

# Call by Elfriede Jelinek and Konstantin Wecker: Peace is more than a dream

**Let's learn to hope** For the anti-war day on the 1st September we exclusively publish the call of the Austrian Nobel Prize winner for literature Elfriede Jelinek and the Munich songwriter Konstantin Wecker to desert from all wars of aggression.

**This text will be published in solidarity with the International Kurdish Culture Festival on the 9th. September 2023 in Frankfurt am Main in German, Kurdish and Turkish**

*"Suddenly, at night, we heard screams, as if a person suffered terrible pain. Then it was quiet. Someone will probably be hit to death, we thought. After an hour we heard screams again, and now it didn't stop. A person screamed all night. A person screamed all day. More and more complaining, more and more helpless. (...) He screamed like an infant screams, naked, without words. Four days and four nights he screamed. It was four years for us. We stuffed paper into our ears. It didn't help. Then it became quiet.*

*Not: the enemy. The human being. The man screamed. (...) In such hours, when, how can I say, you descend down to the groundwater, you ask yourself: Why all this? What's all this for? Would you also ask like that?*

*In all countries, people pondered the same question. In all countries, people gave themselves the same answer. For gold, for land, for coal, for all that dead things, die, starve, people despair, was the answer. And there and there the bravest of the people stood up, called the blind to her hard no, wanted this war to stop and all wars fought for a world in which all children would be good."*

This story from the First World War, "that happened, in which I was there," the writer Ernst Toller left his protagonist Karl Thomas in his play *Oops, we live!* To tell. Only six years later, Toller wrote on the day of the burning of his books in Germany: "In the tornado of war, which is threatening to announce rising arms stocks, Europe plunges into the abyss of suicide. (...) To be honest, you have to know. To be brave, you have to understand. To be fair, one must not forget."

## Every day is killed

The war of aggression by Russia against Ukraine, which violates international law, has been going on for almost 20 months. People are killed and mutilated every day. As in all imperial wars such as that of the NATO state of Turkey against the people of Kurdistan and in the self-governing regions of Rojava in northern Syria or the war of Saudi Arabia in Yemen as well as in the past wars such as those of NATO in 1999 against the Republic of Yugoslavia, 2001 against Afghanistan or in the war of the US-led "Coalition of the willing" 2003 against Iraq.

The prospects for an early end to the war against Ukraine are bad, the war has become a "war of wear and tear". It will not be won, but, as so often in world history, will end far too late. We should understand in order to act.

These imperial wars must be ended immediately: the war against the people of Ukraine as well as that against the Kurds in Turkey, northern Syria, Iran. Likewise, the impending, much larger wars must be prevented. As long as people worldwide can still make it. We have not forgotten what the Austrian author Karl Kraus wrote in 1917: "When the word 'peace' was first pronounced, a panic arose on the stock exchange. They screamed in pain: We deserve it! Let's go to war! We deserve the war!"

Ernst Toller experienced the First World War himself, his literary works and dramas about war, revolution and peace are both encouragement and reminder to us. As an antimilitarist, he returned from the trenches seriously injured, he participated in 1917 with Kurt Eisner, Sarah Sonja Lerch (b. Rabinowitz), Erich and Zenzi Mühsam and many others in Munich in the preparations for the revolution, is actively involved in the overthrow of the monarchy and the council revolution. About his five-year fortress imprisonment after the bloody suppression of the Munich Council Republic by the troops of the SPD bloodhound Noske and the pre-fascist Freikorps, he wrote: "No, I was never alone in these five years, never alone in the most desolate abandonment. The sun comforted me and the moon, wind, which stroked over a puddle and it waved into fleeing circles, grass that grew in spring between stones of the court, a good look, a greeting from loved ones, friendship of comrades, the belief in a world of justice, freedom, humanity, in a world without fear and hunger."

A better life for all people in our world is possible - to dream, to write about it, to sing about it, to insist on it and to commit ourselves together, we all want to do that individually and together: on the global Anti-War Day on the 1st. September, and everywhere and every day worldwide.



*The 1st September has been held since 1947 in the GDR and since 1957 in the FRG as World Peace Day or Anti-war day celebrated Photo: Marc Vorwerk/picture alliance/Sulupress*

We will never stop dreaming of a world without domination without wars, fascism, racism, patriarchy, without the destructive exploitation of people and nature.

As artists, as a writer and a musician, we insist on what Ernst Bloch formulated in his work *The Principle of Hope*: "It is important to learn to hope. (...) The affect of hope comes out of itself, makes people far, instead of narrowing them (...). The work of this affect requires people who actively throw themselves into the becoming, to which they themselves belong. (...) How rich was always dreamed, dreamed of a better life that would be possible."

The insurrection movement in Iran after the murder of the Iranian Kurd Jina Mahsa Amini has raised hope for a global feminist perspective worldwide: Jin, Jiyan, Azadî - Woman, Life, Freedom - Woman, Life, Freedom! This visionary position has a long history in the Kurdish feminist movement for gender equality.

