



By: TA | AP Brief

Kurdish rebel group is withdrawing its fighters from Turkey



A militant Kurdish group announced on Sunday that it is withdrawing its fighters from Turkey to Iraq as part of a peace effort with Turkey.

The statement issued in northern Iraq by the Kurdistan Workers' Party, or PKK, came months after a group of its fighters began laying down their **weapons** in a symbolic ceremony, as part of the **peace process**.

The group has been waging a decades-long insurgency in Turkey that has led to tens of thousands of deaths since the 1980s.

"To prevent any risk of clashes or provocations, we are currently withdrawing all our forces within Turkey to the Medya Defense Area with **Abdullah Ocalan's** approval," read the statement from Sabri Ok, referring to the group's imprisoned leader.

The Medya Defense Area is a term often used by the PKK to describe areas in northern Iraq.

Legal and political concessions

The statement also called for legal and political concessions.

"It is quite clear that we are committed to the resolutions of the 12th Congress and decisive in implementing them," the statement read.

"However, for these resolutions to be implemented, certain legal and political approaches — in line with the resolutions of the PKK's 12th Congress ... need to be adopted."

Ocalan, who has been imprisoned on an island near Istanbul since 1999, urged his group in February to convene a congress and formally disband and disarm. In May, the PKK announced that it would do so.

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The PKK launched its armed insurgency against Turkey initially with the aim of establishing a Kurdish state in the southeast of the country.

Over time, the objective evolved into a campaign for autonomy and rights for Kurds within Turkey.

The group is considered to be a **terrorist organization** by Turkey, the United States and the European Union.