

## Democratic Party of Iranian Kurdistan (PDKI)

I would like to begin by saying that my party, the Kurdistan Democratic Party of Iran (PDKI), had no choice but to defend its people by means of armed resistance, following the *fatwa* issued in 1980 by the late Ayatollah Khomeini. This went on for almost 10 years, and then PDKI suspended the armed struggle and decided to continue its struggle to establish democracy, human rights and the national rights of the Kurds in Iran by political means.

For the 10 years during which we defended ourselves militarily, we never once attacked Iranian forces inside cities or populated areas to avoid civilian casualties. The party and the *peshmerga* forces' command have always insisted that the armed resistance was to defend our people. We believe that the Kurdish question does not have a military solution. Unfortunately, the Iranian forces have always violated the norms and laws of war by attacking and brutally bombing villages and civilians, and as a result many people lost their lives.

Also during those times of armed conflict in which many civilians were injured by Iranian bombardments, injured people were receiving aid from Aid Medicine International, which sent people from France to assist our defenceless people. They are witnesses to how much our party respected human rights and the norms and the laws of war.

I should mention that our party program and the armed wing of our party do not admit anyone under the age of 18. We trained them how to defend themselves and how to assist people during the war. We are continuously educating them in the values of human rights. In the education centres of our military camps, core subjects are the study of human rights and the rights of prisoners of war according to international norms. We educate the young people in human rights values, in the Kurdish language, which they cannot study in government schools, and how to respect and preserve nature and the environment.

It is necessary to point out that one of the most important articles of our party's charter is that covering equal rights between genders; all the cadres, members, followers, sympathizers and *peshmergas* are familiarized with it.

Human rights, women's rights, children's and the rights of prisoners of war are integrated into our party program. It is our belief that this is why our party has never been criticized by Human Rights Watch or other human rights organizations.