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MEPs demand peaceful resolution of Kurdish issue

Press release from N-VA MEP Mark Demesmaeker

An MEP from the European Parliament's European Free Alliance group has urged the European Commission to take an active role in bringing about a peaceful resolution to the Kurdish issue in Turkey.

Turkey's Kurdish people have long been involved in a campaign for self-determination and respect for their national and language rights. Regrettably this has often been marked by violence and bloodshed. EFA MEPs have called for a peaceful resolution to the conflict.

The issue has been in particular focus lately following the brutal murder of three female Kurdish activists in Paris and the start of talks between Turkey's intelligence services and Abdullah Öcalan, held prisoner on Imrali island. It was also noted during a debate today in the European Parliament that hundreds of Kurdish prisoners in Turkish jails went on a 67 day hunger strike in 2012 calling for better rights for Kurds in Turkey. They also called for better conditions for imprisoned Kurdish leader Abdullah Öcalan.

Speaking during the debate in Strasbourg, EFA MEP **Mark Demesmaeker** (N-VA, Flanders) said:

"Once more it seems that the solution to the Kurdish question lies in Turkish hands. And if the signals about the Imrali peace process are right, then perhaps Ankara has come to realise that with Abdullah Öcalan it has the key to a Kurdish solution in its hands.

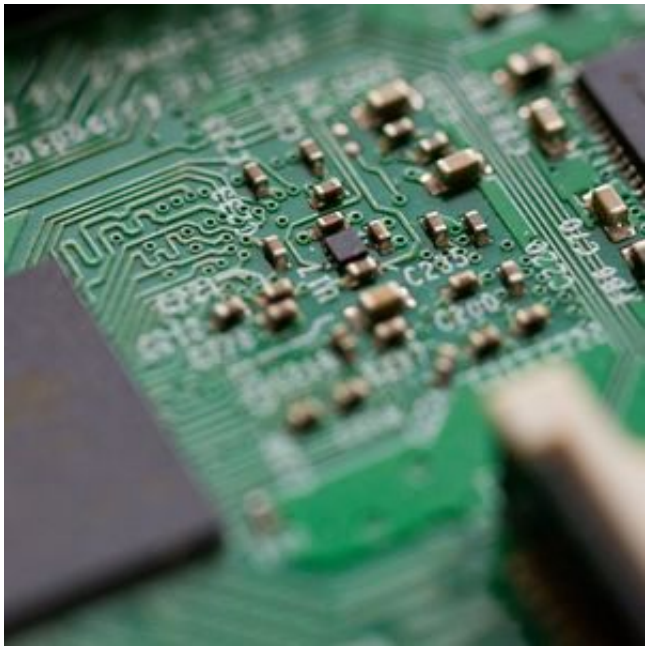
"But we must be cautious. When Turkey opens one door to democratisation, another is slammed shut. Whilst there have certainly been some positive developments, they have been too few and far between and too slow in coming. Political persecution has continued, and the detention of anyone who criticised the government has led to the world's largest prison for journalists.

"So I say to the Commission, Council and EU Member States, do not be blind to these risks, but remain strong in your support of a sustainable political dialogue with all Kurdish political forces. Above all, do not unquestioningly accept everything the Turkish government tells you. Without full language rights, political autonomy, abolition of the unusually high election threshold of 10% and a full constitutional reform with recognition of Kurdish rights, then Ankara's policy will continue to run contrary to the European values of the Union which it says it wants to respect as a candidate EU Member State ."

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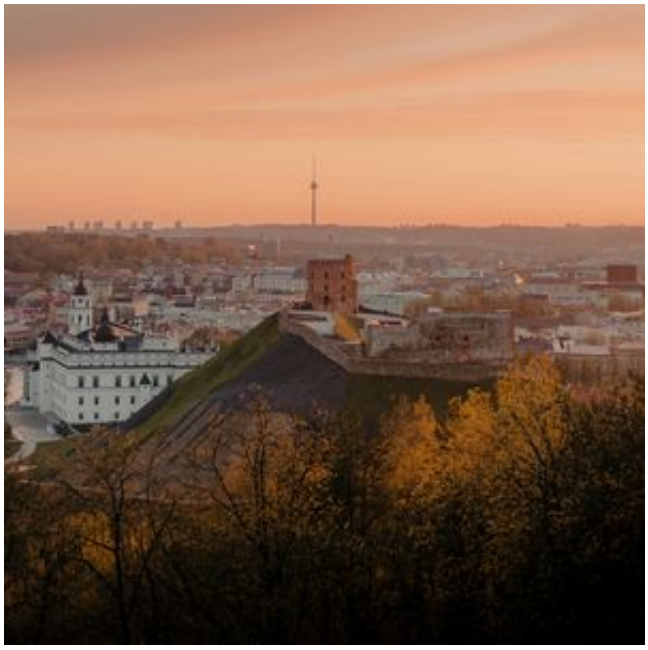
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