight against oppression. It is not a tool of oppression but a tool for creating equality, not restricted to military activity alone but to educational and social activities aiming to strengthen the free will and development of women.



Inspiration for the foundation of YPJ: The YJA-Star women guerrilla

The political and social work carried out by the women's army encouraged Kurdish women all over Kurdistan to organize. In 1995, the first Women's Congress was announced, held in the mountains and the Free Women's Union of Kurdistan (YAJK) aimed to create a women's organization that unifies the women in the different works such as political works, work within civil society and in the women's army.

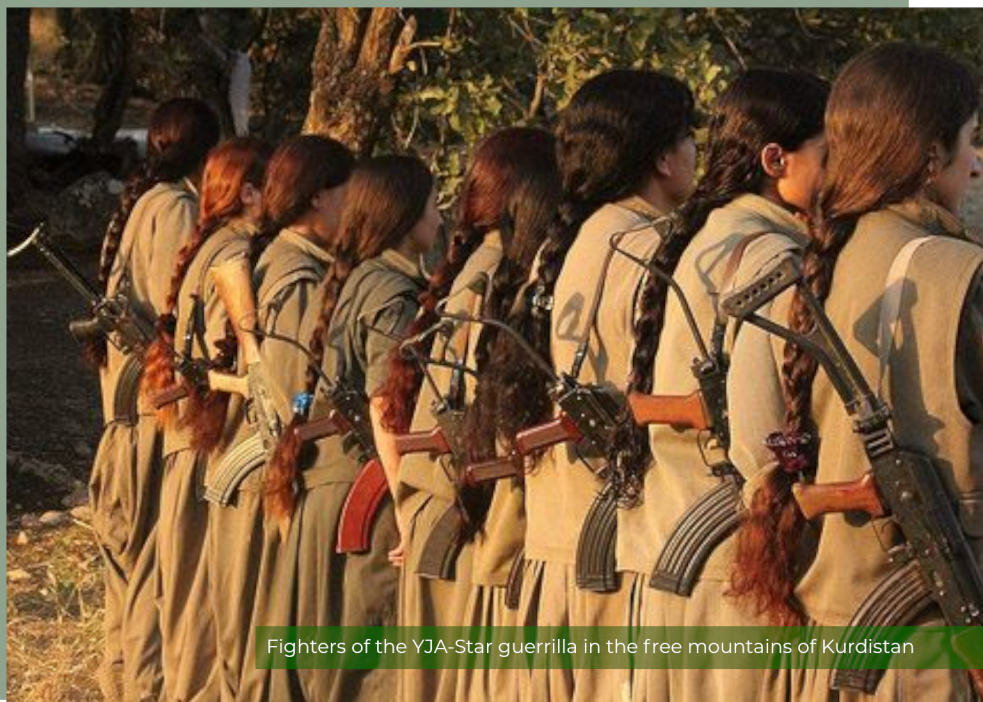
On February 15th 1999, Abdullah Öcalan was kidnapped by means of an international conspiracy, brought to Turkey, and sentenced to death. Until today he is being held in prison on İmralı island in Turkey, where his death sentence was turned into life imprisonment. As a counter-response to the international conspiracy, women decided to organize themselves as their own autonomous party in March 1999.

After several restructurings, women from all parts of Kurdistan are still organizing today in the Women's Freedom Party of Kurdistan (PAJK). With this form of organization women are playing a vanguard role in organizing society, educating women and defending the people from colonization and occupation.

Being kept in solitary confinement, Öcalan is using his defense writings to promote peace and a change in the politics of the movement for the liberation of Kurdistan.

Instead of a Kurdish nation-state, he argues for Democratic Confederalism - a grassroots democracy organized in communes and councils, based on the principles of ecology and woman's liberation, as well as democracy - giving all ethnicities autonomy according to their culture and religion.

It is this ideological basis on which YPJ was founded and according to which we are still organizing ourselves today. The history of sacrifices, bravery, and solidarity that prevented the imperial-drawn borders from dividing Kurdish women, as well as the heritage of the worldwide struggle for women's liberation, paved the path for the foundation of YPJ.



Fighters of the YJA-Star guerrilla in the free mountains of Kurdistan



3. Women's struggle in Rojava

In Rojava, the western part of Kurdistan (Northern Syria), Kurds have lived together with various peoples for hundreds of years. However, different authoritarian regimes had oppressed society and tried to assimilate the Kurds and other ethnicities. The Ba'ath Regime imposed racist policies against the Kurds, who had been stripped of basic human and cultural rights. In 1962, for example, the Regime stripped 300,000 Kurds of their Syrian citizenship. In the 1970's the Ba'ath Regime initiated the project of the so-called Arab Belt. Arab people were settled in traditionally Kurdish areas to push Kurds out of their indigenous land. Against this policy people organized underground, holding meetings, political seminars or celebrated significant cultural events like Newroz.

In addition to the oppression experienced by being Kurdish, women were exposed to a double difficult situation. Patriarchal traditions and dogmatic religious culture kept women oppressed in a social, economical, political and cultural way. Calling for women's rights was seen as shameful. Women also remained financially dependent on men and therefore often felt that they were a burden to society. When facing domestic abuse and violence they were left without any legal rights, including the right of child custody.

The marginalization of women was also visible in education, which 45% of Kurdish and Arab women did not receive. Also women's participation in politics remained blatantly unequal to men. There had not been any real and significant representation of women in any political institutions of the Ba'ath Party. In cases in which women did participate, they always

had to subordinate to the male-dominated structures.

Inspired by the long history of women's struggle in Kurdistan, the women's movement of Rojava was founded under the name of Yekitiya Star ('Star Union') in 2005. Their aim was to organize women across the northern areas of Syria and raise their political consciousness. Due to the repressive Ba'ath Regime, Yekitiya Star had to work in secret. Activists were arrested and tortured and the fate of some women activists are unknown even until today. But this oppression could not stop the women from struggling for freedom. On the contrary, a solid foundation of women's struggle was laid for the onset of the revolution.

After months of uprisings against the Ba'ath Regime during the People's Spring, the population of Kobane expelled the Syrian army and government powers on July 19th, 2012. This was the start of the Rojava Revolution. The Afrin and Jazeera canton followed and all three regions started to organize themselves through communes, councils and cooperatives. In the beginning of the revolution, Yekitiya Star became one of the essential political movements. Since then, the women's movement has grown, including women of all ethnicities and religions. In 2016, the Star Union changed its name to Kongra Star ('Star Congress') and became an umbrella organization for all women's institutions organizing in all fields of life, such as politics, culture, environment, economy, diplomacy and self-defense. Building up their autonomous women's structures made the women of Rojava turn their slogan 'Jin, Jiyan, Azadi!' (Women, Life, Freedom) into reality.



