

# POEMS FOR THE KURDISH MOVEMENT

Sarah Glynn

## *On leaving the Kurdish hunger strikers in Strasbourg*

Their bellies are empty, but their hearts are full.  
As the kilogrammes fall away, so the morale keeps building,  
And the smiles – can we ever forget those smiles?

Eleven men and three women putting their lives on the line  
And for each one, nine others happy to be in their place  
An ultimate act of will that throws down a challenge of vulnerability  
What power is so strong that it can overthrow the most basic instinct for survival?

'We starve because we love life' – they tell us  
We risk our own lives so our children can enjoy theirs

They are here for Ocalan, far away in a Turkish jail  
Ocalan, who must be freed  
But for now, a simple demand –  
To make Turkey follow their own constitution and end his isolation

A simple demand, but no-one listens  
They protest, and no one hears  
They march and no one sees  
They lobby and no one cares  
So the world's indifference has brought them to this  
How many must die for the world to take notice?

And Ocalan?  
What man can inspire such devotion?

His portrait looks down from a thousand walls  
But this moustached uncle is no Stalin  
His philosophy inspires deepest democracy and freedom  
He gives us that Kurdish smile  
For twenty years he has led the call for peace  
Ready for the time when Turkey will respond with sincerity  
He holds the key to the Kurdish question  
But Turkey still guards the lock

I fly home to humdrum reality  
And the enormity of what I have seen only gets harder to comprehend  
But those fourteen men and women have revived my belief in humanity

Revolutionaries are not just figures in flickering black and white  
They are struggling in Turkish prisons and Rojava villages  
And in a non-descript community centre among the nineteenth century apartment  
blocks of Strasbourg

*Amsterdam Airport*  
26 January 2019

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occasion of Öcalan's 70th birthday, 4 April 2019



## *To the hunger strikers*

When it ends, as end it must  
I hope – believe – believe and trust  
That everyone whose hearts you've moved  
Can hear the message that you've proved:  
That all who'd better worlds create  
Must stand against the fascist state,  
And knowing you can do no more  
Take up the banner that you bore  
For *Jin, Jiyan* and *Azade*  
For freedom for humanity.

And when it ends, as end it will  
I hope my friends are living still.  
My friends we need you even more  
To *build* the world you're dying for!

22 May 2019

Recorded on this album, made by comrades in Wales:

<https://imamsisweseeyou.bandcamp.com/album/imam-sis-we-see-you>

## *Fire and Flood – a poem for Afrin and Hasankeyf*

Gentle glens of fruit and forest,  
paradise that was Afrin  
Turkey's men have scorched the earth – made  
desert 'peace' where once was green

Golden waves of wheat and barley  
harvest-ready in the sun  
Flame and smoke of vengeful fire – and  
Turkey's 'cleansing' work is done

Ancient city on the Tigris  
living homes of history  
Hasankeyf – soon drowned in water  
Turkish electricity

Kurdish song will ring from under  
like Tryweryn's mythic bell  
Winds of change rise through the air – of  
Apo's hope this song will tell!

*4 June 2019*

(for background see 'Turkey's Ilisu Dam is a war on culture and nature' *Sunday National* 14 July 2019, [www.thenational.scot/news/17769108.turkey-s-ilisu-dam-war-nature-catastrophic-consequences](http://www.thenational.scot/news/17769108.turkey-s-ilisu-dam-war-nature-catastrophic-consequences))