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The Rojava Revolution: Women's Liberation as an Answer to the Kurdish Question

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The following paper aims to analyze the historical background of the current happenings such as the Kurdish endeavors towards independence and the strengthening of feminist thought, as well as cultural and political circumstances which put into motion a series of events that ultimately lead to a radical change in the political and social climate of the present day Syria. In the midst of a civil war, the Kurdish people seized the opportunity to fight for their own sovereignty in northern Syria, or as it is known by the Kurds – Rojava. Rooted in the strongly progressive idea of Democratic Confederalism designed by a Kurdish nationalist leader and the PKK (Kurdistan Workers' Party) founder Abdullah Öcalan, the Rojava Revolution is often deemed one of the greatest social experiments of our time. Even though the implementation of Democratic Confederalism may be in itself enough to highlight the importance of this revolution in the context of today's Middle East, what is of even greater significance is the blossoming of women's rights in Rojava. Another one of Öcalan's pivotal ideas, known as Jineology (the science of women) puts none other than women at the very center of the revolution. By observing the work of the all-female Women's Protection Units (YPJ) it is clearly evident that the aforementioned ideology manifests itself in practice, not only in the battlefield, but in everyday life as well. In this paper I will try to provide an overview of the historical circumstances that allowed for a spark that started the fire of the Women's Revolution within one of the most patriarchal societies and among one of the most repressed minorities in the world today and further examine the significance of the current situation in Rojava.

Keywords: PKK, Kurds, Rojava, revolution, women, feminism, YPJ

1. Understanding the history of the Kurdish struggle

In order to be able to understand the present circumstances befalling the majorly Kurdish populated Northern Syria – better known as Rojava – one must first address the past and acknowledge the effect that a series of different events throughout recent history had on shaping the current political landscape of the Middle East. Long before the beginning of the Syrian Civil War, the aforementioned series of various events (which will be described in greater detail in the following passages) enabled the Kurds to lay down the foundation of what will become one of the greatest social experiments in recent Middle Eastern history – The Rojava Revolution.

An old Kurdish proverb reads: “The Kurds have no friends but the mountains.” This seemingly simple statement is all but trivial. It contains within itself the very essence of Kurdish existence and perfectly summarizes decades, if not centuries, of Kurdish history ridden by discrimination, oppression, ethnic cleansing and struggle against the efforts to render them non-existent in the eyes of the world. Modern day Kurdistan extends across a vast area of land spanning through four different countries – Iran, Iraq, Turkey and Syria. Thus, it can easily be assumed that the reasons behind the issues the Kurdish people are facing today lie in not so distant past. The Treaty of Sèvres, coined after the fall of the Ottoman Empire in World War One on the 10th of August 1920, can be said to be the very event that irreversibly changed the course of history for the Kurds and banished them onto the margins of what, in a political sense, constitutes a legitimate nation. Even though the Treaty of Sèvres aimed to redesign the map of the Middle East and establish new borders among the autonomous states of Iran, Iraq, Turkey, Syria and Kurdistan, it never came to its full realization.

Due to Turkey's rejection of the terms proposed by the Treaty and the dismay of the Kurdish nationalists caused by the Treaty's exclusion of the Kurdish territories in Syria from the proposed autonomous region eligible for complete independence supported by the League of Nations¹, the Kurds, to day, remained the largest stateless nation in existence, with a population of approximately 30 million scattered across the territories of Iraq, Iran, Turkey and Syria². The aforementioned resulted in a serious rise in tensions within the newly redefined borders. In order to prevent a potential uprising caused by the Kurdish dissatisfaction with the newly established borders, Iraq, Iran, Turkey and Syria began a process of forced assimilation of the Kurdish minority as well as a language-based identity erasure. Even though the region of Southern Kurdistan (Iraqi Kurdistan) can be said to have historically faced the least ethnically based human rights violations, it has yet to be recognized as a more than an autonomous region within modern Iraq despite its independence

1 David MCDOWALL, *A Modern History of the Kurds*, London: I. B. Taurus, 2007, 137.

2 „The Unknown Oppression of the Kurds“, *The Thistle*, <http://www.mit.edu/~thistle/v12/2/curds.html> (20th April 2017)

referendum held in September 2017 showing a staggering 92 percent of voters being in favor of the Kurdish independence³. In Iran the forced assimilation of the Kurdish minority was partially conducted via the lack of minority languages represented within the education system which rendered the Kurdish language absent from a large aspect of Kurdish children's lives during their formative, school years which most certainly play a crucial role in the formation of one's identity. Aside from the absence of the Kurdish language in the important parts of the public sphere, Iranian Kurds experienced discrimination in other areas of life as well. Such discrimination involved the religious institutions of Sunni Kurds being blocked, Kurds denied employment in the public sector and the destruction of Kurdish owned houses during the Iran-Iraq war.⁴ The Iranian Kurdish women were, and still are, the demographic most affected by the said discriminatory practices since their oppression is based not only on their ethnic and national background, but on gender as well. Combined with limited opportunities available to the Kurdish population in Iran, the Kurdish women experienced an array of other issues ranging from even more limited access to education to honor killings which, in 'cooperation' with the ethnically motivated restrictions, lead to a disproportionately high suicide rate (most commonly by self-immolation) among them.⁵ While the Kurdish question within Syria will be discussed in the later chapters it is possible to claim that, even though the Syrian regime exercised great oppression over its Kurdish minority as well, the aftermath of the redefinition of the Middle Eastern borders can be said to have been most evident among the Kurds in Turkey. The tensions caused by the Treaty grew especially prominent in Turkey which was already significantly weakened by the war and still both socially and economically unprepared for such aftermath that the Treaty of Sèvres would cause. “Turkey was now fighting for its life, facing civil war from within and [Greek] invasion from without. Rebel Turkish and Kurdish bands roamed the countryside.”⁶ With both Turkish and Kurdish nationalist thought reaching its all-time high, the period shortly after the failed imposition of territorial boundaries drafted by the Treaty of Sèvres was severely marked by both Ankara's attempts to impose control over the region, as well as various tribal uprisings, mostly in majorly Kurdish populated Diyarbakir, Mardin and Nusaybin regions⁷.

As a result, a new treaty was drafted as an attempt in preserving stability in this recently redefined area of the Middle East. In 1923, the Treaty of Lausanne handed the control over the entirety of the Anatolian peninsula,

3 Martin CHULOV, „More than 92% of voters in Iraqi Kurdistan back independence“, *The Guardian*, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/sep/27/over-92-of-iraqs-kurds-vote-for-independence> (21st November 2017)

4 AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL, *Iran: Human Rights Abuses Against the Kurdish Minority*, London: Amnesty International Publications, 2008, 7-9.

