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Parliamentary Joint Committee on Intelligence and Security
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Parliamentary Joint Committee on Intelligence and Security,

Submission concerning the relisting of the PKK

We are writing to you on behalf of the wider Australian-Turkish community and the undersigned Turkish community associations across the country in support of the Australian Government's decision to relist the PKK (*Partiya Karkerên Kurdistanê*) as a proscribed organisation under the *Criminal Code 1995 (Cth)* and *Criminal Code (Terrorist Organisation— Kurdistan Workers' Party) Regulations 2021*.

Part A - Introduction

The Australian Turkish Advocacy Alliance (ATAA) is the peak public affairs organisation of Australians of Turkish descent, who number over 100,000.

ATAA supports the Australian Government's decision to relist the PKK as a proscribed terrorist organisation under the *Criminal Code 1995 (Cth)*. Hundreds of members of our community have either directly or indirectly been impacted by the PKK's violent campaign over the past five decades. It is therefore our duty to make a submission to this inquiry.

ATAA also wishes to express its disappointment, on behalf of the undersigned community associations, that the extensive consultations have been undertaken with Kurdish community groups based on the recommendations made by the esteemed committee after its 2018 decision, yet the same level of consultations with Turkish representative groups have not been forthcoming. There are many members of the Australian Turkish community who are the victims of the PKK terror group, and we believe they deserve to be given an equal opportunity by the department engagement teams. Some of their stories have been included in this submission.

As a community organisation, we also believe it is our duty to highlight the potential dangers the PKK and its diaspora support network pose to Western liberal democracies like Australia. Although diaspora groups supporting PKK act within a peaceful modus operandi and generally engage in political lobbying to win the support of public and governments in their respective countries, on several occasions, especially in Europe they caused widespread violence and destruction when it suited their agenda^{1 2 3}.

¹ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9DIyAoc6oo>

² <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CNhEo37ObYs>

³ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1owwiiEjmLE>

This submission is in support of the Department of Home Affairs position and the position of the Minister for Home Affairs, which we believe should also consider adding YPG (Yekîneyên Parastina Gel) to the “known aliases” list.

Part B - Background of the PKK

The PKK is a particularly violent terrorist organisation which since its foundation in 1984, been responsible for the deaths of more than 40,000 people, mainly of Kurdish background. The PKK does not represent the Kurdish people or their rights. Most of its founders, some of whom survived brutal infighting over four decades, are Turkish leftists who cannot even speak the Kurdish language.

It is a Marxist-Leninist terrorist organisation, therefore rejects nation-states and what its founder Abdullah Ocalan calls the “bourgeois democracies”,⁴ including the Commonwealth of Australia.

“Given Ocalan’s ideological roots and his commitment to collectivism and his abhorrence of individual freedom one must read the PKK/KCK version of ‘democracy’ as nothing else but Soviet style collectivist ‘people’s democracy’, that is exactly the opposite of how democracy is understood in democratic societies,” noted Dr. Walter Posch, Senior Research Fellow from the European Union Institute for Security Studies in his detailed analysis of the PKK⁵.

At the peak of its campaign in early 1980s and 1990s, the PKK carried out hundreds of massacres against the civilians across the villages in Turkey’s mainly Kurdish populated southeast regions.

The group proudly bragged about these massacres in its official publications many of which can still be accessed via web archive tools.

For example, on 20 June 1987 around 9:30PM PKK militants raided a small village called Pinarçik and massacred 30 civilians, including 16 children and 6 women. They left the following message which they also published later in their magazines:

“No one can save the servants of Turkey’s imperialist fascism from the wrath of the Kurdish army.”

In another attack from 1987, the PKK proudly published its success in killing 25 “traitors” aged between three and 45.⁶ We can provide at least another fifty examples like these that the wider Australian public would condemn if they were to know. PKKs violent terror campaign continuous to this day with their tactics evolving in the face of global cooperation against terrorism in the post 9/11 era as well as increased use of high-tech measures in disrupting and destroying terror cells at planning phase. In this submission we will give you more examples of more recent terror attacks.

The complex structure of the PKK led network of terror groups is evident in the Act with the long list of different names and abbreviations also mentioned as “known aliases”.

