

Women's Revolution Monthly Newsletter May 2026





This is Kongra Star's first newsletter since the end of the war in January 2026 against the Autonomous Administration in North and East Syria. In our last newsletter we have described the events, violent crimes and consequences of the war in detail in our last newsletter.¹ Since then, the past few months have been dominated by negotiations to further define and implement the integration agreements set out in the ceasefire agreement of 29 January 2026. This process is ongoing and marks only the beginning of the changes to come not only in the area of the Autonomous Administration, but also across Syria as a whole. As organisations and institutions of the women's movement under the umbrella of Kongra Star, as well as the women of North and East Syria, we are actively participating in these processes and making it clear that we will fight for our participation in the future of Syria at all levels – politically, socially and economically.²

Integration process: The women's movement continues work and defends its achievements

In the Kurdish areas of North and East Syria, our institutions and organisations keep on working since the end of the military conflict in January, albeit under different conditions. Gradually, it is becoming clear what the integration into the Syrian State entails, while at the same time much is still being negotiated. Generally speaking, as the women's movement, we must defend our achievements, particularly against the patriarchal and Islamist mentality of the transitional government. The war against self-administration and against the women's movement is therefore no longer being waged by the transitional government through military means, but on a political level.

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Campaign: "We are all YPJ! Self-defence is our natural right"

The women's self-defence units (YPJ) are currently negotiating with the Syrian transitional government about continuing to exist as an independent women's army. Although the agreement of 29th of January provides for the integration of the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) into the Syrian army, the transitional government is refusing to integrate the YPJ, even though the YPJ are part of the SDF. To draw international attention to this situation and to support the YPJ in their



struggle, we as Kongra Star launched the campaign "We are all YPJ! Self-defence is our natural right" together with different women's organizations in North and East Syria, on the 26th of April.³

Therefore, numerous activities took place in May in Rojava to give a voice with strength to the YPJ's demands in the negotiations. Throughout the month, several thousand women, including many YPJ- fighters, took to the streets in demonstrations across the cities of Qamishli, Tell Tamer, Darbasiya, Girkê Legê, Amûdê, Hasakah, Tîrbê Spî and Dêrik.⁴ A participant in Qamishli made it clear that the struggle for the



recognition of the YPJ is about defending the achievements of the women's movement as a whole. She also said, "If Al-Scharaa does not accept the YPJ, he will not accept the Kurds in general! The YPJ is the identity of Kurdish women and the identity of the whole of Kurdistan!"⁵



In Hasakah, the Association of Women Writers and Intellectuals of the Cizir-Canton, together with the Women's Council of the Movement for a Democratic Society (TEV-DEM), organised a three-day programme using art and culture to highlight the significance of the YPJ. On the first day there was a poetry evening, on the second day a panel discussion on the role of women in the military field, and on the final day theater-plays and songs were performed. The women's cultural movement Hilala Zerîn has already announced further events, which will take place across Rojava in June.⁶



In addition, Kongra Star organised workshops and panel discussions in which participants exchanged views on women's rights and women's participation in political processes in the future Syria. The importance of the YPJ in this regard was repeatedly underlined. For example, in Tel Tamer, members of the Women's Cultural Movement, members of Kongra Star and mothers of fallen female fighters met to share their perspectives on the issue and to support the YPJ's struggle.

The YPJ was also made visible in the urban landscape for an extended period: in Hasakah, Qamišli and Tell Tamer, images of fallen YPJ fighters were displayed on large billboards. On this occasion, the organisers of the local Kongra Star committees issued statements expressing their support for the YPJ.⁷



Ronahi Hasen from the Kongra Star Diplomacy Committee assesses the campaign's activities to date and says: "The campaign has evolved from local activities into a women's and popular movement that has spread across the



Middle East, Europe and other parts of Kurdistan. The people and women have made their position clear, stating that, if it were not for the YPJ's actions, women would not be accepted in government." It is now important that the campaign continues with vigour, both in Rojava, the Middle East and worldwide. Numerous interviews and articles provide background on the negotiations and the current situation, as well as the demands of the YPJ and of the women's movement. The Women Defend Rojava-Campaign, as well as we as Kongra Star, provide daily updates on the campaign's developments.⁸

Forum: "With the will of free women, we will build a democratic Syria"

In mid-May, 2,000 women from the Firat Canton gathered in Kobanê under the slogan "With the will of free women, we will build a democratic Syria".⁹ The meeting was organised by the Kongra Star representatives of Kobanê. The participants spent a day discussing issues of political participation, legal guarantees for their achievements, and their role in Syria's future state structure. Those taking part included women from civil society, mothers in struggle for peace, members of women's organisations, relatives of the fallen fighters, and YPJ fighters.