5 AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL, *Iran: Human Rights Abuses Against the Kurdish Minority*, London: Amnesty International Publications, 2008, 22.

6 MCDOWALL, *A Modern History of the Kurds*, 137.

7 Ibid, 137.

including the disputed Kurdish territories, to the newly founded Turkish Republic, while assorting the remaining segments of the proposed state of Kurdistan to the neighboring countries of Iran, Iraq and Syria, thus irreversibly shattering the Kurdish dreams of independence.⁸ Ever since the treaties signed after World War One, not only were the Kurds not recognized as an independent national entity, but were actively erased from public existence as a part of Turkish efforts to establish an ethnically homogenous nation-state and “to diminish the significance of ethnic, linguistic, and religious distinctions. (...) During the 1930s and 1940s, the government had disguised the presence of the Kurds statistically by categorizing them as “Mountain Turks” [a name later substituted by “Eastern Turks”]. With official encouragement, some scholars even suggested that Kurdish, an Indo-European language closely related to Persian, was a dialect of Turkish.”⁹ Even the Turkish feminists, displeased with the system and fighting for the betterment of women’s condition in Turkey, “had the tendency to marginalize Kurdish women, which they perceived as backward, and tried to forcefully assimilate them into their nationalist “modernization project”.¹⁰

The efforts to create a ‘pure’ nation-state were carried out to such extents that Kurdish citizens in Turkey often faced not only language bans, forced deportation and resettlement in order to further dilute the already oppressed Kurdish community, but even mass executions following every revolt against the Turkish maltreatment.¹¹ In Turkey, even the “Kurdish Question”, a phrase describing the attempts to address the ideological, political and socio-economic position of the Kurds within the states of Iran, Iraq, Turkey and Syria, is widely referred to as “Kürt sorunu” – the Kurdish Problem¹² – thus alluding to much more sinister means of resolving various issues regarding the Kurdish minority.

This brings us back to the previously quoted proverb: “The Kurds have no friends but the mountains.” As hope regarding the proclamation of an independent state of Kurdistan evaporated ounce by ounce as time passed and the Kurdish identity not only remained unrecognized, but became a subject of ethnic-cleansing performed by the Turkish nation-state across which a great majority of the Kurds was dispersed, in order to resist culturicide and linguicide carried out by Turkish hand, the Kurds became compelled to resort to a radical, bottom-up model of socio-political change – the guerrilla armed struggle. Lacking foreign support and widely disregarded by potential

8 „Kurdish History“, *The Kurdish Project*, <http://thekurdishproject.org/history-and-culture/kurdish-history/> (20th April 2017)

9 Helen CHAPIN METZ, „Turkey: A Country Study“, *Country Studies*, <http://countrystudies.us/turkey/26.htm> (20th April 2017)

10 Dilar DIRIK, „Feminism and the Kurdish Freedom Movement“, *Kurdish Question*, <http://kurdishquestion.com/oldarticle.php?aid=feminism-and-the-kurdish-freedom-movement> (20th April 2017)

11 Amir HASSANPOUR, „Kurdish Language Policy in Turkey“, *Kurdish Academy of Language*, <http://www.kurdishacademy.org/?q=node/129> (20th April 2017)

12 „Why Kurdish Question“, *Kurdish Question*, <http://kurdishquestion.com/why-kq.php> (20th April 2017)

powerful allies, the only ‘friends’ left for the Kurds to turn to, proved to be the mountainous landscapes providing a perfect surrounding for such an endeavor by simultaneously breaching access to the enemy and protecting the Kurdish guerillas.

2. The birth of guerilla warfare and the PKK in Turkey

The beginning of the ‘friendship’ between the Kurds and the mountains they turned to in their struggle for independence, in the context discussed in this paper, can be traced back to the 1970s. In the first fifty years of the Turkish Republic, there have been twenty-nine accounts of Kurds resorting to an armed struggle in an effort to procure for themselves the most basic of human rights such as the right to education or even the ability to name their children using traditionally Kurdish names¹³. All demands regarding those rights fell on deaf ears and armed uprisings were organized to no avail.

However, on the 25th of November 1978 in a teahouse in Fis near Diyarbakir¹⁴, a group of young men and women, radical and revolutionary university students determined to ensure the Kurdish independence from the Turkish Republic, founded an organization that will forever change the course of Kurdish history and ultimately propel it in a direction yet unseen in the Middle East – the Kurdistan Workers’ Party or the PKK¹⁵. Due to the nature of the organization and its lack of weaponry and foreign support in comparison to the professionally trained, NATO backed Turkish soldiers, the PKK (Partiya Karkerên Kurdistanê) remained largely underestimated for a period of time sufficient for organizing a force comprised of approximately 15 000 guerilla fighters and around 50 000 civilian militia, with thousands of supporters all around Europe¹⁶.

To better understand the reasons behind the PKK’s rapid success in gaining popular support, one must first delve into the very core of the organization and address the founder of the party whose ideas seem to resonate with the Kurds even today – Abdullah Öcalan. Born in Omerli on the 4th of April 1949 as a child of underprivileged parents, Öcalan was, from his earliest days exposed to the injustice that the Kurdish people suffered under the Turkish regime. Upon graduating high school, he enrolled into University of Ankara and continued to pursue his studies in the field of Political Sciences. As an ethnic Kurd in a predominantly Turkish environment, Öcalan soon affiliated himself with the Democratic Cultural Associations of the East (a

13 „The Unknown Oppression of the Kurds“, *The Thistle*, <http://www.mit.edu/~thistle/v12/2/kurds.html> (23rd April 2017)

14 Constanze LETSCH, „Sakine Cansiz: ‘a legend among PKK members‘“, *The Guardian*, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/jan/10/sakine-cansiz-pkk-kurdish-activist> (23rd April 2017)

15 Aliza MARCUS, *Blood and Belief: The PKK and the Kurdish Fight for Independence*, New York: New York University Press, 2007, 1.

