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Country Report on Terrorism 2019 - Chapter 5 - Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK)

Aka the Kurdistan Freedom and Democracy Congress; the Freedom and Democracy Congress of Kurdistan; KADEK; Partiya Karkeran Kurdistan; the People's Defense Force; Halu Mesru Savunma Kuvveti; Kurdistan People's Congress; People's Congress of Kurdistan; KONGRA-GEL

Description: Founded by Abdullah Ocalan in 1978 as a Marxist-Leninist separatist organization, the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) was designated as an FTO on October 8, 1997. The group, composed primarily of Turkish Kurds, launched a campaign of violence in 1984. The PKK's original goal was to establish an independent Kurdish state in southeastern Turkey.

Activities: In the early 1990s, the PKK moved beyond rural-based insurgent activities to engage in urban terrorism. Anatolia became the scene of significant violence, with some estimates suggesting at least 40,000 casualties. The PKK foreswore violence from 1999 until June 2004, when its hardline militant wing took control and renounced the self-imposed cease-fire. In 2009, the Turkish government and the PKK resumed peace negotiations, but talks broke down after the PKK carried out an attack in July 2011 that killed 13 Turkish soldiers. In 2012, the PKK claimed responsibility for multiple car bombings that killed more than 10 people. Between December 2012 and July 2015, the Turkish government and the PKK resumed peace negotiations, but the negotiations ultimately broke down – owing partly to domestic political pressures and the war in Syria.

Between January and mid-July 2015, the PKK carried out small-scale armed attacks against Turkey's security forces and military bases. In August 2016, the group claimed a VBIED strike against Sirnak police headquarters, which killed 11 people and wounded more than 70 others. In 2017, Turkish officials blamed the PKK for a car bomb and shooting outside of a courthouse that killed two people and a June attack on a military convoy that killed more than 20 soldiers.

In 2018, numerous attacks by the PKK were reported against Turkey's security forces, including an attack claimed by the PKK in November against a Turkish army base, which resulted in dozens of casualties. On September 12, 2018, a roadside bomb struck a bus carrying workers from the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, killing seven and wounding 13 in Diyarbakir province's Kulp district. The government blamed the PKK for the attack.

In 2019, the PKK engaged in terrorist attacks in eastern and western Turkey, when the PKK struck over the border from its bases within Iraq. In September, the PKK attacked a Turkish military vehicle in Hakkari province, killing two soldiers and wounding another. In July, the PKK was accused of assassinating a senior Turkish diplomat in Erbil, Iraq.

Strength: The PKK is estimated to consist of 4,000 to 5,000 members

Location/Area of Operation: Turkey, Iraq, Iran, and Syria

Funding and External Aid: The PKK receives financial support from the large Kurdish diaspora in Europe.

ecoi.net summary:

Brief description of the
Kurdistan Workers' Party
(Excerpt of chapter 5 of the
country report on terrorism
2019)



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