First steps of YPG/YPJ: self-defense units in the beginning of the revolution

4. History of YPJ

This history of the Women's Self-Defense Units YPJ began with the creation of self-defense units that had been built as a response to attacks of the Ba'ath Regime in 2004, where on March 12th, 32 Kurds had been killed during a football match in Qamishlo. After this incident, small groups (including women) formed armed forces, the Self-Defense Units of Kurdistan (YXK) and organized them across Rojava.

Having gained valuable experiences, the YXK announced their transformation into the Peoples Protection Units (YPG) in 2011. The announcement of YPG in Afrin was led by women but still there were patriarchal mentalities within the organization that tried to keep women away from combat. Although being confronted with obstacles like these, the women participated in clashes against al-Nusra Front in 2012. The first time that women professionally participated in war was at the Qastele Hill in Afrin in the autumn of 2012. Seeing their brave performance in war, the male comrades admitted that their former approach was wrong and that they were impressed by the women's involvement.

Now with more background and experiences, the women built up a first all-female battalion within YPG. On February 13th, 2013 the Martyr Rûken battalion was built up in Afrin, consisting of 80 women. Following this example, on March 9th, 2013 the Martyr Adalet battalion was established in Qamishlo and on March 24th, 2013, the Martyr Dicle battalion was founded in Kobane. Several times, women from the different cantons came together to discuss their role and duty within the revolution.

It was during this time in which it became clear to the women that they need to organize as their own, autonomous women's army in order to change the reactionary perceptions within society and to lead and shape the revolution.

In 2013, between April 2nd and 4th, the women participating in YPG organized their own conference with delegates from all cantons. On April 4th, the birthday of Abdullah Öcalan, they announced the foundation of the all-female women's army, Women's Protection Units, YPJ. The aim was not just to stop the Islamist organizations in the region but furthermore fighting for women's liberation and building up a true democratic and egalitarian society.

Despite the lack of equipment and weapons, YPJ fought alongside the YPG and evacuated occupied areas from the Ba'ath Regime and from Islamist groups like Ahrar Al-Sham and al-Nusra Front. It was in this time, when the first YPJ members were martyred. Bêrivan Qelender was a mother of two children. She felt responsible for the social revolution, always saying that she wanted to build a beautiful future for her children. On May 28th, 2013 she was martyred when Islamist groups were attacking Afrin. One day later, Comrade Silava Afrin, who had joined the ranks of YPG in 2011 was martyred in the village of Basile in the Sherawa district. Our comrades Bêrivan and Silava, the first martyrs of YPJ, had fulfilled their goals of liberating their land and creating a free life for their people. They inspired thousands of women to continue their path by joining the ranks of our units.

In July 2013 the YPG/YPJ liberated the city of Serêkaniyê from al-Nusra Front. During the clashes, the women of YPJ were using a loud and shrill "Tilili" as a battle cry to give morale to their comrades. Hearing this battle cry, the enemy understood that it was women who were fighting them. This spread fear among them, because according to their radical Islamist ideology, their entry to paradise would be denied if they would be killed by a woman. Fighting as an all-female military force against Islamists was therefore not merely a military confrontation, but also an ideological one.

In a short time, YPJ managed to achieve significant victories and proved the ability to lead battles and use various military tactics successfully. YPJ started to train the fighters in more systematic ways, building academies and special educations on tactics and weapons such as heavy weaponry, sniper and sabotage.

On August 3rd, 2014 ISIS attacked the Shengal region in Southern Kurdistan – the home of the Yazidis, a Kurdish religious minority that ISIS had declared as infidels, free to murder at will. In a short time, ISIS killed thousands of Yazidi people and kidnapped women and children to sell them into slavery. The area of attack had been under the control of the Peshmerga forces of the KDP but when ISIS approached, their troops fled the region and left the Yazidi population without any protection, exposed to genocide.

It was the YPG/YPJ forces that opened an evacuation corridor together with HPG and YJA-Star guerrilla units that came from the mountains to protect the Yazidi population. They managed to evacuate 120,000 people who had sought shelter on the high plains of Mount Shengal.



The evacuation corridor from Shengal led to Cezaa, a village near Dêrik in Rojava. There, a YPJ unit became surrounded by ISIS. Despite their limited experience and loss of communication with their comrades, they showed determination to continue the fight. They chanted: "martyrdom, not surrender" until they were martyred with their fingers on their triggers. These words have become of great value and impact. They prove that the women of YPJ are willing to defend a free life by any means necessary. It needs to be well understood that we don't follow any mentality that is longing for death. Our struggle is for life and therefore it is the deep love for a free life that makes us willing to give even our own in order to create a life of freedom.

On September 15th, 2014 thousands of ISIS militants invaded and besieged the city of Kobane. It was in this time, when international attention was gained for the courage and bravery of YPJ, becoming a role model for women around the world. YPJ members were fighting as snipers, doing sabotage actions and leading operations, like commander Zehra Penaber who became a symbol of courage and female leadership. During this war, YPJ members were fighting in the Serzûrî village alongside their male comrades of YPG.

The village got surrounded by ISIS and 12 comrades became enclosed. 5 of them were young women, led by Commander Peyman Tolhildan. The fighters fought from the 2nd floor of a school that ISIS was approaching with 200 men and three tanks. Through radio contact YPG/YPJ fighters said that no reinforcement should be sent to keep the number of martyrs low and emphasized their will to fight until the end.



On September 16th Comrade Peyman said through the radio that as a revolutionary she will face martyrdom with a smile on her face. After ISIS set the school on fire and destroyed the first floor, the comrades fought until their last bullet, destroyed their weapons, formed a circle and under the shrill battle cry of the women comrades, they blew themselves up. With their action they became symbols of resistance, choosing rather to end their lives in freedom than to surrender.

The same spirit was revived in the action of Rêvan Rojava. On September 27th, Comrade Rêvan was fighting with her unit in a village south of Kobane when they ran out of ammunition. In order to protect her comrades and prevent ISIS from entering the city, comrade Rêvan decided to carry out a self-sacrificing action in order to stop the enemy. Comrade Rêvan became the first one doing an action of this nature within the history of the YPJ. She became a symbol of commitment and resistance.

Some days later, on October 5th, Arîn Mirkan. was fighting at Mishtanour Hill. Seeing that ISIS tanks were approaching, she advanced to them and set off a grenade underneath one of the tanks. With her action, she saved the lives of her comrades, destroyed the tank and killed dozens of ISIS fighters. After her martyrdom her photograph was hung everywhere and carried on every march or demonstration. A statue of her set up in Kobane is commemorating her bravery until today and many children born after her action are carrying her name.



Symbol of the Serzûrî resistance: Peyman Tolhildan

With the enormous resistance and sacrifices of YPG/YPJ, Kobane was successfully liberated on January 26th, 2015. Since this battle in autumn 2014, YPG/YPJ have been cooperating with the International Coalition Against ISIS who gave air support to liberate Kobane.

