



Immediate Release: Federal politics, Anti-terror laws

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## Unprecedented opposition to terror listing

A first of its kind Senate motion to disallow the listing of the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) as a Terrorist organization is to be moved late this afternoon by Greens' Senator **Bob Brown** and supported by Democrat Senators.

A range of community, legal and civil rights organizations have strongly and publicly opposed the listing of the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) as a Terrorist organisation since it was first listed in December last year. The level of community and parliamentary opposition to this listing has been unprecedented.

Federation of Community Legal Centres of Victoria spokesperson **Anthony Kelly**, said today, *"The Parliamentary Joint Committee which reviewed the listing unanimously found that the PKK doesn't pose any threat to Australia's domestic national security. The listing should be disallowed as a matter of course"*

According to the federal government own assessment, the objective of the PKK is the promotion and advancement of the rights of Kurds living in Turkey.

*"This political listing has nothing to do with protecting Australia from violence." Said Mr Kelly, "This is a foreign policy decision to take the side of the Turkish government in this long standing armed conflict. Proscription criminalizes entire communities of people, simply by association."*

The listing of the PKK in Australia highlights the dangers of the Governments' controversial proscription regime. The practice of listing organisations is undemocratic and a departure from fundamental principles of criminal law. Opinions, aspirations and political affiliations which would otherwise be desirable in a democracy are made illegal. Even emotional support, two or more conversations or meetings with an indirect member of any listed organisation is criminalized regardless of your intent.

According to ALP Senators, Duncan Kerr, and John Faulkner, who had produced a dissenting report, the listing will inflict 'potentially catastrophic community impact' on Australian Kurds.

*"Virtually any support of Turkish Kurdish human rights objectives that are shared by the PKK could leave Australians open to prosecution. Under this listing, asylum seeker claims of persecution due to real or alleged association with the PKK or related organisations will expose refugees to criminal prosecution for membership or a number of other serious offences."* said spokesperson **Vicki Sentas**.

*"In Turkey, Kurdish people face arrest for speaking up about their human rights and for supporting the existence of the PKK. In Australia, Kurdish people now face surveillance and arrest for doing the same thing."*

There are also real fears that the listing will be utilized to further justify the actions of the Turkish state in this conflict which has included the destruction of Kurdish villages, extra judicial killings, torture of Kurdish arrestees and the active prevention of the use of Kurdish language and other symbols.

For further information contact:

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A 2-page public statement by Community Organisations is available at <http://www.communitylaw.org.au/community/pages/News/>