16 MARCUS, *Blood and Belief: The PKK and the Kurdish Fight for Independence*, 1.

group supportive of the Kurdish struggle) in order to tackle, and eventually better, the dire state of the Kurdish identity within Turkish borders.¹⁷ As an avid proponent of the struggle for Kurdish rights, as well as a connoisseur of Marxist theory, Öcalan built upon the existing left-wing ideology of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, merging it with anti-imperialism, ecology and Jineology ('the science of woman' much needed in the patriarchal environment of his origin) in order to create an alternative to the Turkish treatment of the Kurds unique to the Kurdish experience. However, unlike the ideas proposed by the aforementioned Marxist theorists, "Öcalan simplified the future of the Kurdish struggle. For Öcalan there were no tortured debates on whether Kurdish society has reached the necessary level of ideological development for launching armed struggle or questioning whether the society's economic status was appropriate for communist warfare or whether Mao's "Three Worlds" theory should be adopted. Instead, there was the problem – Turkey's colonization of the Kurdish region coupled with imperialism and capitalism. And the solution – armed struggle and socialism."¹⁸ Even though the very act of nurturing one's culture was regarded as rebellion, the highest form of rebellion for Öcalan, and consequently for the PKK, remained armed rebellion.¹⁹

This attitude towards the problem led to not only acquiring a great following consisting of both men and women, but also to the PKK engaging into paramilitary actions and guerilla warfare against the Turkish central government in 1984. The final aim of the armed struggle was to once again reclaim the people's rights to their own language and culture, as well as demanding independence for Kurdistan.²⁰ As the attacks grew fiercer and mutual violence escalated, acts of expressing domination over the enemy rose rapidly. Those believed to be members of the PKK often faced torture and extrajudicial killings by Turkish government officials. Along with various other torture methods, rape became a widespread scare tactic performed by the Turkish police and other government officials over the suspected female PKK guerillas and civilian members.²¹ Such accounts of rape served not only to accentuate the prevailing attitude concerning the Kurds, but to clearly illustrate gender roles tilted in favor of the dominant male.

Raping 'their women' as an act of asserting supremacy and reducing them to mere objects being fought over by two opposing sides, in this context, showed that, despite the Kurds being an oppressed nation, there existed an even more oppressed subgroup in their midst, a subgroup in which all forms of

17 „A Short Biography“, *Partiya Karkerên Kurdistan*, <http://www.pkkonline.com/en/index.php?sys=article&artID=22> (23rd April 2017)

18 MARCUS, *Blood and Belief: The PKK and the Kurdish Fight for Independence*, 38.

19 Ibid, 39.

20 Sevim SONGÜN, „History of PKK in Turkey“, *Hurriyet Daily News*, <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/default.aspx?pageid=438&n=history-for-the-pkk-in-turkey-2009-09-14> (24th April 2017)

21 Meral DUZGUN, „The Kurdish Women's Movement: Challenging gendered militarization and the nation-state“, PhD dissertation, University of Westminster, 2014.

repression within society are reflected at once – women²². For this very reason, Öcalan stressed the importance of women's liberation through a concept of his own making known as Jineology, literally translated as the science of women. If women are the most oppressed subgroup within a larger disempowered class, the aspiration towards empowerment must start from none other than women themselves since the liberation of the most oppressed subgroup consequently represents the liberation of groups and subgroups on all levels above it. "The extent to which society can be thoroughly transformed is determined by the extent of the transformation attained by women. Similarly, the level of woman's freedom and equality determines the freedom and equality of all sections of society."²³ This transformation can be illustrated by drawing an analogy with a tower of cards. Here, every story of the tower represents a social class, from the least to the most privileged, while the tower represents the system under which the society operates. On the bottom of the tower there is a number of apexes followed by a layer of horizontally placed cards, followed by another layer of apexes and so on. Since every one of the classes can contain women it is possible to say that the cards themselves represent women. If only one of the cards from the top is removed, only a part of the structure topples. Therefore, even though the privileged women still experience an entire set of issues that are not experienced by privileged men (e.g. issues regarding unwanted pregnancy or alike that are often politicized in order to push a certain groups agenda regardless of one's class) it is not enough that the change starts from them. However, if one were to take a card from the downmost story (representing the most underprivileged social class in which women experience both the lack of privilege caused by class and still tackle various gender specific issues) the entire structure collapses and leaves all the cards on the same level. Only by eliciting a bottom-up change while simultaneously addressing the gender biased issues which can often be rendered political, is it possible to pave a way for true freedom and equality within the society. The same analogy can be used if one were to replace the term 'class' with the term 'nation' in the context of countries consisting of members of different nationalities where one nation asserts dominance over the other. Thus, if the Kurds were to achieve independence as a nation in a sense of ridding themselves of the continual dominance of another, it was of crucial importance for women of the PKK to simultaneously tackle their own gender-based oppression and become active and independent agents of the struggle and personally take up arms in a fight for freedom.

22 Abdullah ÖCALAN, *Democratic Confederalism*, London: Transmedia Publishing Ltd., 2011, 17.

23 Abdullah ÖCALAN, *Liberating Life: Woman's Revolution*, Cologne: International Initiative, 2013, 57.

3. Jineology, women in the Kurdish freedom movement and the PKK

The principles proposed by Jineology became ingrained in the Kurdish freedom movement through practice long before some of Öcalan's more famous writings on the topic, such as "Liberating Life: Woman's Revolution", came into existence. Öcalan argued that the experience of enslavement of the Kurdish women, while partly shared by women all around the world, was in many ways unique to the Kurds. Lack of education, economic dependency, lack of freedom, honor killings and similar modes of women's subjugation ran rampant within the society.²⁴ By Öcalan, such occurrences were seen as a direct manifestation of the political dead-end in which the Kurds, as a nation, have been stranded throughout the majority of their recent history. In fact, the subjugation of women was, by him, considered nothing else but a reflection of the loss of political power that the Kurdish male experienced.²⁵ It is important to note that all the societies that the aforementioned refers to (Kurdish, Turkish, Syrian, Iraqi and Iranian) were, and in part still remain, largely patriarchal and many aspects of political power are channeled through the dominant male, while women were primarily subjected to housewifization²⁶ and thus removed from the socio-political sphere of life. By the loss of the said power, not only did the Kurdish male become repressed by the more powerful Turkish oppressor, but the women experienced and even higher degree of disempowerment, since the extent to which they were able to practice their rights still depended on a now subjugated dominant male – much as was the case between the feudal lord and a peasant working his land, as described in Marxist theory. This serves to show that liberating the already dominant male simply was not sufficient if one was to achieve independence and freedom for all members of the society – the key to achieving so lied in women. As a part of his teachings, Öcalan proposed a general democratization of society, education and liberation of women²⁷ in all areas of life. Women became encouraged to tackle and take on traditionally male gender roles and become active creators of their own lives by equally participating in both daily life and the armed struggle for independence. In practice, Jineology soon became one of the central tenets of the Kurdish struggle, permeating all aspects of life, from the battlefield, economy and politics to everyday activities.