After YPG/YPJ defeated ISIS in the towns of Til Hamis and Til Berak in February 2015, the Islamists launched a big attack on the Assyrian villages south of the Khabur River in Til Temir. The German comrade Ivana Hoffman, who came as an internationalist fighter to defend the revolution, was in her position in one of the Assyrian villages when the attack began. She fought, defending the villages to prevent ISIS from committing a massacre. Ivana was martyred on March 7th, 2015 in the village of Til Nasir, becoming the first international martyr within the Rojava Revolution.

In commemoration of the Kobane resistance, YPJ held a conference from September 4th to 8th in 2015 in Kobane. The slogan of the conference was: "In the footsteps of the Martyrs of Kobane, we support the unity of democratic peoples to ensure a free life." The most important point that the conference addressed was the solidarity between all socio-cultural groups in Syria. Based on this principle, the military alliance Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) was formed on October 11th, 2015, including various Syrian opposition groups from different ethnic backgrounds.



Her action changed history: Arîn Mirkan



A women liberated from ISIS rule hugs a YPJ fighter during the Minbij operation

Its formation came from the necessity for a unified military force that aims to liberate the region from terrorist groups and build a free, democratic and federal Syria. Being one of its core components, our forces are taking part in all military operations launched by the SDF until today.

On November 13th, 2015 YPJ took a leading role in the campaign against ISIS in Al-Hol which was the first campaign that the new military alliance launched together, followed by the second campaign in the south of Kobane, where the Tishrin Dam on the Euphrates river was liberated from the control of ISIS on December 26th, 2015. Subsequently, in February 2016 the SDF launched the campaign against the major ISIS stronghold in Shaddadi town.

This campaign had a high ethical and humanitarian aim because ISIS had turned Shaddadi into a slave market, selling Yazidi women and children into rape and slavery. This is why the liberation of Shaddadi on February 20th, 2016 was of great importance to YPJ, Yazidis, and all women of the world.

In the summer of 2016 the operation to liberate Minbij began. Minbij is a strategical city north-east of Aleppo district, majorly inhabited by Arabs with Kurdish, Circassian and Chechen minorities.

ISIS had been ruling Minbij since 2014, establishing a terror regime forcing their ex-

tremist interpretation of Sharia law on the population according to which women had to cover themselves with a black veil from head to toe. After 75 days of heavy fighting, Minbij was declared liberated on August 13th, 2016 and 140,000 civilians were able to be rescued.

When encountering YPJ fighters, civilian women hugged them, burning their black veils and celebrating their liberation from the horrors they suffered under ISIS. Some of those women even joined the ranks of YPJ.

In November 2016, the campaign to liberate Raqqa started, the capital of the so-called ISIS caliphate. The operation was under the command of a woman, the YPJ and SDF commander Rojda Felat. After reaching the city, a tough battle of 135 days took place inside the city.

Arab women within YPJ participated with two autonomous women's battalions and also another battalion of the Shengal Women's Units YJŞ took an active role, avenging the enslavement of thousands of Yazidi women. With the liberation that was announced on October 19th, 2017 up to 450,000 civilians were rescued from the hands of ISIS.

During the Raqqa military campaign 30 female fighters were martyred. In the statement of the liberation the YPJ Commander Nesrin Abdullah said: "We dedicate the liberation of Raqqa to all the women of the world."



YPJ fighters bring joy to the streets of Raqqa after its liberation

After the statement was read out, a celebration took place at the Al-Naim Square, where ISIS used to carry out mass executions and brutal public beheadings. By shouting the slogan 'Jin, Jiyan, Azadi!' the YPJ fighters, the Shengal Women's Units and the women of the Christian Defense Forces turned the former capital of ISIS into a symbol of women's freedom which resonated throughout the world.

At the beginning of 2018 the so-called caliphate of ISIS was still not defeated. The SDF were engaged in a military campaign in Deir ez-Zor, where ISIS had retreated to as a last stronghold after previous cities like Minbij and Raqqa were liberated. It was during this current operation when the Turkish state started a military invasion against Rojava's western canton of Afrin on January 20th, 2018 using Islamist mercenaries as ground forces. YPJ and their allies within SDF carried out a great resistance to protect the people of Afrin. The spirit of Kurdish women became once again visible on January 27th, 2018. YPJ fighter Avesta Xabûr prevented a massacre in the village of Hemam in Jindires district by stopping a Turkish tank by using her body as a bomb. Her action made clear what the revolution meant for women and that they rather would sacrifice their lives than accept for their people and land to live under occupation.

With her martyrdom she became a symbol of women's bravery and dedication for the revolution.

On February 1st, YPJ fighter Barîn Kobani fought with her unit against Erdogan's mercenaries in Qurna village of Bulbula district in Afrin. Being trapped and having almost no ammunition left, she refused to surrender and fired her last bullet on herself to avoid falling in the hands of the enemy. When the Turkish-backed mercenaries found her body, they stripped her of her clothes and heavily mutilated her body. This attack showed once more the misogynistic reality of Erdogan's forces. The video of her mutilated body that the perpetrators filmed and spread aimed to break the will of the YPJ fighters. Instead it became the reason for many women to increase their resistance against the misogynist occupation forces.

Despite the huge resistance that was carried out in Afrin, the Turkish attacks resulted in the violent occupation of the region. Thousands of people were forced to leave Afrin and became refugees.



Honored martyr: Barîn Kobane

Along with the occupation, Turkey is pushing forward demographic change, forcefully displacing the indigenous Kurds from their native land and settling Sunni Arab population from other parts of Syria that had come to Turkey as refugees. Until today severe human right violations are taking place in the occupied area, such as looting, kidnapping, torture, rape and murder. The beloved Kurdish city of Afrin once again became contaminated by the brutality of fascism, religious radicalism, and violent colonialism of the Turkish state and ISIS mercenaries.

After the resistance of Afrin, YPJ participated in the battle against the last territory of the so-called ISIS-caliphate, the Battle of Baghuz in East Syria. It began on February 9th, 2019 as the last step of the Deir ez-Zor campaign. Baghuz was the very last place where ISIS had retreated to, after experiencing heavy territory losses. Therefore, it had turned into a densely populated tent city housing the most loyal population of ISIS members who had followed the organization until the end. The operation was paused several times to allow ISIS members to surrender and to evacuate hostages and families. On March 23rd, 2019 the defeat of the so-called caliphate of ISIS was declared and thousands of ISIS fighters and their families surrendered themselves to the SDF, among them citizens from all around the world that had come to Syria to join ISIS. As YPJ together with our YPG and SDF comrades, we paid the defeat of ISIS terrorism in total with the life of 11,000 martyrs. We gave these sacrifices with the full knowledge that fighting ISIS' terrorism does not just protect Rojava, Syria and the Middle East, but the whole of humanity.

In the same year, October 9th, 2019 the Turkish state and its allied Islamist groups launched another military operation against the territories of the Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria (AANES). While at the beginning the Turkish state attacked several places across the border, it focused its attacks on the cities of Serêkaniyê and Girê Spî. From the beginning on our YPJ forces participated in the resistance with great determination. Feeling provoked by the strong women's participation, the mercenaries used by the Turkish state published videos recording barbaric misogynist practices towards resisting women and YPJ fighters. On October 12th, 2019 Kurdish politician Hevrîn Khalaf was ambushed in her vehicle, tortured and executed by Ahrar al-Sharqiya, an Islamist mercenary group backed by the Turkish state. Her dead body was mutilated and a video showing the scene was circulating on the internet.