TAK (Teyrêbazên Azadiya Kurdistan) is one of the most brutal cells within the PKK, is responsible for many violent attacks including the February 2015 suicide bombings in Turkish capital Ankara. In this attack 29 civilians were killed, including the uncle of Granville, NSW resident [REDACTED]

“My uncle, [REDACTED] was killed in a bomb attack on the bus he was taking back home from work in February 2015. The death left my aunty a widow, needing to care for two children as a single mother and left two children, [REDACTED] (5 at the time) and [REDACTED] (14 at the time) without a father. It was a massive blow for my mother and father living in Australia – to lose such a close relative and have a family torn apart was very saddening. It was especially hard for my father who is still impacted by it. The impact of that attack

⁴ https://ataa-my.sharepoint.com/:b/g/personal/admin_ata-a_org_au/Eem9rP1AB3tItrZo_DyRRoBpY-7J7WTDnKqkz1jpG_3JQ?e=y2LZJS

⁵ https://ataa-my.sharepoint.com/:b/g/personal/admin_ata-a_org_au/Eem9rP1AB3tItrZo_DyRRoBpY-7J7WTDnKqkz1jpG_3JQ?e=y2LZJS P7

⁶ <http://www.serxwebun.org/arsiv/13ozeltebax/files/assets/downloads/page0031.pdf>

continues to reverberate through the lives of the victims it has left behind. ██████ told ATAA.

██████ is a 47-year-old resident of ██████ NSW. His brother, ██████ was killed while doing his compulsory military service in Hakkari Cukurca, at the age of 22. ██████ told us that ██████ was two weeks out of the end of his service and both brothers were planning to meet at their third sibling's wedding in later 2004 in Turkey. ██████ sees PKK terrorists as a grave danger to any country they live in as he thinks they disrespect the opportunities given to them from those countries.

██████ lives in ██████, NSW. Her brother was kidnapped by the PKK and tortured during his captivity. While in captivity, he also had witnessed his friends being murdered randomly by PKK terrorists.

"I migrated to Australia in 1990. I had two children at the time. All my siblings and parents were living in Turkey. My brother ██████ went for his military service in 1992 in Eastern Turkey; the city of Hakkari/Yuksekov. All I knew was that he was at the military. We did not hear from him for months. After a few months we heard from the TV news that a few soldiers were rescued from the hands of PKK and one of them was my brother. We were informed that 10 Turkish soldiers including my brother were kidnapped by the PKK and were held at a PKK cave for 3 months. My brother was so effected that he disclosed very limited information. He told us that his friends were killed randomly in front of his eyes just for fun and he could've been one of them. He said he had to live with his dead friends bodies in the cave for a few days until they were removed by PKK. They also were subject to torture almost every day and were subject to hunger and thirst. My brother was mentally unwell and was diagnosed of PTSD. He is still struggling with his trauma."

The PKK's diaspora support networks have caused significant damage in Europe especially, either through trafficking of drugs or violence.

The U.S. Department of Justice study concludes that the PKK-KONGRA GEL covertly financed its growing militant and propaganda activities from the illicit drug business in cooperation with several Kurdish organized crime networks.⁷

Members of the Turkish community and their associations had been targeted in Germany, Belgium, Netherlands, and France were targeted in the past by PKK sympathizers^{8 9 10 11}. According to our community leaders, Turkish community association assets in Australia have in the past been targeted as well.

Members of our community on numerous occasions expressed their belief in the existence of active PKK support networks in Australia. They believe these networks potentially carry some sort of responsibility in the recruitment and travel arrangements of ██████ and ██████, who were killed in Northern Syria alongside YPG, an organisation labelled by the former US Secretary for Defence, Ash Carter as "the same" with PKK.

Most recently, one of the former foreign recruits of YPG/PYD was arrested by the FBI in the United States for planning to carry out violent attacks¹².

⁷ <https://www.ojp.gov/ncjrs/virtual-library/abstracts/narcoterrorism-turkey-financing-pkk-kongra-gel-illicit-drug>

⁸ <https://www.yenisafak.com/dunya/almanyada-pkk-yandaslari-camiye-saldirdi-3615675>

⁹ <https://www.dailymotion.com/video/x7mm3r1>

¹⁰ <https://www.ensonhaber.com/dunya/almanyada-pkk-destekcileri-esnafa-saldirdi>

¹¹ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I3tDWjaBNml>

¹² <https://www.justice.gov/usao-ndfl/pr/tallahassee-man-arrested-inciting-violence-florida-capitol-building>

It would be naive not to think that YPG/PYD to find footing in Australia through far-left extremist networks with propensity for violence. In fact, the PKK/YPG/PYD also allegedly provides military and paramilitary training to hard left radical groups such in Northern Iraq and Syria¹³.

According to former CIA Station Chief in the Middle East, ██████████, YPG leader, an errand boy of PKK's jailed leader Abdullah Ocalan, Mazlum Abdi is one of the worst terrorists ever known to the agency¹⁴.

The PKK and YPG continues to use child soldiers against all human rights conventions undersigned by like-minded nations of Australia.^{15 16 17}

It is essential that the esteemed members of the committee understand that despite their protestations, the PKK does not represent the Kurdish people. In fact, the majority of the PKK's victims have been the Kurdish people of Southeast Turkey as noted in the examples above, in Northern Syria and Northern Iraq. The best example of this is the current sit-in protests carried out by the Kurdish mothers whose children had been abducted by PKK as recruits in mainly Kurdish town of Diyarbakir¹⁸.