The warlords and politicians of this world can neither ban our dreams, nor can they prevent our attempts to make this a reality in the long run. Neither in Ankara nor in Tehran, nor in Moscow nor in Washington, Beijing or Berlin.

"It is our responsibility, as intellectuals or simply as thoughtful people, to try at least to think about what something better could look like. And if there are people who are actually trying to do something better, it is our responsibility to help them with it," said David Graeber about the importance of the "real revolution" in Rojava in a conversation with journalist Pınar Ögünç. That speaks from our soul. The anthropologist, anarchist and anti-fascist Graeber is on the 2nd. September 2020 was torn out of life far too early. He, the thinker, researcher and Occupy activist, always assured his readers that we can overcome the problems of the world by creating alternatives. That's why we should never stop dreaming, hoping and going on a search.

## **The utopia of Rojava lives**

Unbearable, on the other hand, is the fact that the German government, the German corporations and the German arms industry still support the criminal and racist Erdoğan regime today: In this way, the ruling politicians are complicit in a war of aggression in violation of international law - because the Turkish NATO army also commits its war crimes with German weapons and with German tanks, such as the occupation of the northern Syrian canton of Efrin in violation of international law in 2018 and the expulsion of the Kurdish and Yistish population there.

So the handshake of the German Interior Minister Nancy Faeser in Ankara with her Turkish colleague in 2023 is outrageous and enlightening at the same time: Nothing about German (foreign) politics is feminist, it is mendacious and hypocritical. The war of aggression of the Turkish Erdoğan regime against the people of Rojava in northern Syria and in southern Kurdistan in northern Iraq is contrary to international law and a crime against humanity. It must be stopped immediately. But the German government is silent and is once again sealing its dirty deal with NATO partner Turkey against refugees. This pact is deadly for a lot of people. They die in the Mediterranean, at the external borders of Fortress Europe and in the torture cellars of the "allies".



*"The people of Rojava now need our worldwide solidarity" Photo: Beata Zawrzell/picture alliance/NurPhoto*

Rojava and Kurdistan concern us all: The people of Rojava now need our worldwide solidarity. And we need the utopia of Rojava: this social experiment of a grassroots and council democratic, feminist, ecological and socially just, multi-ethnic and multi-religious society in a region of patriarchal autocrats, of violence and wars. For years, the self-managed project in Rojava has been the only glimmer of hope for many people throughout the region for peace and anti-racist solidarity against hatred and destruction.

The deadly EU-Turkey deal against all people who have to flee from war, hunger, hardship and destruction must finally be stopped. It was the prelude to the abolition of the right of asylum in June this year and the EU policy against refugees. We want many people all over the world to get involved and take to the streets for Rojava and against the wars: We need a worldwide wave of civil disobedience so that we stop all arms deliveries!

As a writer, as a musician, we are always obliged to speak the truth. I, Elfriede Jelinek, also



wrote this in 2022 as part of the initiative "Writers ask Russians, speak the truth" in a longer text: "Surely said: What you are shown is not true. The pictures lie, they lack the words. (...) A great cultural people like the Russian, whose literature I have always admired, must not freeze in these clumsy untruths, it must speak the truth. Just as your wonderful poets, your writers and thinkers, who have told the truth and thus become the property of humanity. Do not let yourself be excluded from this community, tell everyone the truth who listens to you that this war of aggression against a sovereign state like Ukraine must be ended immediately."

We support our peace friends in Russia. "There is a need for mass mobilization against the war of aggression, an invitation to all Russian soldiers to immediately refuse and desert the order. Only a revolt among the Russian soldiers can stop this war immediately!" I wrote that, Konstantin Wecker, in the anti-war manifesto on the 3rd. March 2022, ten days after the start of the Russian attack. The older ones among us will remember: This was also the case in Vietnam - the beginning of the end of the US war of aggression at that time was the mass desertion and the revolts of the ordinary US soldiers against their officers and generals.

We want to tell about another war crime: a massacre committed in the mountains of Kurdistan by officers and soldiers of NATO member Turkey. The perpetrators have not been held accountable to this day, almost 25 years after the crime. It is an example of many: The Munich woman Andrea Wolf/Ronahî as well as the Kurdish musician Hoznan Hogir and at least one other person are on the 23rd. October 1998 as unarmed prisoners were tortured and executed by officers and soldiers of the Turkish army in the mountains of the Kurdish region of Wan (Turkish: Van) after their arrest.



*"When the word 'peace' was first pronounced, a panic arose on the stock exchange" (Karl Kraus, 1917) Photo: Lutz Jaeckel/lalif*

It was not until 15 years later that a cemetery in the mountains of Keleh near Çatak near the massacre could be opened in September 2013, but the relatives of those killed could only physically remember their loved ones on Only two years later, on Sunday, the 29th. November 2015, a few weeks after Angela Merkel sealed the "EU-Turkey deal" against refugees in Ankara, the Turkish military bombed and destroyed the cemetery named after the German internationalist, feminist and anti-fascist Andrea Wolf as well as the memorial and the documentation center with helicopters, fighter planes and grenades. Just as it has bombed and destroyed many other cemeteries in Kurdistan. By the way, this is also a war crime according to international law.