Hevrîn Khalaf was committed to finding a democratic solution for the crisis in Syria and a relentless fighter for women's freedom. Her execution caused an international outcry and until today people commemorate her struggle and dedication while condemning her barbaric murder. On October 21st, the Turkish-backed jihadists of the Faylaq al-Majd battalion published a video in which they are desecrating the body of fallen YPJ fighter Amara Renas. Once again, this became an even greater motivation for YPJ fighters to increase their commitment to the struggle.

As the attacks resulted in the Turkish occupation of Serêkaniyê and Girê Spî, thousands of civilians became refugees and like in occupied Afrin, human rights are violated systematically. Furthermore, the Turkish State is using the occupied regions to give safe passage for ISIS members heading to the areas of the AANES, increasing the threat of an ISIS resurgence in the newly liberated lands of North and East Syria.

After the territorial defeat of ISIS, the Turkish state intensified its targeted assassinations by drone attacks on YPJ commanders and fighters who played a leading role in the fight against ISIS. On August 19th, 2021 a Turkish drone targeted YPJ commander Sosin Bîrhat in Til Temir, killing her and four other male comrades. Comrade Sosin played a leading role in the liberation of many areas, especially the Sheikmaqsoud neighborhood, which accomplished a huge victory through revolutionary people's war in the huge and historical city of Aleppo. She became a source of morale for all fighters and the population there. The circumstances of her assassination were revealed, when three agents of the Turkish secret service MIT were caught in a special operation and confessed that the attack was premeditated.



Source of inspiration and example of female leadership: Sosin Bîrhat



YPJ fighters training as special forces YAT

Regarding the risk of an ISIS resurgence the SDF as well as the AANES were warning the international community about having a high number of ISIS members in detention centers and camps that were not built to house such large number of high risk prisoners. Help from the international community was repeatedly asked for, especially regarding the repatriation of foreign citizens and the establishment of an international court that could put ISIS members on trial in North and East Syria. Those voices had mainly been ignored, though. In order to prevent ISIS from reorganizing within al-Hol camp, the Humanity and Security Operation was launched on March 28th, 2021. Al-Hol camp was housing 60,000 inhabitants from 57 nationalities at this time with the vast majority of them being families of ISIS militants. YPJ commander Jiyan Tolhildan was leading the operation. Many YPJ fighters, especially those of the Anti-Terror Units, YAT participated in this operation that resulted in exposing hidden ISIS cells and arrests of wanted ISIS personnel.

On January 20th, 2022 the warnings concerning new attempts of ISIS reorganizing turned into reality. An ISIS insurrection started at the al-Sina'a prison in the city of Al-Haseke. ISIS mem-

bers that had been covertly organizing underground attacked the prison from outside while inside guards were taken hostage, tortured and killed. Only because of the quick intervention of the SDF a bigger catastrophe had been prevented. Our forces were active in this Operation (People's Hammer Operation) from the beginning on and the prison break out attempt was thwarted. A sacrifice of 121 fighters and prison staff was given to stop the ISIS resurgence. Among them there was one member of YPJ, Comrade Awaz Urmiyê who participated in the operation as a member of the Anti-Terror Units, YAT. The ties between Turkey and ISIS once again became clear when a reinforcement convoy of the Til Temir Military Council was air-struck by a Turkish drone while heading towards Haseke to give aid to the fight against ISIS.

On April 30th and May 1st of 2022, YPJ held their 3rd conference under the motto "YPJ is the force that will guarantee women's freedom, defend the land, and crush occupation". 400 delegates were discussing the political and military situation in the Middle East, Kurdistan and North and East Syria and evaluated the works of YPJ during this conference.

In 2022, the Turkish state intensified its drone war against North and East Syria. 130 drone strikes had injured 151 people and killed 87. These strikes were targeting important military and political personnel as well as civilians, children and crucial infrastructure. On April 20th, 2022 YPJ commander Dilar Heleb and the two YPJ fighters Ronahî Kobane and Kobanî were killed by a drone attack on their vehicle in Kobane. Dilar Heleb was part of the YPJ leadership in Kobane and had played an important role in the liberation of Aleppo and Minbij. On May 30th YPJ fighter Mizgîn Botan was killed when a Turkish drone targeted her vehicle in Qamishlo. Mizgîn was from Eastern Kurdistan and joined the Rojava Revolution when ISIS was attacking the region. On July 2nd, another YPJ commander was killed in a targeted assassination by a Turkish drone strike in Raqqa. Mizgîn Kobane had joined the revolution in early years and participated in defending the people and women in Aleppo. The experiences she made there she shared with her comrades and fought in many battles against ISIS.

On July 22nd, 2022 a Turkish drone killed Anti-Terror Units (YAT) commander Jiyân Tolhildan in a targeted assassination alongside her comrades YPJ commander Roj Xabûr and YAT fighter Barîn Botan. The three had been on their way home from a women's conference celebrating ten years of the women's revolution when their vehicle was targeted. Commander Jiyân Tolhildan was a founding member of YPJ. She played a leading role in the fight against ISIS and participated in defending the city of Kobane. She was a relentless fighter for women's liberation who inspired hundreds of young women to join the ranks of YPJ. The documentary "Jiyân's Story: Women's Revolution" made about her life and published in 2017

tells her life story, from her childhood in a village close to Afrin until the beginning of the women's revolution in 2012.

Turkey killed many other women who played key roles within society. For instance the three members of the Internal Security Forces, Sara Mihemen El-Hisen, Selma Eli Mistefa, and Cihan Mihemed Mistefa that were assassinated together with their male colleague in a drone strike on July 28th, in Ayn Issa. Also Dilsoz Tirbespiye, member of the Self-Defense Forces, who was murdered by a Turkish drone strike on August 9th in Qamishlo. Or Zeyneb Mihemed, the co-chair of the Justice and Rehabilitation Office who got killed with her male colleague on September 27th, 2022 near Girke Lege. On August 18th, a Turkish drone hit a group of young women playing volleyball in an UN-affiliated school, a school of young women wanting to join YPJ but were too young to be accepted. Six of them lost their lives. The list goes on and on, numerous civilians, associates, military, and revolutionaries were killed, but specifically a high number of strong women comrades who were leading the way and changing the world.

At the same time that Turkey intensified its attack on AANES, ISIS increased its activity as well. Due to increasing murders and torture committed by ISIS cells in al-Hol camp, on August 25th, 2022 the second phase of Security and Humanity Operation was launched. The operation had to start later than planned because of the incessant Turkish attacks on the region. During the operation YPJ forces were able to liberate two hostage Yazidi women who had been kidnapped by ISIS in the attack on Shengal in 2014. In the same operation, YPJ forces freed four non-Yazidi women who were chained and brutally tortured by ISIS women. The operation ended on August 31st, 2022.

