

‘The struggle for a better world, inspired by Öcalan’s philosophy, must continue unabated’

Sarah Glynn's words at a press conference in Cologne not only capture the essence of solidarity but also mark the dawn of a new chapter in the Freedom for Öcalan campaign.

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A press conference [in Cologne on Friday](#) marked the launch of the second phase of the “Freedom for Abdullah Öcalan, A Political Solution to the Kurdish Question” campaign, expanding the movement’s scope and extending the call for international solidarity. Sarah Glynn was one of the speakers at the conference. Her words not only capture the essence of solidarity but also mark the dawn of a new chapter in the Freedom for Öcalan campaign.

Sarah Glynn

As we marched through this city of Cologne two weeks ago, to mark the 25th anniversary of the abduction of Abdullah Öcalan – tens of thousands of people whose footsteps caused the bridge to sway – I couldn't help but wonder what those who planned his abduction might be thinking. His capture and incarceration was supposed to decapitate the Kurdish Freedom Movement and leave it for dead. The international secret services who carried it out thought that their mission was completed and that aspirations of Kurdish rights were finished.

They were to receive an immediate shock in the reaction of Kurds around the world, but they must be even more shocked now to see how the movement has grown and gained new dimensions. It has been taken up by a new generation – many of the people on that march were not even born when Öcalan was abducted – and it has also acquired a new international following. Around the world, people like Thoreau and me have been inspired by Öcalan's ideas and by their practical implementation in Rojava. And some of us have been lucky enough to be able to dedicate our time to advocating for those ideas and for the movement behind them.

I suppose you could say that we are here to represent supporters of Öcalan from around the world – from Brazil to Bangladesh, from South Africa to Sidney, from Washington to Wales. People who find in Öcalan, and in the Kurdish movement he leads, a politics and a hope that we have been unable to find elsewhere – proof that another world is not only possible but under construction.

This international solidarity has a long history, and like all solidarity, it is a two-way street. As we try and highlight Öcalan's situation in our different countries, we take lessons from his ideas for our own lives and work.

Today, we are all acutely aware that we are undertaking this campaign in the most difficult of political circumstances. History appears to be speeding past, and Kurdistan is hidden in its dust cloud, as all eyes are turned to Gaza.

But that doesn't mean that we should not, or cannot, continue to campaign on other issues. And, in fact, the horrific images that appear on our screens every

day demonstrate the crying need for Öcalan's ideas. In the Middle East, and in many other places too, differences in culture and religion are being violently exploited by those who declare the impossibility of coexistence. Meanwhile, in North and East Syria, inspired by Öcalan's philosophy, different cultures are recognised and respected, while their people are enabled and encouraged to work together.

I want to finish by quoting a man whose burning image has incited horror and sadness, but whose words have a clear message. Before he set himself alight in Washington to protest against his country's complicity in genocide, US serviceman Aaron Bushnell wrote, "Many of us like to ask ourselves, 'What would I do if I was alive during slavery? Or the Jim Crow South? Or apartheid? What would I do if my country was committing genocide?' The answer is, you're doing it. Right now." That question – what are we doing to stop the cruelties being carried out by our governments? – is one we all need to ask.

Bushnell also wrote – in a reddit post a year ago – "It's so important to imagine a better world. Let your thoughts run wild with idealistic dreams of what the world should look like, and let the pain and anger at how it's not that way flow through you. Let it free your mind and fuel your rage against the machine."

Which takes us back once again to Öcalan. If we imagine a better world, we need a path to transform our idealistic dreams into reality. Öcalan has set out a philosophy that can help us carve out that path. We want to work with him to make those dreams reality.

**Sarah Glynn is a writer and activist – check her [website](#) and follow her on [Twitter](#).*