As Öcalan's ideas gained more prominence, the end of the 80s and the beginning of the 90s saw a dramatic rise in the involvement of women in the armed struggle. The wave of change within both Turkish and Kurdish societies became more than evident. In 1987, the first all-female organization

24 ÖCALAN, *Liberating Life: Woman's Revolution*, 40.

25 Ibid, 40.

26 A process of reducing women to the roles of wives and mothers, with no say in discussions on political, social and economic issues that might concern them

27 ÖCALAN, *Liberating Life: Woman's Revolution*, 40.

was created within the PKK under the name of Patriotic Women Union of Kurdistan or YJWK (Yekîtiya Jinên Welatparêzen Kurdistan). However, due to a sudden spike in numbers of female guerilla fighters in the early 90s (after a series of famous uprisings known among the Kurds as Serhildans), YJWK was soon reorganized under the name of TAJK (Free Women's Movement of Kurdistan).²⁸ "During the first National Women's Congress in March 1995, YJAK (Yekîtiya Jinên Azad a Kurdistan/Union of the Free Women of Kurdistan), the first military-political organization of Kurdish women was created under presidential control of the PKK. In the Second National Congress of Women in March 1999, the organization became autonomous under the name of PJKK."²⁹

Since in its earlier days, the PKK did not only act as a separatist, but also an anti-capitalist structure rooted in Marxist theory, the importance of separating the PKK from its all-female offshoot PJKK lied in the notion of capitalism and the nation-state representing the ultimate forms of a dominant male.³⁰ As such, to the PKK/PJKK, the exploitative nature of capitalism and the nation-state was thought to mimic the dynamics between an authoritative husband and a submissive wife on a much larger scale. In this sense, not only women, but all Kurdish people living under the oppressive capitalist regime (as that in Turkey) became 'submissive wives' of the 'authoritative husband' system, with Kurdish women suffering double misfortune by being subjected to the oppressive dominant male in the forms of both capitalism and the patriarchal household dynamics. Thus, in order to achieve equality, and ultimately independence, the PKK deemed necessary that women be given a chance to act freely alongside their male counterparts while still maintaining a clear distinction between them for the sole purpose of providing themselves with a chance of gaining representation within the society. Alongside the physical, armed struggle, representation of women in all areas of life and presenting them as equally capable, served another important type of struggle essential to the success of the PKK – the mental struggle.³¹

After Abdullah Öcalan's incarceration on the island of Imrali under the accusations of treason in 1999, a death sentence (later reduced to life in prison) for leading an armed campaign and conducting what was, by the prosecution, regarded as terrorist attacks against Turkish citizens³², focal ideas of the PKK changed radically. Due to the correspondence with the American theorist Murray Bookchin, whose ideas were mostly rooted in anarchism, ecology and libertarian socialism, Öcalan himself slowly began to abandon the Marxist-Leninist theory, that served as a theoretical foundation of the PKK ever since

28 Massoud SHARIFI DRYAZ, „Women and nationalism: How women activists are changing the Kurdish conflict“, PhD dissertation, École des hautes études en sciences sociales, 2011.

29 Ibid.

30 ÖCALAN, *Liberating Life: Woman's Revolution*, 43.

31 ÖCALAN, *Liberating Life: Woman's Revolution*, 45.

32 „Prison island trial for Öcalan“, *BBC News*, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/303045.stm> (28th April 2017)

its beginnings, in favor of Bookchin's libertarian municipalism, modifying it further into a theory known today as Democratic Confederalism.³³ Öcalan soon condemned some past PKK activities as well as his own actions that ultimately lead to his arrest. During the time prior to Öcalan's imprisonment, to an extent, the PKK still adhered to the idea of leader-worship within their ranks, "the world was changing, [but] the PKK did not adapt its structures. Thus the PKK was pushed into reactionary behavior, particularly in the areas where the fighting took place."³⁴

As Öcalan's worldviews changed, so did the modus operandi of the PKK. The group discarded their authoritarian practices that relied heavily on seeking independence and gender equality through the barrel of a gun, and instead resorted to pacifist means of achieving their set goals. Rather than procuring the desired rights by force, the PKK since aimed to internalize the notions of a democratic, gender-liberated, ecological society realized through bottom-up change and spread the idea among the people through ideological education on Democratic Confederalism, Jineology and other radical literature in order to establish a true model of direct democracy in which each and every citizen is an active participant in the political life, regardless of their nationality or gender.³⁵

4. Battle against ISIS and the adoption of Öcalan's ideas in the Rojava Revolution

For future reference, it is important to note that, throughout recent history, Syrian Kurds experienced a great degree of discrimination, similar to their Turkish counterparts. Inability to claim one's nationality, the loss of citizenship, language bans and restrictions regarding freedom of expression that for decades plagued Syrian Kurds³⁶, created a fertile ground on which the seed of the ideas proposed by the PKK in Turkey was to be planted.

The PKK's involvement in various Syrian affairs is not at all a recent occurrence, nor were Öcalan's ideas adopted overnight as the Rojava Revolution began. Throughout the course of the 80s and 90s, Öcalan, now wanted in Turkey, sought shelter in Syria's Damascus. The existing relations between the two regimes caused the Syrian government to grant permission to the PKK to establish bases and training camps within the country. In turn, the aforementioned resulted in more Syrian Kurds joining and fighting amongst the ranks of the PKK, as well as adopting the ideas it stood for.