YPJ fighters participated in other important operations that aimed to hunt down ISIS sleeper cells, such as the Operation al-Jazeera Thunderbolt (Dec 29, 2022 – Jan 5, 2023) and the Operation Retaliation for Raqqa Martyrs (Jan 25 – Feb 1, 2023) which was launched after an ISIS cell attacked the Internal Security Forces and a prison holding ISIS detainees in the al-Dariyah neighborhood in Raqqa on December 26th, 2022 killing six members of the Internal Security Forces. YPJ continues every day to strengthen its struggle against the fascism and domination of a multi-fronted war facing both ISIS resurgence and the historical and protracted genocidal aims of the Turkish State. However as time progresses, the revolutionary Women's Defense Units of North and East Syria develops in leaps and bounds, pushing forward the fight against patriarchy, domination, and creating a more free and true life for women every day.



Embodiment of the women's revolution: Jiyân Tolhildan

5. Organization and principles of YPJ

YPJ has its General Command and is represented by female leaders within the General Command of the People's Protection Units (YPG) and the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF). Decisions are made jointly together with YPG and SDF. Decisions related to YPJ however, are made independently by the YPJ leadership through a conference or extended meetings, or through our own autonomous military council.

The YPJ can not be understood in the framework of a classical army of a nation-state. We act according to the principle of legitimate self-defense and therefore we are not an attacking, offensive force. We are serving the people defending their right of self-determination and the women defending them from any kind of attacks. To ensure those aims, YPJ is based on two pillars: ideological education and military training. Education enables women to develop their personality as well as their intellectual abilities. Thanks to the Women's Liberation Movement of Kurdistan, YPJ could draw on experience to develop a solid ideological foundation with a comprehensive philosophical theory that aims to support women in protecting themselves ideologically from authoritarian, nationalist or liberal attacks. YPJ organizes intellectual and political education through academies that are widely spread through the regions of the AANE. There are academies for new fighters and commanders as well as those where everyone can join. Educational terms are held in Kurdish language as well as in Arabic, always with the focus laid on religious and ethnic diversity among the participants. The duration of the terms vary due to the different programs and can last from two and a half months until half a year.

The education programs contain a variety of different lessons such as the history of Kurdistan and the Middle East, sexism in society, democratic confederalism and many more which are relevant to build up an extensive political understanding. A big focus is put on analyzing the history of women especially the history of women's resistance which has been purposefully hidden by the nation-states and other dominating powers in an attempt to undermine women's progress. An important concept taught in our academies is the Women's Liberation Ideology, which was developed by Abdullah Öcalan. It offers core principles to women on how they can liberate themselves and applies to women everywhere. All in all, the academies aim to build up women's personalities that can create a free life and inspire others to do so. Great importance is also given to language education and the literacy of our fighters. This is why Kurdish and Arabic language classes are also part of the lessons taught in our academies.





Graduation ceremony of YPJ fighters completing an ideological educational term

The nature of women's participation in self-defense is not constricted only within military tasks. Without an intellectual and philosophical approach a women's presence within the ranks of an army would not cause radical changes in society. A lot of military forces worldwide have female presence but those armies are not designed to help women achieve their freedom. They are made to serve the interest of capital and nation-states. Organized self-defense bound to democratic principles however, accompanied by revolutionary thought has the potential to bring democratic change in society. The ideological aim of YPJ is to build up personalities with an ecological and democratic mentality that can construct an egalitarian and free society.

In addition to the ideological education, our fighters receive professional military training. They are trained on various weapons, war tactics, and technical skills to reach an efficient level of combat. Therefore our fighters are trained in specialized branch-academies in which they can professionalize. For instance training professional snipers, education in the field of sabotage-actions or the usage of heavy weapons. Based on the rich experience of YPJ, various tactics and skills needed for different types of combat situations are being trained under different environments as well as different landscapes.

As a women's army, YPJ has developed our own tactical approaches, carried out many successful actions and our fighters are present in

every front line and hold combat command positions until the highest level, not just commanding female fighters of YPJ but also male fighters within YPG and SDF.

The membership of YPJ is voluntarily. Every woman has the right to join YPJ, without distinction based on nationality or religion. Every fighter joins the ranks of YPJ with the aim to protect the peoples of North and East Syria and educate herself in a political way according to the YPJ's principles. The required age of membership is 18 years. On June 29th, 2019 Mazlum Abdi of the SDF General Command signed an action plan with the United Nations to end and prevent the recruitment of minors during a ceremony in the United Nation Palace in Geneva. Being part of SDF, the YPJ is bound to this agreement.

Girls and young women have been seeing YPJ as an option to escape domestic violence or forced marriage within their families. In co-operation with the women's movement Kongra Star, effective mechanisms have been found to prevent minors joining YPJ but more importantly to solve problems that made young women want to join the military forces in the first place.

Additionally to the UN action plan the AANES opened Child Protection Offices. Those offices serve as civilian complaints mechanism that allows families, parents and civil actors to file complaints and report any recruitment of minors within SDF components.

The works of YPJ are organized in different offices. The Education Office is in charge of organizing ideological and military education, building up academies and following up on the development of the fighters. The Foreign Relation Office is in charge of international relations, aiming to create democratic alliances that help to built peace and unity among women around the world. The YPJ Press Office is reporting news and in this way informs its members as well as the public about current events and latest developments. The Press Office is also publishing a printed magazine, broadcasts TV programs and is in charge of social media activity. The Office of International Law is advising the military forces in Inter-national Laws and follows their compliance. It has contact to institutions working in the field of law and justice and is following any violations of international law. The Office of the Martyrs' Families is in charge of the families of the martyred YPJ members. It is in contact with them and provides support in any way that is needed. The Health Office is in charge of medical care. It takes care of providing preventive health measures like medical education as well as caring for wounded members of YPJ. It is also in charge of military hospitals. The Office of the Wounded and Veterans is in charge of those that got wounded and those who have long-term physical health complications. It is also responsible to find opportunities for education and activities for those friends who during the struggle gave a part of themselves and because of this are less physically abled. The Office of the Fighters' Families is in charge of the families of the YPJ members. It is in direct contact to the families and takes part in works in society, according to the needs of the families. The YPJ Information and Documentation Office provides information about the political and

military situation in North & East Syria in English language on various social media platforms. It sheds light on security threats and keeps the public informed about the activities and tasks of YPJ. It also provides information to journalists, politicians, activists and researchers.

Besides these tasks, YPJ gives great importance to cultural activities. Members are motivated to participate in activities such as folklore dancing, playing instruments, writing poems, singing in choirs or learning martial arts. Different cultures are finding their own expression in those activities and holidays from different religions are celebrated together. YPJ hosts festivities and celebrations on important days of their history like March 8th or April 4th, and always holds events in honor of the martyrs for whom individual and joint commemorations are organized.

