

LET'S RECLAIM SOCIALISM THROUGH THE BUILDING OF PEACE AND DEMOCRATIC SOCIETY

Esteemed thinkers, dear comrades, valued delegates, and all people who continue to believe that socialism is still possible;

I address you today from İmralı Island under the conditions of isolation of 26 years, at a moment when a new dialogue with the state over the Kurdish question in search for peace and a democratic society have resumed again. To address you, at the International Conference on Peace and Democratic Society, on the path of rebuilding socialism, is both meaningful and significant.

As Kurds, over the course of the PKK's 52-year struggle, we have completed our fight for existence and dignity, and we now enter a period in which a democratic republic and a democratic society can be rebuilt.

The PKK has fulfilled its historical mission by securing the national existence of the Kurdish people, while also exposing the limitations of nation-state socialism. Twentieth-century socialism emerged as a negative revolutionary intervention, yet failed to present a lasting alternative. Despite enormous sacrifices, this struggle has become a legacy enriched through both theoretical and practical critique. To honor and to own this legacy properly requires transforming socialism from a mere memory to a living social force beating at the heart of the people. The socialist tradition in history must be understood as a legacy aimed at building both peace and democratic society, and the path forward lies in fulfilling internationalist responsibilities—in theory and in practice.

Although utopian socialists and Marxists have offered comprehensive critiques of the capitalist hegemonic system since the 19th century, they failed to develop a decisive line with concrete results. Today's capitalism is no longer merely a crisis; it has become a disease threatening the very survival of humankind. The monopoly of violence in the form of the nation-state plays a defining role in this collapse.

Just as capitalism cannot be explained solely through economic motives, the failures of socialist movements cannot be explained only by capitalist repression. Historical and contemporary mistakes have also been decisive.

My critiques of Marxism must be understood correctly. I do not blame Marx; in his era, history was not better understood as it is today and there was no ecological crisis, and capitalism was still on the rise. Even so, Marx was a thinker of profound self-questioning and intellectual courage. He perceived the importance of women's liberation, yet approached it superficially, believing that once economic exploitation was overcome, gender oppression would naturally dissolve. His attempt to interpret social history exclusively through class, and his insufficient analysis of the state and the nation-state, led to serious consequences. While offering these critiques, I would like to underline my deep respect for Marx's efforts and have no doubt of his sincerity, and note that I distinguish Marxism from Marx himself. When we critique Marxism and actual existing socialism on certain fundamental questions, what we feel—as socialists—is the spirit of self-critique from within.

Anti-systemic forces must revisit historical materialism in a way that aligns with the reality of human society. It is essential to understand that capitalism did not “descend from the heavens” in the 16th century; rather, its roots extend back to the 10–12 thousand years of evolution of civilization that began in Lower Mesopotamia. Archeological sites such as Göbeklitepe and Karahantepe shed light on this historical origin. For this reason, I find it more accurate to define the existing system of civilization as a “caste-based system of social murder.” Archaeological and anthropological findings show that male hunter castes, through the development of killing techniques, suppressed and

enslaved women-centered clan communities. This marks the deepest rupture in human history—indeed, a major counter-revolution shaping all subsequent developments of civilization.

Understanding capitalism from this long historical perspective allows for far more eye-opening analysis. This system not only deepens internal social contradictions; it also threatens the extinction of the human species by producing chemical and nuclear weaponry that can annihilate the planet, by polluting the environment, and by plundering nature's riches both above and below the ground. It is one of the essential duties of the international to offer the humanity with a new analysis of capitalism founded upon this grave reality.

We need to examine the history of the oppressed through the perspective of the commune, which emerged first and foremost as a formation of self-defense. This requires seeing early tribal communities as the beginnings of the commune and adopting a historical perspective stretching to today's proletariat—and to all oppressed groups.

On this basis, we state that history cannot be reduced solely to class struggle. While class struggle is indeed part of it, it is more accurate to read history as a long process of relation and conflict between communal development and anti-communal development extending back roughly 30,000 years.

I anticipate that this conference also by engaging with the theoretical analyses I have offered here, will foster important debates that can contribute to the development of a new perspective of political program and organization. In this process, the fundamental method is dialectical materialism. However, certain excesses of classical dialectics need to be overcome. We must see contradictions not as opposing poles destined to eliminate one another, but as social phenomena that also sustain and shape each other. For without the commune, there would be no state; without the bourgeoisie, no proletariat. Thus, contradiction must be assessed not with a logic of annihilation, but through a transformative historical perspective.

Scientific developments show that the dialectical method remains an effective tool for social analysis, so long as it is not treated as absolute. With this framework, updating the commune–state and class–state dialectics is imperative. The failure of 20th-century real socialism stemmed from an inability to interpret this historical dialectic correctly: state centered socialism seized the state, only to be defeated by it. By binding the right of nations to self-determination to the nation-state, it became confined within the boundaries of bourgeois politics. The concept of a “proletarian nation-state” similarly produced nothing but a reproduction of statist mentality.

Interpreting this reality correctly, I stated the following: nation-state socialism leads to defeat, whereas democratic society socialism leads to victory. Today, the time has come to advance toward democratic emancipation on the basis of democratic society socialism.

On this path, I move forward with the conviction that we will succeed in reconstruction not through the state, but rather through the paradigm of a democratic republic and a democratic nation founded upon principles of women's freedom, ecology and democratic society.

This awareness has renewed our movement ideologically and politically, revitalized its organizational dynamism, and deepened its roots in society — enabling it to develop a socialist program capable of responding to the needs of the century.

The relationship between democratic socialism and the state is also being reshaped within the context of the peace and resolution process. I define my relationship with the state as a relationship of democratization. The concept of the democratic republic requires that the state not function as a divine power standing above society, but rather as a structure operating within the framework of a

democratic contract made with society. Through a strategy of democratic politics, it is possible to bring about change and transformation of the state and to rebuild society on democratic foundations.

Grounding this strategy in law will form the lasting basis of peace. Law is a mechanism that guarantees and balances the democratic relationship between state and society, serving as an instrument that prevents violence. At the same time, it will institutionalize the establishment, legitimacy, and reconstruction of the democratic republic. In relation, one of the key strategic arguments I have proposed is the concept of democratic integration and its legal framework. Democratic integration law, in which legal norms are reconstructed in favor of society through individual and universal norms along with collective rights, must rest on the following three fundamental principles:

- A law of the free citizen
- A law of peace and democratic society
- Laws of freedom

Democratic integration law will not only transform the state into a normative one but will also allow to institutionalize the societal gains, enabling society to realize its freedom. The “Call for Peace and Democratic Society” process that I launched is in itself a process of dialogue. In a region such as the Middle East—defined by complex relationships of ethnicities, religions, and sects—much can be achieved through democratic dialogue and negotiation. In addition, I believe that a meaningful socialism can be organized not through a violent revolutionary method but through a positive system of construction and existence—one that takes shape through democratic dialogue. Without comprehensive and profound democratic dialogue, it is difficult to believe that socialism can be built, or that it could endure even if it were built.

Lenin, too, said: “Without an inclusive and advanced democracy, socialism cannot be built.”

With these thoughts and determination, I once again wish you a successful conference, and extend my enduring comradely greetings and affection.

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