



Women Fighters in the Kurdish National Movement

Transforming Gender Politics and the PKK

Mustafa Kemal Topal

"Engaging with a vast body of literature on power, colonialism, and gender Topal offers an original and insightful study of the multifaceted experiences of women fighters and the evolution of gender relations within the Kurdish movement across generations. Pursuing an interpretivist approach informed by in-depth interviews and multiple site visits, his work represents the state-of-the art in qualitative methods in Kurdish studies."

Günes Murat Tezcür, Professor, Arizona State University, USA

"This unique study gives us insights into the lives, perceptions, and goals of Kurdish women fighters. Theoretically inspired by Donna Haraway and Karen Barad, Mustafa Topal shows, how the women fighters living in the mountains recreate themselves as free women in interaction with nature. His study of the political structures in autonomous Rojava reveals how the women fighters' gender ideas have influenced local Kurdish communities." *Drude Dahlerup, Professor, Stockholm University, Sweden*

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Hardback | 240 pp | February 2024 | 9780755648368 | £85.00 £55.25

The Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) is a Kurdish militant political organization and armed guerrilla movement. Designated a terrorist organization by Turkey, the EU and the US, it seeks self-determination from Turkey. But this book examines the other changes it generates in society, focusing on how it has become a platform for shifts in gender politics through its women fighters. Based on fieldwork undertaken in Iraq, Syria and Europe - including in-depth interviews and participant observation within women's camps - the book examines Kurdish women fighters' motivations to join the PKK, as well as their personal life stories and views on gender, patriarchy, and ethnic minority experiences. This is the largest ethnographic study on the PKK to date and the book argues that in addition to seeking their nation's struggle for survival and a democratic society, Kurdish women fighters are driven by the prospect of improving conditions for themselves and for women across the entire region.

Mustafa Kemal Topal is Assistant Professor at the Roskilde University in Denmark, where he also received his PhD. He is also fellow at the Bergen University in Norway, having been awarded the Independent Research Fund Denmark International's Postdoctoral Grant for his new project 'Kurdish Women's Democratic Experiment in Post-Conflict Northern Syria'.

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