

Appendix 1. Responses to the Article by Kurdish Women

Response authored by a female PKK member in Northern Iraq on behalf of Women in the Kurdistan Women's Liberation Movement (Komalên Jinên Kurdistan) (comprising leading women of the PKK)

- The PKK is a revival and resurrection movement of the Kurdish women.
- Women have a very important place in the PKK since its very foundation.
- The PKK grew in strength as the level of women's liberation increased.
- The PKK is a people's movement that has developed under the leadership of free women.
- The struggles for the freedom of the Kurdish people in general and the freedom of Kurdish women are intertwined. They support and strengthen each other and create a free individual and society in a radical way.
- Initially, the PKK was influenced by Marxist ideologies, class struggles, and socialist movements.
- In the PKK, giving priority to women's freedom is a rule/code.
- The PKK took concrete steps to free the women from the patriarchal system. This was not an easy task. As you may guess, to create the opposite of the existing gender constructs required great intellectual and practical work.
- Today, in our revolutionary life, women and men participate equally in all aspects of life. Women are taking even bigger responsibilities and risks than men. For example, Kurdish women achieved great successes in the guerrilla missions (even in the ones that were argued as impossible by men). The successes achieved by our women guerrillas convinced the Kurdish men to change their male-dominated attitudes towards women. Today, female guerrillas enjoy equal participation in military missions, administration of the organization, and the other aspects of life. A system of co-chairing, co-presidency, and co-spokespersons, with one male and one female, has been developed in almost all sections of life here. This was achieved through our intense ideological trainings.
- The main reason why women join the PKK is the demand and the quest for liberation.
- The PKK enables the Kurdish women to achieve self-awareness in their struggle for liberation.
- The PKK broke the traditional gender patterns among its members. There is no place for the roles of dominant masculinity nor traditional femininity.
- The majority of our trainings are held in mixed gender classrooms. However, we also have several women specific training academies and locations.
- All trainings in the PKK are carried out on the basis of women's freedom.
- In PKK, the ideas of "dominant masculinity" and "slave women" are under constant criticism.
- The new PKK recruits (men and women) go through an educational process to change their mentalities.
- All trainings, life, war, organization and assignment are based on the equality of women and men.
- In the PKK, women are the owners of life, organization and revolution.

- Women's assignment into leadership positions in the PKK came after a tough history of struggle. Today, women have equal say (and participation) in all aspects of life in the PKK. You cannot see this in any of the other organizations (or even in the states) in the Middle East.
 - In the PKK, nothing is based on force. There are thousands of men and women in the mountains. They are here voluntarily and with their own decisions. We have a strong intellectual structure. The greatest discipline comes from thought.
 - The source of our bravery is the ideology of liberation of Kurdish women.
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Response authored by woman living in Northern Iraq (who resided with the PKK for months)

- The leader of the PKK, Abdullah Ocalan, repeatedly stated “PKK is a women’s party”.
- A society cannot be freed unless its women are free. While half of a society is a slave (the women in the traditional Kurdish society), the other half can't claim to be free.
- Since the foundation of the PKK, the most important issue that has been stated by Ocalan is the issue of women's freedom and equality.
- Everything stated by Deniz is true. Especially since 1989, women have been actively involved in military missions and in many places, they have been the pioneers of the war.
- YJA-Star is an autonomous army composed of only women within the PKK.
- In the PKK, women play an active role in combat. They even lead many of the military missions. Hundreds of women lost their lives in war so far, and dozens of them have been recorded as heroes, in the war history of the PKK. In the PKK women do not do the auxiliary work for men.
- Öcalan considers these female heroes as goddesses and the sources of freedom, and himself as their servant.
- It is hard to provide exact numbers. In some places, the majority of the combat units are composed of women. Sometimes women compose only half of the units. But, the leadership cadre of every single unit is always has an equal representation of both women and men.
- In pre-PKK Kurdistan, as in every feudal society, Kurdish women were the most oppressed, whose rights were ignored, despised by the patriarchal mentality, and in many places, they were not even considered as human beings. As Öcalan stated, Kurdish men viewed the women as objects that had no mission other than being slaves of the house or mere instruments for the production of children.
- The PKK is also a training/education movement. In the PKK, the Kurdish women became conscious and aware of the women who live a free life in other parts of the world. They learned that they did not have to live under the male hegemony, but they have a right to live a free and equal life. They learned that they had to be considered as an individual who has a will, power, and ability to think over their decisions.
- The heaviest punishments in the PKK have been reserved for the mistreatment of women. It is because the PKK gives a high emphasis to gender equality that mistreating women is considered equal to attacking to the PKK itself.