33 Rafael TAYLOR, The new PKK: unleashing a social revolution in Kurdistan, *ROAR Magazine*, <https://roarmag.org/essays/pkk-kurdish-struggle-autonomy/> (28th April 2017)

34 Abdullah ÖCALAN, Prison Writings, *Google Books*, <https://books.google.com.au/books?id=2ZYaX07cEUAC&printsec=frontcover#v=onepage&q&f=false> (28th April 2017)

35 TAYLOR, „The new PKK: unleashing a social revolution in Kurdistan“ (28th April 2017)

36 „Syria: The Silenced Kurds“, *Human Rights Watch*, <https://www.hrw.org/reports/1996/Syria.htm> (5th May 2017)

Although Syrian Kurds never accounted for more than a small proportion of the Kurdistan Worker's Party in total³⁷, according to the observations of Abdullah Öcalan himself, those joining were mostly "immigrants who fled to Syria from the oppression and violence of the Turkish governments."³⁸ Such set of circumstances allowed for Öcalan's ideological discourse to be accepted and spread more and more among the Syrian Kurdish minority. However, in October 1998, under Turkish pressure, the Syrian government expelled Abdullah Öcalan from his long time safe haven in Damascus³⁹ and, over the next decade, continuously cracked down on its Kurdish minority in order to stop the ideas behind the PKK from spreading. The governmental efforts to silence the revolutionary thought Öcalan's ideas now brought to Syria proved to be futile. Even though the PKK bases were forcefully closed and its members arrested⁴⁰, the newly adopted political thought remained alive in the minds of the Syrian Kurds supportive of the PKK. In 2003, the aforementioned prompted the establishment of the Democratic Union Party (PYD), an underground, PKK affiliated organization based on the idea of Democratic Confederalism, with limited military capabilities and often susceptible to violent governmental oppression.⁴¹ The weakening of Bashar al-Assad's regime that started in 2011 during a series of uprisings known as the "Arab Spring"⁴², and the subsequent rise of the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria, weakened the grip that the Syrian government had on the Kurds and allowed them to carve out their own way to freedom in the midst of a rampant civil war that started to consume Syria. As Kurds sought their own path in the war that was to come, theories such as Democratic Confederalism and Jineology were fast to openly spread throughout Syria and quickly became the pillars of the forthcoming revolution. In a quest for autonomy, the Syrian Kurds established a radically pluralistic, economically self-sufficient, stateless democracy⁴³ in northern Syria (Rojava) and adopted many teachings proposed by Abdullah Öcalan, among which women's liberation and the rejection of a nation-state are the most prominent.⁴⁴ The rejection of the nation state can be said to be the very mean of solving the national question that the Kurds have been struggling

37 Gareth JENKINS, „The PKK and the PYD: Comrades in Arms, Rivals in Politics?“, *The Turkey Analyst*, <https://www.turkeyanalyst.org/publications/turkey-analyst-articles/item/535-the-pkk-and-the-pyd-comrades-in-arms-rivals-in-politics?.html> (23rd November 2017)

38 Hosheng OSE, „The PKK-Assad regime story: harmony, discord and Öcalan“, *NOW.*, <https://now.mmedia.me/lb/en/commentary/565108-the-pkk-assad-regime-story-harmony-discord-and-ocalan> (23rd November 2107)

39 JENKINS, „The PKK and the PYD: Comrades in Arms, Rivals in Politics?“ (23rd November 2017)

40 Hosheng OSE, „The PKK-Assad regime story: harmony, discord and Öcalan“, *NOW.*, <https://now.mmedia.me/lb/en/commentary/565108-the-pkk-assad-regime-story-harmony-discord-and-ocalan> (23rd November 2107)

41 JENKINS, „The PKK and the PYD: Comrades in Arms, Rivals in Politics?“ (23rd November 2017)

42 Strangers in a Tangled Wilderness, *A small key can open a large door: The revolution in Rojava*, Charleston: Combustion Books, 2016, 23.

43 Ibid, 25.

44 Ibid, 23.

with ever since the erasure of Kurdistan in the beginning of the 20th century. If the nation state is abolished, the possibility of one nation dominating another disappears solely because nationality would no longer be seen as an acceptable source of legitimacy in the context of justifying one's actions, thus not allowing for further discrimination and oppression of the Kurds (or any other group for that matter) based on cultural or linguistic assimilation and erasure. In that sense the Kurdish question would be solved simply by being rendered obsolete. However, as it has been previously mentioned (by the 'tower of cards' analogy), in order to begin the process that will allow for the abolition of the nation state and bring about equality, it is of crucial importance to make women the fuge[wo]men of said change. For this reason, the internal structure of the PYD consists of shared, co-chair⁴⁵ positions reserved for one man and one woman on every level of its political hierarchy. As the principles of Democratic Confederalism condemn offensive warfare and consider it a rudimentary remnant of the nation-state that needs to be overcome, while favoring self-defense as a means of preservation of one's identity and the right to democratic decision making⁴⁶, in 2011, a self-defense military wing of the PYD was officially declared in Rojava – the YPG (People's Protection Units). In the early days of the Revolution, the YPG embraced the PKK's ideology, but remained an independent force.⁴⁷ Despite a popular misconception, the YPG was not only male, but a mixed gender military organization consisting of mostly Kurdish volunteers and also members of other ethnicities present in Rojava⁴⁸ – an occurrence seldom seen in the patriarchal Middle Eastern nation-states.

Yet, in spite of their revolutionary and innovative nature, Kurdish efforts remained largely unnoticed in the eyes of the Western world for long after the beginning of the Syrian civil war – that is – until the declaration of an all-female offshoot of the YPG in 2012 – the YPJ (Women's Protection Units).⁴⁹

45 RUDAW, „PYD elect new co-chairs at party congress“, *Rudaw*, <http://www.rudaw.net/english/middleeast/syria/28092017> (21st November 2017)

46 ÖCALAN, *Democratic Confederalism*, 28.

47 Danny GOLD, „Meet the YPG, the Kurdish Militia That Doesn't Want Help from Anyone“, *Vice*, https://www.vice.com/en_us/article/meet-the-ypg (5th May 2017)

48 „YPG: People's Protection Units“, *The Kurdish Project*, <http://thekurdishproject.org/history-and-culture/kurdish-nationalism/peoples-protection-units-ypg/> (5th May 2017)

49 „YPJ: Kurdish feminists fighting the Islamic State“, *The Week*, <http://www.theweek.co.uk/middle-east/islamic-state/60758/ypj-the-kurdish-feminists-fighting-islamic-state#ixzz3GjjLHvDw> (6th May 2017)

5. ISIS as the ultimate 'dominant male' and women's liberation as an answer to the Kurdish question

Rooted in the most extreme interpretations of Islam originating from the Wahhabi movement and promoting religious violence in the name of jihad, in the present society, it can be said that ISIS represents one of the most oppressive and fascist regimes in the world today⁵⁰. The Islamic State, that spans across more than a thousand miles of Syrian and Iraqi territory, can be considered one of the only jihadist states, or – as ISIS supporters often refer to it – 'Caliphates' in existence today.⁵² “While the sheer amount of land that IS controls is significant, it is not the most important thing to take into account. Rather, what is more striking is the fact that it is a de facto state. Its actions are not underground; it seeks – and, to an extent, has – popular legitimacy. Of course, this is possible solely because of the unprecedented level of regional destabilization brought on by the Syrian civil war and Iraq's crippling sectarian politics. In this climate of instability, IS was able to quietly enlarge its sphere of influence, collect funds, train its fighters and consolidate its popularity like no other group before it.”⁵³