There are more than a dozen Kurdish political parties in the region, and none of them share the same ideologies with PKK-YPG/PYD. The heavily armed and battle-hardened terror group often violently oppresses its rival political parties. Today PKK-YPG/PYD are at odds with the KDP administration in Northern Iraq and with ENKS in Northern Syria. The Northern Iraqi Kurds who do not live under the autocratic Marxist-Leninist ideology of PKK are often victimised by the terror group. There have been severe clashes between Northern Iraq's Western ally KDP's peshmerga forces and PKK in recent times¹⁹.

Finally, Ocalan and PKK see Israel, supportive of Kurdish nationalism, as a threat to PKK's pan-nationalistic confederate ideology. Again, according to Posch, official media outlets of the PKK/KCK also publish "bizarre conspiracy theories about Israel, such as the opinion the Jewish state would be an active supporter of the Islamic State for reasons of common Semitic roots between Hebrews and Arabs".

Part C - Recommendations

1 Recommendations

It is ATAA's recommendation that:

1. PJCIS endorse the Minister for Home Affairs' decision to re-list the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) under the *Criminal Code Act 1995 (Cth)*.
2. PJCIS seek additional information and make further enquiries to identify the PKK's listing to be extended to the YPG / PYD which is the Syrian branch or affiliate of the PKK.
3. PJCIS recommend relevant government agencies to investigate and report on the recruitment of Australians for and Australia originated financing of PKK/YPG.

¹³ <https://www.trtworld.com/magazine/antifa-trained-by-terrorist-pkk-in-syria-may-end-up-outlawed-in-the-us-36817>

¹⁴ [The Inevitable Day of Reckoning in Syria - Just Security](#)

¹⁵ <https://www.refworld.org/docid/498805c428.html>

¹⁶ <https://undocs.org/s/2018/969>

¹⁷ <https://www.mei.edu/publications/child-soldiers-and-ypg>

¹⁸ <https://morningexpress.in/turkey-diyarbakirs-mothers-now-sit-in-24-hours-a-day/>

¹⁹ <https://www.al-monitor.com/originals/2021/06/deadly-attacks-stoke-kdp-pkk-tensions-iraqi-kurdistan>

4. PJCIS recommend relevant government authorities to further engage Turkish community groups as direct victims of PKK's five-decade long terror campaign ahead of next periodical review in 2024.

Part D - Submissions

2 Submissions

Our recommendations are based on the following:

- 2.1 s102.1 of the *Criminal Code 1995 (Cth)* defines 'terrorist organisation' as:
 1. an organisation that is directly or indirectly engaged in, preparing, planning, assisting in or fostering the doing of a terrorist act; or
 2. one that has been listed in the regulations as a terrorist organisation.
- 2.2 The PKK is both listed in the regulations as a terrorist organisation and is also an organisation that is directly or indirectly engaged in, preparing, planning, assisting in or fostering the doing of a terrorist act.
 1. A small example of PKK terrorist organisations activities attributed to the terror group but not included in the Minister's Statement of Reasons are the following:
 - (i) Various attacks against civilians and civilian gas infrastructure²⁰.
 - (ii) 8 June 2020: Van. Bomb attack against a vehicle carrying civilian electrical contractors killed two people, injured eight.²¹
 - (iii) 14 May 2020: Van. Two civilians were killed after PKK militant opened fire on a charity vehicle.²²
 - (iv) 31 July 2018: Hakkari. PKK IED explosion killed 25-year-old mother and her 11-month-old baby in Hakkari.²³
 - (v) 8 April 2020: Attack on villagers going to collect wood killed five civilians.²⁴
 - (vi) 12 February 2021: N Iraq. The PKK executed 13 hostages it held captive since 2015 with "single bullets into the heads" when a rescue operation launched by the Turkish army²⁵.
 2. All these activities demonstrate that the PKK is directly engaged in preparing, planning, assisting, or fostering the doing of a terrorist act.
 3. The PKK is also part of or affiliated with Syrian terrorist organisations including the PYD/YPG, who the United Nations has identified as using child soldiers in its armed activities²⁶.
- 2.3 The PKK poses a serious threat to Australians and our way of life.
 1. On September 10, 2001, the day before 9/11, Australian 22-year-old Amanda Rigg was killed by a PKK-affiliated DHKP C violent extremist leftist suicide bomber in Istanbul.

²⁰ Statement of Reasons Pg 13 Department of Home Affairs 2021.