Every member of YPJ has democratic rights and is motivated to give her own views on the development within YPJ. Structures were configured within the organization where every member has the right and sometimes is required to write reports of evaluations, complaints or proposals. Every day a short round of criticism and self-criticism is held. This so-called 'Tekmil' is a short platform in which the members are coming together in their smallest unit, the team. They are evaluating the day, can give criticism and make proposals. In addition to this, regularly held meetings are opportunities to discuss and evaluate the works and life amongst each other. This system of organization has been immensely successful in allowing for problems big and small to be solved and for the growth and development of both YPJ members as individuals and also the organization as a whole.



YPJ fighters train to gain the skills needed to defend the revolution

6. YPJ's impact on North and East Syria and the world

YPJ is one of the core reasons that the women's revolution in North and East Syria was made possible. For many women, YPJ opened a new path, offering an alternative to a life shaped by patriarchal norms and standards. Our work influenced the society deeply on many different levels and helped to introduce a new view on women that is not based on traditional and sexist models. The bravery and commitment of our fighters shattered the mentalities that saw women as weak, defenseless and as a burden for societies. The establishment of a women's army in the heart of the Middle East that is fighting for the liberation of the women of the world has become a great achievement that will influence the history of women's liberation forever. All of this, we owe to the bravery of our martyrs who gave everything they had to make a life possible in which women can live free from oppression. This is why we as YPJ will always continue the path of our beloved comrades who sacrificed their life for freedom.

It is also important to mention the role of mothers within the social revolution. A lot of them took initiative and encouraged their sons and daughters to join the YPG/YPJ without any interference. They realized that true democracy can only be achieved through organization and that freedom can't be reached without serious sacrifices.

Their role was not limited to encourage their children only to join the defense units, but they also contributed with the formation of the civil defense forces HPC-Jin that take care of the se-

curity in their neighborhoods, patrolling and building checkpoints to prevent danger.

In this way more and more women visibly participated in tasks of self-defense throughout North and East Syria. In this way the role of self-defense was not limited to just military but gave everyone the ability to participate in their own self-defense and defense of their communities and thus existence.

YPJ gained international attention and admiration. We received many awards, such as the Ibrahim Ahmad peace price, honoring our fight against ISIS terrorism and our efforts for a peaceful, democratic society. Furthermore, journalists and filmmakers covered the struggle of YPJ and documentaries showing the reality of YPJ which were shown on international film festivals and won awards, like "Her War: Women vs ISIS".

A significant aspect of YPJ is that the women within YPJ did not all come from North and East Syria, but from all parts of Kurdistan, Syria, the Middle East and the whole world. The struggle for self-defense and self-determination of women is an international one. Starting with the Kobane war, many women from all around the world came to join the ranks of YPJ. This led to the creation of an international battalion within YPJ, the YPJ International, in which international volunteers get ideological and military education, learning about the principles of the Rojava Revolution.

Some of the internationalist volunteers gave their life in defending the women's revolution. The German Martyr Avaşın Tekoşın Güneş (Ivana Hoffmann), the Argentinian Martyr Lêgerîn Çiya (Alina Sanchez), and the British



Mothers organized in civil defense units HPC-Jin

Martyr Hêlîn Qereçox (Anna Campbell) joined the ranks of the liberation struggle because they understood that the values of the Rojava Revolution are universal. Their sacrifices inspired even more women to come and join the revolution, whether it be in civil works or in military works, the internationalist structure has been spread far and wide across North and East Syria.

In these ten years, YPJ has been creating many strategic alliances with numerous organizations within North and East Syria as well as on an international level. Women's delegations from all around the world visited YPJ, our fighters and commanders took part in countless conferences and went to different parts of the world to draw attention to the women's struggle in North and East Syria. These efforts are based on the belief that the struggle for women's liberation needs to be waged on a global level. Just like we want to spread the achievements of the Rojava Revolution, we also seek to exchange methods of struggle with resisting women worldwide.

Furthermore, YPJ is establishing international diplomatic relations with governments, members of parliaments and political parties, in order to draw attention to the political situation in North and East Syria. The first YPJ representative visiting Europe was YPJ commander Nesrin Abdullah who visited Europe in 2015 seeking support from politicians and the international community in the fight against ISIS. Until now, YPJ representatives met with politicians and state officials from many countries to discuss security risks such as ISIS and to promote the democratic system of the self-administration of North and East Syria. The unity of the different women within YPJ has unleashed an energy of women who are struggling for liberation against thousands of years of oppression and slavery.

The capitalist nation-state system is not just unable to build peace and democracy but is actively causing war, oppression and exploitation in the whole world. Against this system that is damaging women and people around the world YPJ is building up and defending a concrete alternative that enables women to liberate themselves, lifting the burden that capital and patriarchy forced on our societies and opening a way for a true democratic, ecological, and free life.



Understood Rojava as her own revolution: internationalist martyr Hêlîn Qereçox, fallen in Afrin 2018