Since its rise to power, its ideology claimed numerous victims and most roughly affected none other than women living in the territory the IS appropriated. As they occupied territories in Syria and Iraq, ISIS militants imposed a strict dress code on women, consisting of a wide and thick black veil barely revealing the eyes⁵⁴ thus rendering women almost invisible beneath the cloth coverings and symbolically removing them from public life. For all those who did not follow the newly imposed dress code, severe punishment ensued. The IS's radical interpretation of Islam presupposes utter subjugation of women and strips them of even the most basic rights under the guise of promoting Islam and modesty. Under the jihadist rule, women are completely removed from participating in the life of the community and are reduced to nothing more than objects at the service of male supporters of the Islamic State. The women who were not lucky enough to remain only disempowered housewives confined to the walls of their own homes, were either executed or raped and shoved into the gruesome world of jihadist sex slavery. In this grisly community of ISIS fighters and supporters, women are seen as objects for

50 Alastair CROOKE, „You Can't Understand ISIS If You Don't Know the History of Wahhabism in Saudi Arabia“, *Huffpost*, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/alastair-crooke/isis-wahhabism-saudi-arabia_b_5717157.html (12th May 2017)

51 Stephen SHEEHI, „ISIS as a Fascist Movement“, *Academia.edu*, https://www.academia.edu/18618158/ISIS_as_a_Fascist_Movement (12th May 2017)

52 Erin Marie SALTMAN, Charlie WINTER, „*Islamic State: The Changing Face of Modern Jihadism*“, London: Quilliam Foundation, 2014, 31.

53 SALTMAN, WINTER, „*Islamic State: The Changing Face of Modern Jihadism*“, 31-32.

54 Rukmini CALLIMACHI, „For Women Under ISIS, a Tyranny of Dress Code and Punishment“, *The New York Times*, <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/12/12/world/middleeast/islamic-state-mosul-women-dress-code-morality.html> (6th May 2017)

trade, either given to faithful ISIS soldiers or sold at modern slavery market.⁵⁵ Either way, the sole purpose of women in this context became to gratify sexual urges of the dominant, oppressive male without their own say in the matter.

All things considered, it can easily be noticed that the Islamic States ideology almost perfectly fits into the context of the 'dominant male' and 'submissive woman' dynamics used by Öcalan to demonstrate how the system exploits the people living under its rule, already described in the third chapter of this paper. The Islamic State and its supporters represent the 'dominant male' in both literal and figurative senses. While the women in occupied villages and cities experience severe abuse from the male jihadists, the entirety of the occupied territories has, on a much greater plan, as well, adopted the dynamics of the abused woman and the abusive man by translating the behavior present in the private sphere onto the public sphere in which it becomes law to which all the residents of the occupied areas must abide in order to avoid punishment at the hands of the abusive Islamic State.

The previously mentioned Women's Protection Units (YPJ) prove to be of utmost significance in this context for the sole reason of being able to resist oppression on both levels and fight the ultimate subjugating 'dominant male' in the form of ISIS militants in the public and the patriarchy manifested in everyday life in the private sphere. According to its proponents, in order for the Rojava Revolution to succeed, it is not enough to fight ISIS with tanks and weapons⁵⁶. To ensure that the principles of gender equality, inclusion regardless of ethnic background and liberty, upon which this revolution is built – which can be perfectly summed up by the Kurdish slogan "Jin, Jiyan, Azadî" (Woman, life, freedom) – become internalized in the minds of all Rojava citizens, it is necessary that the women become bearers of change in both the battlefield and everyday matters such as marriage and expected gender roles within the household while simultaneously repelling the looming threat that is the Islamic State in order to avoid simply slipping from one oppressive system into another.⁵⁷ "The YPJ is in itself a feminist movement, even if it is not their main mission."⁵⁸ As such it could, according to Abdullah Öcalan's previously described ideas of women's liberation as a way to freedom for all, bring about betterment for all the residents residing in the liberated territories of Rojava.

By ISIS militants, being killed in battle by a female fighter of the

55 David BARNETT, „Women who are captured by Isis and kept as slaves endure more than just sexual violence“, *Independent*, <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/middle-east/isis-sex-slaves-lamiya-aji-bashar-nadia-murad-sinjar-yazidi-genocide-sexual-violence-rape-sakharov-a7445151.html> (6th May 2017)

56 Dilar DIRIK, „Building Democracy without the State“, *ROAR Magazine*, <https://roarmag.org/magazine/building-democracy-without-a-state> (6th May 2017)

57 Dilar DIRIK, „New World Summit: Stateless State – Kurdish Women's Movement“, *Vimeo*, <https://vimeo.com/107639261> (6th May 2017)

58 „YPJ: Kurdish feminists fighting the Islamic State“, *The Week*, <http://www.theweek.co.uk/middle-east/islamic-state/60758/ypj-the-kurdish-feminists-fighting-islamic-state#ixzz3GjjLHvDw> (6th May 2017)

YPJ is considered a disgrace and a great dishonor⁵⁹, which as such even more closely illustrates the horrific position of women and the attitude towards them upheld by the ISIS fighters. Despite, or maybe even because of such circumstances, women played a pivotal role in the liberation of Kobane – the famous martyr city that, against all odds rose from its own ashes and resisted the Islamic State. It was not only women, but a specific YPJ fighter known as Arîn Mîrkan, who, to the revolutionaries in Rojava, became the embodiment of unconditional resistance, a hero, and one of the most famous martyrs of the women's struggle for freedom⁶⁰, who managed to help all residents of Rojava to once and for all shatter “the myth of the undefeatable fascism of ISIS.”⁶¹ Arîn Mîrkan was a young Kurdish, revolutionary woman and a soldier in the Women's Protection Units who reached newspaper headlines when she carried out a suicide attack east of Kobane in October 2014⁶².