²¹ <https://www.hurriyet.com.tr/gundem/son-dak-ka-vanda-hain-saldiri-2-isci-sehit-oldu-8-isci-yaralandi-41536833>

²² <https://www.mynet.com/van-da-pkk-li-teroristlerce-vefa-sosyal-destek-grubuna-saldiri-110106515920>

²³ <https://www.trthaber.com/haber/gundem/bedirhan-bebek-ve-annesi-aniliyor-598781.html>

²⁴ <https://www.aa.com.tr/tr/turkiye/diyarbakirda-sivillere-yonel-k-teror-saldirisi-5-sivil-sehit-oldu/1796563>

²⁵ <https://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/pkk-terrorists-kill-13-civillians-defense-minister-akar-162397>

²⁶ Children and armed conflict in the Syrian Arab Republic - Report of the Secretary-General (S/2021/398)

2. In 2016 the former Australian Ambassador to Turkey James Larsen and his 12-year-old daughter narrowly escaped death when the PKK detonated a car bomb in Ankara's Kizilay Square, which also resulted in the deaths of 37 people²⁷.
 3. Australians Reece Harding, Jamie Bright and Ashley Kent Johnson were killed fighting along with PKK's Syrian branch YPG.
- 2.4 The PKK is a significant player in international drug trafficking and people smuggling. The PKK finances its terrorist activities through international drug trafficking, people smuggling and extortion^{28,29}.
- 2.5 The international position is that the PKK is a terrorist organisation:
1. The PKK is proscribed in many countries including the United States of America, Australia, New Zealand, Japan, the United Kingdom and the European Union. All of these countries recognise the security threat that the PKK poses.
 2. The North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) also refers to the PKK as a terrorist organisation.
 3. US President Biden has previously stated that the PKK is a terror group '*plain and simple*' and that '*IS not the only existential threat to the people of Turkey, the PKK is equally a threat and we are aware of that*'.

Part E - Community Groups Who Endorse This Submission

- 2.6 This submission is supported by the following Australian Turkish Groups:
1. Council Of Turkish Associations Incorporated NSW
 2. Turkish Welfare Association NSW
 3. Australian Turkish Mutual Alliance NSW
 4. North Cyprus Turkish Community of Victoria VIC
 5. Turkish Islamic Association of QLD
 6. Broadmeadows Turkish Islamic and Cultural Centre Inc. VIC
 7. Northern Cyprus Turkish Association NSW
 8. Sydney Turkish Islamic Culture and Mosque Association NSW
 9. Gallipoli Turkish Cultural Foundation NSW
 10. MUSIAD Sydney NSW
 11. Redfern Islamic Society NSW
 12. Bonnyrigg Turkish Islamic Cultural Association NSW
 13. Australian Azerbaijanis Association Inc NSW
 14. South Azerbaijan Democratic Turkic Unity NSW
 15. Australia Turkish Cypriot Cultural Welfare Associations VIC
 16. Australian Turkish Youth Association NSW
 17. Thomastown Turkish Islamic and Education Centre VIC

²⁷ <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2016-03-14/australian-ambassador-to-turkey-recounts-ankara-blast/7245966?nw=0&r=Gallery>

²⁸ <https://www.ojp.gov/ncjrs/virtual-library/abstracts/narcoterrorism-turkey-financing-pkk-kongra-gel-illicit-drug>

²⁹ Statement of Reasons Pg 12 Department of Home Affairs 2021.

18. Diyanet Foundation NSW
19. Turkish Media Limited NSW
20. Turkish Association Western Sydney NSW
21. Cyprus Turkish Islamic Community of Victoria Inc VIC
22. Turkish Education and Performing Arts Association NSW
23. Turkish Black Sea Folklore and Friendship Society Inc. NSW
24. ICMG Guildford Mosque Association NSW
25. Council of Turkish Association Inc. NSW
26. ICMG Mascot NSW
27. Holroyd Turkish Society Inc. NSW
28. Australian Turkish Advocacy Alliance NSW
29. Australian Turkish Music Ensemble Inc. NSW
30. Samarkand Community Youth Club NSW
31. Western Sydney Turkish Islamic Cultural Centre NSW
32. Islamic Cultural Centre of Sydney NSW
33. Australia Light Foundation VIC
34. Whittlesea Turkish Elderly and Pensioners Association Inc VIC
35. Turkish Islamic Association of Western Australian WA
36. Islamic Centre of Newcastle NSW

Part F - Conclusion

We urge the Committee to endorse the decision of the Minister for Home Affairs to relist the PKK as a terrorist organisation pursuant to the Criminal Code 1995 (Cth). This is a particularly important issue to Australians of Turkish descent who in many instances have lost family members because of the PKK's violent terrorist activities in Turkey.

We thank the Committee for this opportunity to make a submission and invite the Committee to discuss our submission further.

Yours faithfully,

Hank Evecek

Director, Australian Turkish Advocacy Alliance