A much-discussed topic was the legal means to safeguard the achievements of the women's movement in North and East Syria within Syria's new constitution. Among other things, the participants called for the YPJ to be officially recognised as a legitimate force for the protection of society. Furthermore, in discussions and speeches, the participants repeatedly emphasised the importance of women's political participation in all decision-making structures in Syria. "In the new Syrian order, women must not be marginalised once again," stated Ilham Ehmed, Co-Foreign Minister of the Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria. The meeting was also very important because Arab and Kurdish women discussed



future prospects together. In doing so, they actively opposed the division which is being promoted by the transitional government between Arab and Kurdish in the society.

The return of displaced people in progress

In May, two additional groups, which means a total of 1,600 displaced families, returned to Afrin. The return of the displaced people is part of the ceasefire agreement of 29 January between the Syrian transitional government and the Autonomous Administration. In March 2026, the first displaced families were able to set foot on Afrin's soil again for the first time, after years on the run, resulting in moving images. At the same time, many families find their homes destroyed and looted. For them, the struggle to settle back in their homeland continues, even in Afrin.



During Eid al-Adha (Fiest of the Sacrifice) at the end of May, the co-representative of foreign affairs of the Autonomous Administration, Ilham Ehmed, visited the region – which is also her homeland – for the first time since the occupation¹⁰

Many families had fled Afrin in 2018 when Turkey, together with jihadist militias, occupied the town and the region. Since then, due to the ongoing conflict in North and East Syria, they have been forced to flee time and again – some as many as six times. During their flight, many have lived in up to six different towns, often in refugee camps or in makeshift accommodation in schools. This also means that lessons can resume in the schools that have now been vacated. Further convoys to Afrin are planned. Some 14,000 displaced families from Serêkaniyê¹¹, which was also occupied by Turkey in 2019, are awaiting their return. Negotiations on this matter are ongoing between the Autonomous Administration and the transitional government.



“A society that loses its language loses its history and identity” – Kongra Star

In May, many activities relating to the Kurdish language took place in Rojava. This was partly because 15 May is International Kurdish Language Day.¹² Furthermore, the Kurdish language is frequently a topic of discussion in the integration process, as it is not recognised by the Syrian transitional government as an official language – alongside Arabic. Throughout the month, many thousands of people took to the streets to demand the recognition, protection and promotion of the Kurdish language at all levels – in institutions, schools¹³, in the cultural and media sectors, on street signs, place names and institutional signage, and in all other areas of life.



We also participated in all these activities and contributed with our own events. In a statement, Macide Hesûn, the chair of the Kobanê Women's Council, made it clear: “We will never again accept the destruction of the Kurdish language. Thousands of girls and boys have given their lives so that we can live with our language and culture.”¹⁴



List of Links

- 1 <https://kongra-star.org/eng/2026/02/15/newsletter-womens-revolution-januray-2026/>
- 2 <https://hawarnews.com/en/lawyer-explains-that-women-must-be-involved-in-syrias-new-constitution>
- 3 <https://kongra-star.org/eng/2026/04/26/campaign-in-support-of-the-womens-protection-units-ypj/>
<https://english.anf-news.com/women/emine-ose-ypj-must-be-part-of-the-army-and-women-must-take-part-in-decision-making-mechanisms-85326>
- <https://hawarnews.com/en/kongra-star-womens-rights-in-syria-link-to-ypj-recognition>
- 4 <https://hawarnews.com/en/qamshlo-march-system-that-does-not-recognize-womens-existence-does-not-represent-us>
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- <https://hawarnews.com/en/tirbe-spiye-women-affirm-their-support-for-ypj>
- <https://hawarnews.com/en/march-supports-ypj-its-representation-in-ministry-of-defense>
- 5 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4EXbXFFeUAY>
- 6 <https://hawarnews.com/en/hilala-zerin-announces-program-of-events-in-support-of-ypj>
- 7 <https://hawarnews.com/en/ypj-martyrs-pictures-hung-in-tell-tamer>
- <https://hawarnews.com/en/banners-bearing-photos-of-ypj-martyrs-hung-in-hasakah>
- 8 <https://hawarnews.com/en/female-ypj-fighter-affirms-struggle-for-constitutional-protection-of-womens-rights>
- 9 <https://english.anf-news.com/women/2-000-women-gather-in-kobane-we-will-determine-our-own-future-in-syria-85434>
<https://hawarnews.com/en/euphrates-womens-forum-kicks-off>
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- 14 <https://english.anf-news.com/women/kongra-star-calls-for-constitutional->

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