After becoming surrounded by ISIS militants without a way to escape, Mîrkan detonated herself along with dozens of jihadists in her vicinity⁶³, thus not only taking her own life, but simultaneously providing the most needed leverage to the fighters of the YPG and YPJ which subsequently resulted in the liberation of Kobane. Despite it being a radical move, Mîrkan's sacrifice can be viewed rather symbolically in the context of the Rojava Revolution. To the participants of the Rojava Revolution, and among their supporters, “Arîn Mîrkan's heroic death was a hymn to life, to freedom, to women's emancipation. Her selfless action out of solidarity with her people and the freedom of women in particular was a heavy blow (...) to ISIS. In a world that sexualizes and objectifies the woman, Arîn Mîrkan used her body as a final frontline against fascism.”⁶⁴ To not only female fighters, but all proponents of the Rojava Revolution, this radical example ultimately showed that extremism will never prevail, that resistance is possible and served to further fuel the fire of feminist thought among the women in Rojava by sending a message that bespeaks of unconditional defiance of women as a way to defeat the terror of the Islamic State and establish a free, equal society.⁶⁵ Of course, the defiance

59 „YPJ: Women's Protection Units“, *The Kurdish Project*, <http://thekurdishproject.org/history-and-culture/kurdish-women/ypj/> (6th May 2017)

60 Hisham ARAFAT, „Syrian Kurds celebrate Kobani Liberation Day“, *Kurdistan24*, <http://www.kurdistan24.net/en/interview/443e9503-2f88-4fee-a93e-7f4b6b9c3344/Syrian-Kurds-celebrate-Kobani-Liberation-Day> (6th May 2017)

61 Dilar DIRIK, „Radical Democracy: The First Line Against Fascism“, *ROAR magazine*, <https://roarmag.org/magazine/dilar-dirik-kurdish-anti-fascism/> (6th May 2017)

62 „Kurdish female fighter suicide bomber attacks IS in Syrian Kurdistan“, *Ekurd Daily*, <http://ekurd.net/mismas/articles/misc2014/10/syriakurd1442.htm> (10th May 2017)

63 „Kurdish female fighter in suicide attack on Isil amid fighting for key Syria town“, *The Telegraph*, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/middleeast/syria/11142226/Kurdish-female-fighter-in-suicide-attack-on-Isil-amid-fighting-for-key-Syria-town.html> (6th May 2017)

64 DIRIK, „Radical Democracy: The First Line Against Fascism“ (6th May 2017)

65 Meysa EBDO, „Interview With YPJ Commander In Kobanê: Kobanê Will Not Fall“, *The Rojava Report*, <https://rojavarreport.wordpress.com/2014/10/09/interview-with-ypj-commander-in-kobane-kobane-will-not-fall/> (10th May 2017)

in question is able to be realized in much less extreme ways, such as making women seen in all areas of life, establishing structures of co-presidency (one man and one woman sharing the presidential position)⁶⁶ and even excluding men with a history of domestic violence from various organizations.⁶⁷

Furthermore, the death of Arîn Mîrkan can also be interpreted as a break from the 'dominant male' – 'subjugated woman' dynamics in public and private spheres, out of one's own free will, represented on a smaller scale. "In Rojava, especially in the battle for Kobanê there is a collision of two ideologies, two worldviews, two visions of the future that clash with each other. The one has the freedom of women as the center-point, the other their enslavement. One has the patriarchal paradigm; the other adheres to women's liberation ideology."⁶⁸ Arîn Mîrkan in this context, in a way, represents the whole of Rojava under the ISIS terror. The revolutionary women in Rojava adopted that logic by arguing that, if one woman can resist dozens of militants, then many – the YPJ – can resist the entire Islamic State, and if they can resist the IS, then all the citizens in Rojava can tackle the oppressive mentality left behind by both ISIS and decades of other oppressive regimes⁶⁹ and finally live a life of freedom and equality designed by their own hand via organizing and exercising their political and civic rights⁷⁰.

However, the road to a life of freedom is all but easy to navigate and the collision between the two main agents in this conflict, the patriarchal mentality and independent women is all but a simple occurrence. The aforesaid can be further explained by taking into account the liberation of Raqqa. The former capital of the Islamic State was liberated on the 17th of October 2017 after being under siege since 2014. After 135 days of violent clashes, ISIS militants faced their defeat inside the city.⁷¹ The most notable fact regarding the liberation of the city is the notable role of former sex slaves of ISIS militants. During this military campaign stories of a former sex slave vowed to take revenge on her captors⁷² would ever so often be the topic of headlines on various news sites. The stories of these rape survivors standing up to their captors and retaliating for months or even years of horrific abuse seem to represent the uprising of the

66 Meral DUZGUN, „The Kurdish Women's Movement: Challenging gendered militarization and the nation-state“, PhD dissertation, University of Westminster, 2014.

67 Dilar DIRIK, „What is Kurdistan for Women“, *Links*, <http://links.org.au/node/4109> (6th May 2017)

68 Meral ÇIÇEK, „Why the Rojava Revolution is a Women's Revolution“, *Women in War*, <http://www.womeninwar.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2015/08/Beirut/4/Meral%20Cicek.pdf> (10th May 2017)

69 Meysa EBDO, „Interview With YPJ Commander In Kobanê: Kobanê Will Not Fall“, *The Rojava Report*, <https://rojavareport.wordpress.com/2014/10/09/interview-with-ypj-commander-in-kobane-kobane-will-not-fall/> (10th May 2017)

70 Ruken ISIK, „Kurdish Women Struggle for a Next System in Rojava“, *The Next System*, <http://thenextsystem.org/kurdish-women-struggle-for-a-next-system-in-rojava-kurdistan-northern-syria/> (12th May 2017)

71 GREEN LEFT, „Raqqa liberated: 'We dedicate this to all women'“, *Green Left*, <https://www.greenleft.org.au/content/raqqa-liberated-%E2%80%98we-dedicate-all-women%E2%80%99> (23rd November 2017)

72 Julian ROBINSON, „Yazidi sex slave kidnapped by ISIS vows to 'take revenge' on brutes who tortured her after joining all-female militia to fight in Syria“, *Daily Mail*, <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-4713844/Yazidi-sex-slave-kidnapped-ISIS-vows-revenge.html> (23rd November 2017)

'submissive women' against the 'dominant men' in the truest form. According to the YPJ commander Nesrin Abdullah, by liberating Raqqa "Women have freed themselves of the exploitative male regime in political, social, cultural and military aspects, and became a solution to the problems and builder of morals. YPJ has been a hope for all the women of Syria during the Raqqa campaign, defending women from Kurdish, Arabian and other nations and all religions and planting seeds of brotherhood among peoples. [They] inflicted the heaviest blow on the gangs here which they called their capital. With this struggle, [they] emancipated and glorified the trampled honor of Ezidi women. [They] have emancipated thousands of captive Ezidi women and children."⁷³