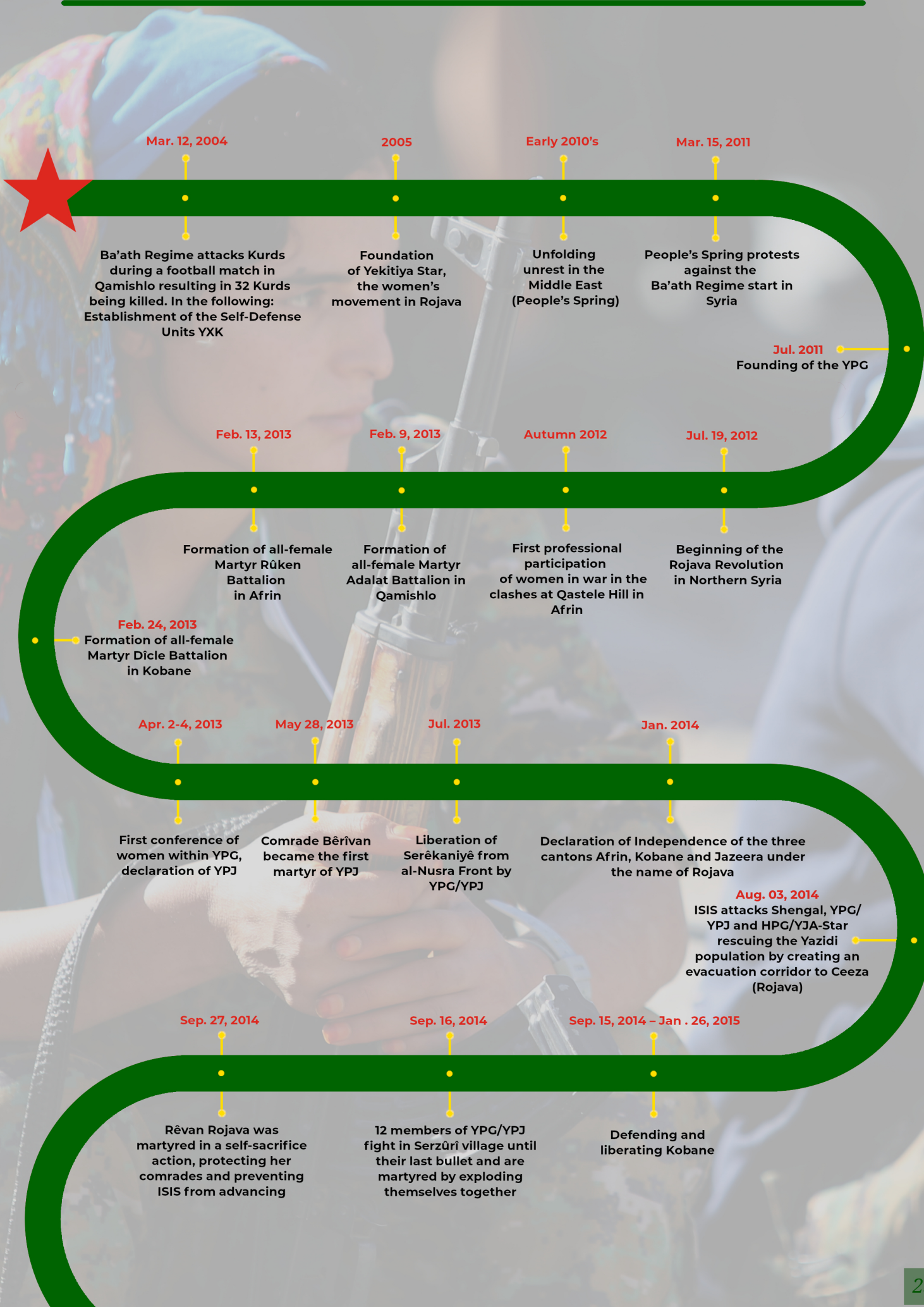
Our slogan 'Jin, Jiyan, Azadi' that is now used around the world is rooted in the long tradition of the revolutionary women's movement in Kurdistan and thousands of our fallen comrades gave their life defending its meaning. The amount of solidarity that YPJ was given from all around the world and the fact that the flag of YPJ is flying in women's demonstrations worldwide shows the amount of hope we have created for women's freedom.

YPJ aims not just to give the final blow to the negative perception of women as a burden and change the male mentality regarding the role and meaning of women. Moreover, it aims to overthrow the historical pillars of nation-states that are defined by class society and patriarchy.



Women's delegation from Scotland visiting YPJ in March 2023

7. Timeline of the Rojava Revolution and YPJ's activity



Oct. 05, 2014
Comrade Arin Mirkan became martyred in a self-sacrifice action saving the life of her comrades and killing dozens of ISIS fighters

Autumn 2014

YPG/YPJ started its cooperation with the International Coalition Against ISIS

Feb. 21-29, 2015

Liberation of Til Hamis and Til Berak

Mar. 7, 2015

German Internationalist Ivana Hoffman was martyred while defending an Assyrian village in the Til Temir region

May 6 – Jun. 15, 2015

Liberation of Mount Abdulaziz, Til Temir, Mebrûka, Silûk, Girê Spî and Eyn Îsa

Sep. 2015
Liberation of Sirin

Dec. 26, 2015

Liberation of the Tishrin Dam from the hands of ISIS

Nov. 13, 2015

Start of SDF military campaign to liberate Al-Hol

Oct. 11, 2015

Foundation of the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF)

Oct. 10, 2015

Foundation of the Syrian Democratic Council (SDC)

Sep. 4-8, 2015

YPJ conference in Kobane

Feb. 20, 2016
Liberation of Shaddadi town

Mar. 2016

Liberation of the south-eastern territories of Mount Abdulaziz

Mar. 2016

Proclamation of the Democratic Federation of Rojava – Northern Syria and beginning of the constitution writing process

Aug. 13, 2016

Liberation of Minbij, establishment of communes and civil administrative councils in Minbij

Nov. 2016

Start of the military campaign to liberate Raqqa

Dec. 2016
Constitution adopted under the name of the Democratic Federation of North-Eastern Syria

Sep. 8, 2017

SDF launches the military campaign to liberate Deir ez-Zor

May 2017

Liberation of Tabqa, establishment of councils

2016

Yekitiya Star reorganizes itself as Kongra Star, becoming an umbrella organization for all women's institutions in North and East Syria

Oct. 19, 2017
Liberation of Raqqa, establishment of councils

Jan. 20, 2018
Turkish military invasion of Afrin, leading to its occupation

Jan. 27, 2018

Comrade Avesta Xabûr martyred in a self-sacrificing action in Afrin

Sep. 6, 2018

Announcement of the creation of the Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria, responsible for 7 regions (Jazeera, Euphrat Region, Afrin, Minbij, Tabqa, Raqqa, Deir ez-Zor)

Mar. 23, 2019

Military defeat over the so-called ISIS caliphate in Baghuz

Jun. 29, 2019

SDF commander Mazlum Abdi signs UN action plan to end and prevent the recruitment of children under 18 in Geneva

Aug. 19, 2021

YPJ commander Sosin Birhat assassinated in a Turkish drone strike organized by agents of the Turkish secret service MIT

Mar. 28 – Apr. 02, 2021

1st phase of Operation Security and Humanity in al-Hol camp

Oct. 9, 2019

Turkish invasion of Serêkaniyê and Girê Spî, leading to the two cities being occupied by Turkey, execution of Kurdish politician Hevrin Khalaf by Turkish backed jihadist mercenaries

Jan. 20, 2022

ISIS insurrection attempt in the Sina'a prison in Haseke, stopped by quick intervention of SDF operation "People's Hammer"

Apr. 20, 2022

In Kobane YPJ commander Dilar Haleb assassinated by a Turkish drone with two of her comrades YPJ members Ronahi Kobane and Kobani

Apr. 30 - May 30, 2022

Third YPJ conference

May 30, 2022

YPJ fighter Mizgin Botan assassinated by a Turkish drone attack in Qamishlo

Jul. 2, 2022

YPJ commander Mizgin Kobane assassinated in a Turkish drone strike in Raqqa

Jun 25 – Feb. 01, 2023

Operation Retaliation for Raqqa Martyrs

Dec 29, 2022 – Jun. 05, 2023

Operation al-Jazeera Thunderbolt against ISIS cells in al-Hol, Til Hamis, Til Berak and the Syrian-Iraqi boarder area

