



By: TA | AP Insight

The Turkish law brings an end to the decades-long conflict with Kurdish militants



Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's ruling party on Wednesday filed a bill in parliament to advance a peace initiative aimed at ending the **decadeslong conflict** with Kurdish militants, including a provision for an effective pardon for former fighters.

The Kurdistan Workers' Party, or PKK, last year declared its decision to **disarm** and disband as part of the peace effort with Turkey, following a call by its imprisoned leader, Abdullah Ocalan.

The PKK then staged a **symbolic disarmament** ceremony in northern Iraq, where it is based, and announced that it was withdrawing fighters from key locations in Turkey to Iraq.

The bill toward "strengthening national solidarity and social cohesion" defines the procedures for overseeing the PKK's disarmament and the judicial treatment of its members.

Parliament's Justice Committee on Friday will consider the bill before a debate in the general assembly, said Abdullah Guler, chair of the Justice and Development Party's parliamentary group.

The government hopes it passes before the summer recess later this month.

"The critical threshold is the surrender, disarmament and destruction of the PKK terrorist organization's weapons and the establishment of a mechanism to determine this process," he told a news conference.

The proposal was submitted with the support of 360 parliamentary deputies, Guler said, with more expected to sign up in the coming days.

The PKK still holds many weapons

The PKK still has the bulk of its arsenal. A decommissioning mechanism will rely on confirmation by the National Security Council that the group has been disbanded and its

weapons surrendered.

The rehabilitation of PKK members is expected to include a pardon for about 4,000 members not directly involved in violence once the group is dissolved.

This could pave the way for the release of people convicted of crimes such as PKK membership or supporting the group financially or through propaganda.

It will also allow the return of PKK members based in **Syria** and Iraq or in exile in European countries, Hurriyet newspaper reported.

Ocalan's situation in his island prison likely will be improved, giving him broader visiting conditions and communication with the outside world

Ongoing investigations and prosecutions for such crimes would be postponed for a period dependent on the severity of the alleged offenses, Guler said.

If no terror-related crime is committed within the time frame, the case will be dropped.

Applications to benefit from the law must be made within six months of its publication in the Official Gazette, Guler said. A ministerial committee and a parliamentary commission will monitor the process.

Militants convicted of intentional homicide and those sentenced to life sentences before 2005 are excluded from the bill's provisions. This applies to Ocalan and other senior PKK figures.

The pro-Kurdish DEM Party has lobbied for Ocalan, who has been imprisoned since 1999, to be granted official status to coordinate the transition process, leading to his release.

Although this is not in the current proposal, media reports suggest it may be considered later.

Instead, Ocalan's situation in his island prison likely will be improved, giving him broader visiting conditions and communication with the outside world.

that "with this law, we are setting out to resolve a historical issue. We are at the beginning of a democratization process that will be at least as significant as the founding of the republic."

The insurgency began in 1984

The PKK has waged an armed insurgency since 1984, which has claimed tens of thousands of lives and spilled into Iraq and Syria.

It has been designated a terrorist organization by Turkey, the United States and the European Union.



Abdullah Ocalan announced support for the legislation, saying that with this law, we are setting out to resolve a historical issue

The group initially sought an independent Kurdish state but later shifted to demands for autonomy and expanded rights in Turkey.

Previous peace efforts between Turkey and the PKK have ended in failure, most recently in 2015.

The proposed law is intended as a temporary legal framework that could last up to four years, although parliament could extend the period.

It is anticipated that further legislation could be introduced to tackle other issues such as Ocalan's release.

In a message conveyed through DEM Party legislators who visited him on Monday, Ocalan announced support for the legislation, saying