Even though the aforementioned may hold true in the context of the future of Rojava and the entire Syria to a certain extent, it is impossible to claim that the collision between the women and the patriarchy ended and the women have won and been fully emancipated. ISIS may have been defeated in Raqqa, but it is still undeniable that the battle claimed numerous lives and the victory left the city in ruins. This image can serve as simple analogy for the potential post-revolution society in Rojava. The collision of these two opposing ideologies, one patriarchal and another radically feminist, may too result in just that – a society in ruins. In order to create anew it is important to tear down the remnants of the old system. The armed struggle is just the beginning, but as long as it occurs only in wartime, so is the social revolution. In order for a revolution to be successful it must be maintained and a clearly defined solution to previously existing problems must be offered in practice adequate for implementation during peace-time. Its proponents must continue actively working on rebuilding and improving the society in the civilian sphere through, in this case, the establishment of institutions intent on promoting women's rights through education in Jineology⁷⁴ and ensuring equality. In words of Abdullah Öcalan: "It is the fundamental mission of the new leadership to provide the power of intellect and will needed to attain the three aspects crucial for the realization of a democratic modernity system: a society that is democratic as well as economically and ecologically moral. To achieve this, we need to build a sufficient number of academic structures of appropriate quality. It is not enough to merely criticize the academic world of modernity—we have to develop an alternative. These alternative academic units should be constructed according to the priorities and the needs of all the societal areas, such as economy and technology, ecology and agriculture, democratic politics, security and defense, culture, history, science and philosophy, religion and arts. Without a strong academic cadre, the elements of democratic modernity cannot be built."⁷⁵ If such actions are not undertaken the 'ruins' of the society

73 GREEN LEFT, „Raqqa liberated: 'We dedicate this to all women'“, *Green Left*, <https://www.greenleft.org.au/content/raqqa-liberated-%E2%80%98we-dedicate-all-women%E2%80%99> (23rd November 2017)

74 Fidan ABDULLAH, Hamreen SEIKHO, „Jinology is taught at Afrin high schools“, <http://en.hawarnews.com/jinology-is-taught-at-afrin-high-schools/> (23rd November 2017)

75 ÖCALAN, *Liberating Life: Woman's Revolution*, 59.

cannot be rebuilt, with it operating, at best, according to the fragmented and rearranged pieces of the previous system without succeeding in actualizing true and utmost change.

6. Concluding remarks

Considering all of the aforementioned, it can be argued that “the situation of women is not a ‘women’s issue’ and therefore must not be dismissed as a specific, private issue that interests women only. The question of gender equality is in fact a matter of democracy and freedom of all of society; it is one (though not the only) standard by which the ethics of a community should be measured. Since capitalism, statism, and patriarchy are interconnected, the struggle for freedom must be radical and revolutionary – it must regard women’s liberation as a central aim, not as a side issue.”⁷⁶ Furthermore, “the struggle for women’s freedom must be waged through the establishment of their own political parties, attaining a popular women’s movement, building their own non-governmental organizations and structures of democratic politics. All these must be handled together, simultaneously. The better women are able to escape the grip of male domination and society, the better they will be able to act and live according to their independence initiative. The more women empower themselves, the more they regain their free personality and identity.”⁷⁷ Allowing women to freely regain their identities could, taking into account the previously mentioned notion of women constituting the most oppressed group within the society, thus contribute to the establishment of an array of parties and/or movements founded by other repressed social groups women might belong to solely by allowing women to be considered active and equally valuable participants since it can be argued that the strength of any oppressed group lies not only in the revolutionary idea, but in numbers as well. “Therefore, giving support to women’s ire, knowledge and freedom movement is the greatest display of comradeship and a value of humanity.”⁷⁸ Such notion present within the ideological mindset of the Rojava revolution could represent not only an idea unique to its place and time, but could also provide a possible answer to the Kurdish question in the form of liberation for all, including all nations and ethnicities in Rojava as a radical democracy, while, at the same time, remaining applicable to any existing society in the world.

76 DIRIK, „What is Kurdistan for Women“ (6th May 2017)

77 ÖCALAN, *Liberating Life: Woman’s Revolution*, 60.

78 Ibid.

Sažetak

REVOLUCIJA U ROJAVI: ŽENSKO OSLOBOĐENJE KAO ODGOVOR NA KURDSKO PITANJE

Katarina PAVIČIĆ-IVELJA

Cilj ovog rada jest analizirati povijesnu pozadinu trenutnih događanja poput kurdske borbe za neovisnost i jačanja feminističke misli, kao i kulturne te političke okolnosti koje su pokrenule niz događaja koji su na posljeticu doveli do radikalne promjene u političkoj i društvenoj klimi današnje Sirije. U jeku građanskog rata, Kurdi su iskoristili priliku da započnu borbu za vlastiti suverenitet u sjevernoj Siriji, na kurdskom jeziku poznatoj kao Rojava. Budući da je utemeljena na nadasve progresivnoj ideji demokratskog konfederalizma, osmišljenoj od strane kurdske nacionalističkog vođe i osnivača PKK-a (Kurdistsanske radničke partije) Abdullaha Öcalana, revolucija u Rojavi često se smatra jednim od najvećih društvenih eksperimenata našega vremena. Iako već sama implementacija demokratskog konfederalizma može biti dovoljna kako bi se istaknula važnost ove revolucije u kontekstu današnjeg Bliskog istoka, procvat ženskih prava u Rojavi za trajanja revolucije od još je većeg značaja. Jedna od ključnih ideja Öcalanove filozofije, poznata kao Jineologija (znanost žena), ne postavlja ništa drugo do žene u sam centar revolucije. Promatrajući rad ženske vojske, tako zvane Jedinice ženske zaštite (YPJ) jasno je vidljivo da se spomenuta ideologija očituje u praksi, ne samo na bojištu, već i u svakodnevnom životu. U ovom radu nastojat će dati pregled povijesnih okolnosti koje su dopustile iskru koja je zapalila vatru ženske revolucije u jednom od najpatrijarhalnijih društava i među jednom od najpotlačenijih manjina u današnjem svijetu te nadalje istražiti značaj sadašnje situacije u Rojavi.