Aug. 25 - Sep. 17, 2022

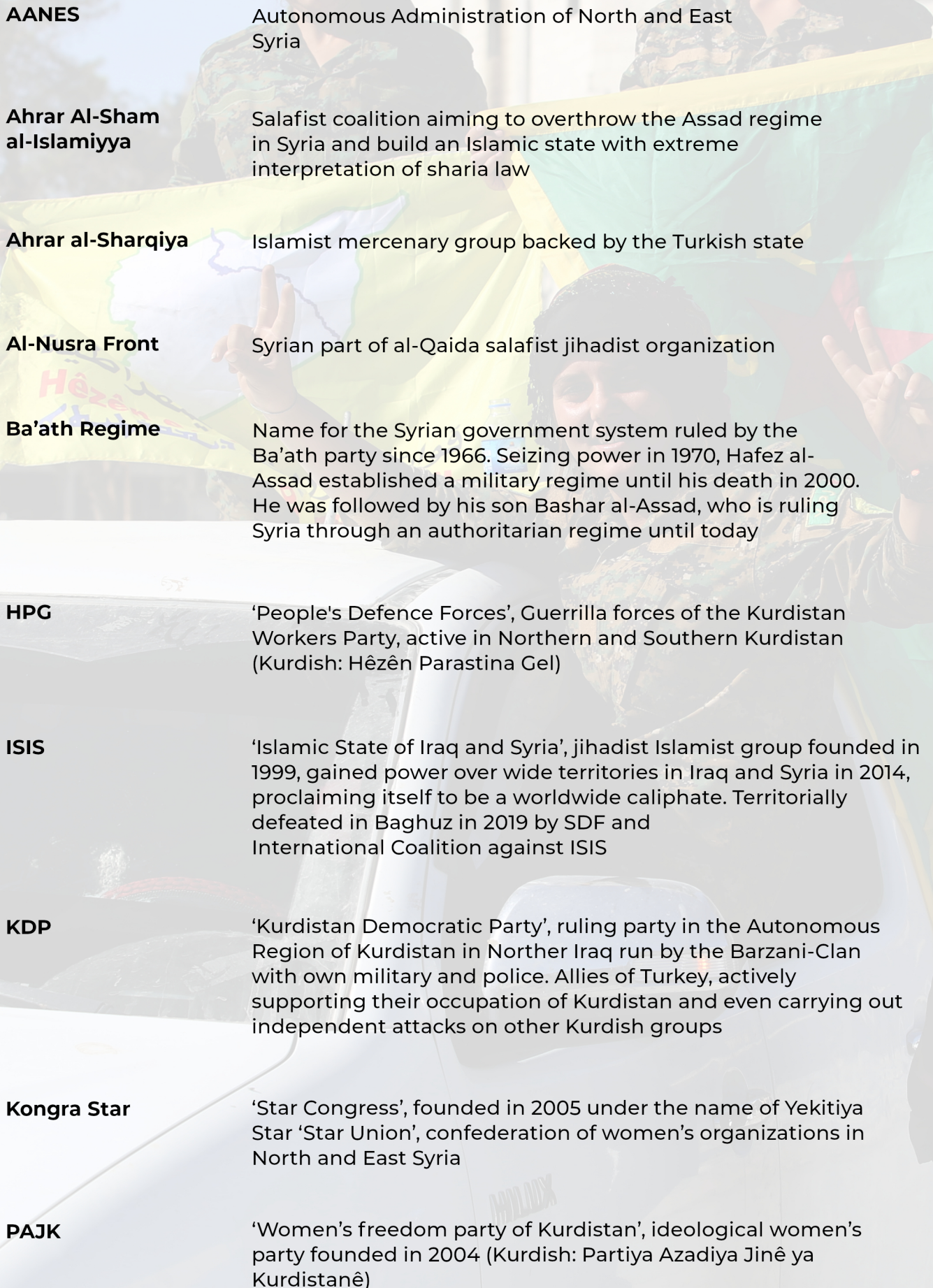
2nd phase of Operation Security and Humanity in al-Hol camp

Jul. 22, 2022

YAT commander Jiyan Tolhildan, YAT fighter Barin Botan and YPJ commander Roj Khabur assassinated in a Turkish drone strike in Qamishlo



8. Glossary



AANES	Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria
Ahrar Al-Sham al-Islamiyya	Salafist coalition aiming to overthrow the Assad regime in Syria and build an Islamic state with extreme interpretation of sharia law
Ahrar al-Sharqiya	Islamist mercenary group backed by the Turkish state
Al-Nusra Front	Syrian part of al-Qaida salafist jihadist organization
Ba'ath Regime	Name for the Syrian government system ruled by the Ba'ath party since 1966. Seizing power in 1970, Hafez al-Assad established a military regime until his death in 2000. He was followed by his son Bashar al-Assad, who is ruling Syria through an authoritarian regime until today
HPG	'People's Defence Forces', Guerrilla forces of the Kurdistan Workers Party, active in Northern and Southern Kurdistan (Kurdish: Hêzên Parastina Gel)
ISIS	'Islamic State of Iraq and Syria', jihadist Islamist group founded in 1999, gained power over wide territories in Iraq and Syria in 2014, proclaiming itself to be a worldwide caliphate. Territorially defeated in Baghuz in 2019 by SDF and International Coalition against ISIS
KDP	'Kurdistan Democratic Party', ruling party in the Autonomous Region of Kurdistan in Northern Iraq run by the Barzani-Clan with own military and police. Allies of Turkey, actively supporting their occupation of Kurdistan and even carrying out independent attacks on other Kurdish groups
Kongra Star	'Star Congress', founded in 2005 under the name of Yekitiya Star 'Star Union', confederation of women's organizations in North and East Syria
PAJK	'Women's freedom party of Kurdistan', ideological women's party founded in 2004 (Kurdish: Partiya Azadiya Jinê ya Kurdistanê)



PYD	Democratic Union Party, established on September 20th, 2003 in Rojava
SDF	'Syrian Democratic Forces', Kurdish-led multi-ethnic military alliance that played a key role in the fight against the Islamic State
SDC	Syrian Democratic Council, political wing of the SDF and the political leadership of the AANES
YAJK	'Free Women's Union of Kurdistan', found in 1995 to combine women working in fields of politics, society, or the women's army YJA-Star
YAT	Anti-Terror Units of SDF (Kurdish: Yekîneyên Antî Teror)
Yekitiya Star	Kurdish women's organization in Rojava founded in 2005, predecessor organization Kongra Star
YJA-Star	'Union of Free Women – Star', autonomous women's army within the HPG guerrilla forces
YNK	'Patriotic Union of Kurdistan', political party in South Kurdistan led by Jalal Talabani, mostly organized in the areas of Sorani Kurds
YPG	'Peoples Defense Units', armed self-defense units in North and East Syria (Kurdish: Yekîneyên Parastina Gel)
YPJ	'Women's Protection Units' all-female self-defense units in North and East Syria(Kurdish: Yekîneyên Parastina Jin)
YXK	'Self-Defense Units of Kurdistan', first armed units in Rojava, later becoming YPG/YPJ (Kurdish: Yekîneyên Xweparastina Kurdistanê)

YPJ Information & Documentation Office

**www.ypj-info.org
contact@ypj-info.org**

Social Media:

Twitter: @YPJ_Info

YouTube: YPJ Info

Instagram: ypj_info

Telegram: t.me/YPJInformation

Mastodon: @YPJ_Info@kolektiva.social



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