- Every single guerrilla within the PKK views the freedom of women as the essence of their struggle, and they promise commitment to this principle in their words of loyalty after each training session.
 - In the PKK, violence against women is considered equivalent to being hostile to the ideology of the PKK.
 - The level of women's freedom achieved by the PKK has inevitably been reflected in Kurdish society. Kurdish women, compared to past, are now more conscious, active in the political arena, willed, and powerful.
 - Thanks to the struggle for gender equality within the PKK, the place of women in Kurdish society has progressed. Respect for women has increased among all Kurds who embraced the ideology of the PKK. Men in the society began to trust women in leadership positions. Women have begun to be appointed to leadership positions in various social and political institutions and workplaces.
 - Undoubtedly, it is not an easy job to break down the cultural, social and political mentality that has been created by a society dominated by men for over five-thousand-years. It is not easy to reach to all Kurdish women in the society and raise their awareness of gender equality. Today, the PKK is an outlawed group in Turkey and in many other parts of the world. It can't just go into the society and promote gender equality. The opportunities are very limited. When there is an opportunity, guerillas work under the constant risk of being caught or getting killed.
 - Despite this, due to the excitement and morale created by the empowerment of the women guerrillas in the PKK, Kurdish women have begun to organize themselves in all aspects of life to better fight for their rights. Still, the source of their inspiration comes from the women guerillas of the PKK.
 - Being in love with someone is not prohibited in the PKK. However, the PKK is still an actively fighting group. For this reason women are not allowed to conceive and then raise children in this environment.
 - The situations you are referring (getting pregnant) is rare as the PKK is against marriage and sexual intercourse. However, so many mistakes were done in the year of 1999. Separating the babies from the mothers is one them. It was a short-lived practice. Even Ocalan condemned it when he was informed about it. I personally know that several women who bore children were let go to provide a better life for their babies. Not just the women but also the fathers were let go so that they can establish a family. Many of them freely live in Northern Iraq today.
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Appendix 2. Video Interviews Regarding Gender with Members of the PKK

Source: *Wall Street Journal* (published on July 24, 2015)

Title: In PKK, Kurdish Women Fight Alongside Men

Link: <https://www.wsj.com/video/in-pkk-kurdish-women-fight-alongside-men-/D316C7D7-229D-4388-9D39-24B18AA868B8.html>

Content: Interview with a female PKK fighter.

Source: *CNN* (published on October 6, 2008)

Title: PKK: Kurdish guerrilla movement for sexual equality

Link: <http://www.cnn.com/2008/WORLD/meast/10/06/iraq.pkk/index.html>
<https://youtu.be/CRP-9ZfzY9A>

Content: Interview with several male and female PKK commanders

Source: *BBC* (published on August 20, 2015)

Title: Kurdish & Yazidi women fighting ISIS

Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fQZR6xzDkjc>

Content: Interview with two female PKK commanders (Beritan Sela and Narin Jamished)

Source: *Al Jazeera* (published on November 11, 2014)

Title: The Guerrilla Women Fighting ISIS | AJ+ Docs

Link: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_FDjJ4oFTAs

Content: Interview with several female PKK fighters

Source: British Documentary maker, *Journeymen Pictures*

Title: The guerilla girls of Turkey

Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gjTlS5xg9ys>

Content: Interview with several female PKK fighters