They not only bomb the living, they also bomb the killed and murdered, because they want to erase the memory of their ideas and their dreams. But they will not succeed.

We should remember the ideas and utopias of the killed so that they will never be forgotten, neither the ideas nor the people: "I would wish that there were movements in the metropolises that would attack this war, make it impossible. Just cut the replenishment. I know it is utopian in view of the situation in the metropolises (...) It will continue to be the same for a long time. Too bad, that would be something. A militant movement that paralyzes the war machine." Andrea Wolf wrote these sentences at the age of 32 on the 1st. May 1997 in the mountains of Kurdistan, almost 17 months before her murder.

"To be fair, one must not forget," wrote the writer Ernst Toller on the day of the burning of his books in Germany. And so, analogous to our appeal to the people of Russia, we want to call on the people of Germany today, on the international anti-war day, to finally end their silence and speak the truth: The German government still supplies weapons to its NATO partner Turkey, and with these weapons people are killed every day and wars of aggression are waged in violation of international law. The agreements of the EU and the German government with Turkey are partly responsible for the mass death of refugees in the Mediterranean and at the EU's external borders.

## **The duty of disobedience**

In the call "Prevent the disaster", intellectuals, including the author of this text, demanded as early as 2019: "Instead of flanking Erdoğan's defamation of the Kurds and all opposition members in general as "terrorists", the EU should review the cooperation it has entered into in migration policy with Ankara. This is especially aimed at the German government, which already prohibits the display of Kurdish symbols. In return, the right of people from Syria to find protection from their persecutors in Germany and Europe must be expressly guaranteed. This would also be in their own interest: Anyone who weakens or even destroys democratic processes by giving authoritarian regimes a free hand will not be able to make this world safer for anyone."

Abdullah Öcalan has been held in solitary confinement on the prison island of İmralı since 1999. In his book *Beyond State, Power and Violence*, the Kurdish politician, representative and important theorist writes:

*"I find attractive ethical-political people who cultivate friendship with animals, live in harmony with nature, build on a balance of genders, live in freedom, equality and love and*

*save the power of science and technology from being toys for warriors and powerful. I'm definitely not talking about a longing caused by imprisonment in a one-person prison! I'm talking about a spiritual paradigm. Categorically, I say: the worship of power and power, the sparkling and glittering life of all bloodtrained civilizations, I'm really tired and hate it. (...) The break with the hierarchical, etatistic class civilization is the strongest self-criticism. I believe that I will carry it out successfully. The childhood of humanity, the forgotten history of the working people and the peoples, the worlds of freedom and equality in the utopias of the women, the children and the child remained elders - I prefer to participate in them, achieve success there. All this is utopia. But sometimes utopias are the only saving inspiration. From today's buildings, which are worse than graves, you will of course break out through utopias."*

A just and peaceful solution for the people of Kurdistan requires the release of Abdullah Öcalan and the lifting of the ban on the PKK in Germany. We therefore demand the immediate release of Abdullah Öcalan!

"Fascism is not an opinion, but a crime!" With this sentence, the resistance fighter Martin Löwenberg (1925 - 2018) encouraged people to civil courage at many joint demonstrations to prevent Nazi marches through blockades, save lives and hide refugees. "It can be legitimate what is not legal," says the former concentration camp prisoner and resistance fighter Löwenberg in the documentary of the same name by Petra Gerschner and Michael Backmund about his life against fascism, oppression and war.

We want to conclude our contribution with the poem At the end of the time of the poet Rose Ausländer (1901 - 1988). In 1941, the fascists locked Rose Ausländer into the ghetto Czernowitz. There she met the poet Paul Celan, both of whom had a lifelong friendship and their love for poetry. Even after the dissolution of the ghetto, Rose Ausländer was not allowed to leave the city, but escaped forced labor and deportation and survived the Holocaust and war in a basement hiding place. This poem is full of love for people and full of longing and hope for a life after the war. And this is what we sincerely wish especially to the people in all parts of Kurdistan, who have been suffering from colonial oppression and war for over 100 years, that the war, which is always "terror of the powerful", finally ends:

At the end of time  
When the war is over  
at the end of time  
we go for a walk again  
in the Muschelallee  
agree  
with human and human

It will be nice  
when it will be  
at the end of time

- Rose Ausländer





Leonhard Foeger/picture alliance/reuters

**Elfriede Jelinek**, born in Austria in 1946, received the Nobel Prize for Literature in 2004. The writer deals with patriarchy, war and fascism in her plays, for example in *Rechnitz (Der Würgeengel)*. Jelinek has also been supporting the people of Kurdistan in political texts for decades and is committed to colleagues in exile, such as the Turkish writer Aslı Erdoğan



Alexander Gonschoir/Imago

**Konstantin Wecker**, born in Munich in 1947, has been supporting the Kurdish movement for years. The songwriter grew up in an anti-fascist house: his father refused to serve in the Wehrmacht, the mother went with him to demos. Elfriede Jelinek admires the poet for the power and radicality of her plays. He is "unbandig" happy about the cooperation on this text