

*Abdullah Ađar, narrates stories of Mehmetçik
fighting terrorists in urban areas, mountains
and during the Euphrates Shield Campaign!*

ABDULLAH AĐAR

ÖZGÜR

THE FREE BELOVED HERO



Remzi Kitabevi

ABDULLAH AĞAR was born in 1967 in Ankara. He graduated as an infantry lieutenant from the Military Academy in 1989.

He received a rangers formation then became the Special Forces Detachment Officer. Right after he stepped in his first commando brigade in the city of Bolu, he had to leave for the south-eastern Turkey and participated in a battle on his very first night. He has fought in the mountains throughout his military journey.

He spent six years in the mountains of southeastern Turkey and Iraq. During his service in the Special Forces, he lost 11 of the soldiers he commanded. 25 of them were seriously injured and became disabled veterans. He had countless bullet injuries during the military operations he commanded in northern Iraq.

He received medals for his “High Courage and Renunciation” and for his service in the Special Forces.

He also participated in military operations in Balkan countries and Caucasus mountains during the same period.

Following this periode, he wrote five books about Southeastern Turkey and terrorism.

He was once again sent to Iraq by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 2010 and spent four years in the area. He travelled all around the country. He spent lots of time with local people. He had the opportunity to make elaborate observations and researches about the Iraqi civil war, religious conflicts, sectarian violence and terror, resistance and the paramilitary organisations mainly based around ISIS and Al-Hashd Al-Shaabi.

When he returned to Turkey, he wrote “ISIS and IRAQ” the most elaborate field research book about ISIS.

He also returned to the southeastern Turkey, had conversations with soldiers in the battlefields and shared the data he collected in his last book called “ÖZGÜR ŞEHİT” (Özgür: The Free Beloved Hero)

His other books are:

5. *Tim “Güneş Doğsun İsteriz”* (5th Team: “We Want the Sun to Rise”)

Ölüm Dağları Bekler “Cudi Dağı” (The Death Waits on the Mountains “Mount Cudi”)

Türk Komandoları “Kuzey Irak” (Turkish Rangers “Northern Iraq”)

Toprak Mehmet’e Susamışsa “Ülkem Bayrağım Onurum” (When The Soil Craves for Soldiers “My Country My Flag My Dignity”)

Baskın “Biz Bu Dağların Erleri” (The Raid “We, The Privates on These Mountains”)

İŞİD ve IRAK “Beled el-nifak vel şikak!” (ISIS and IRAQ “The Land of Hypocrisy and Animosity”)

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ABDULLAH AĞAR

ÖZGÜR:
The Free Beloved
Hero



Remzi Kitabevi

ÖZGÜR: THE FREE BELOVED HERO / Abdullah Ađar

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*My country, my flag, my banner,
my nation, my state,
my honor, my virtue, my glory,
my divine testament, my faith
my oath on which
I have sworn...*

*For those who have fallen
for the sake of our untouchables,
and those who will fall,
for those who have walked on this path
and those who will walk...*



*For what does a soldier die?
Well, for what does a soldier want to die?
Why is this nation composed of soldiers?
Well, why are the enemies the enemies?*

*Without finding answers to these questions
It is not only not possible to understand
the separatist terrorism in the Southeast
But also the wars the Turkish nation
has been conducting for the past thousand years
Nor the wars which it will conduct
Nor how to conduct those wars...*

*I have written everything with the belief that
Death is better than life
Even though life is beautiful no matter what.*

As long as a worthy death is in the offing.

ABDULLAH AĞAR

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Preface

As mass movements triggered the Syrian Civil War in March 2011, the eight-year “American direct invasion” in Iraq had finally come to an end and Syria had evolved into “a war of terrorism and proxies,” while the paths were laid in Turkey for the “peace process.”

From that point, these years have been marred by “non-linear/unconventional warfare” and “conceptual war.” Though they seem unrelated at first glance, a new era started entangled as a consequence of these three turning points. The fragilities and animosities in the Middle East have been designed by the war lords of religion, land and interest, which were to have a lasting impact for the future in the region. Of course, these will only be evident for those who want to see and understand.

By the end of 2011, PKK terrorism in the mountains had become ineffective but with the Uludere incident it entered a new phase. The killing of thirty-four alleged “smugglers” by Turkish airplanes would have detrimental effects on Turkey in many ways. Now a new process, which can be labelled as a “conceptual mistake,” has started. A war against insurgents, which was supposed to have continued until eternity, has been supposedly terminated; Turkey has moved toward peace with terrorists despite the fact that PKK has dared to undertake assaults on Uludere and Şemdinli, resulting in attacks on our children and our homeland.

As Iraq entered the darkness under ISIS (DAESH), the civil war in Syria expanded and evolved. The peace process that started with great hopes has culminated in the largest rebellion during the history of the Turkish Republic. The PKK, for three and a half years, has successfully exploited the process by deploying weapons, ammunition, and explosives while organizing itself accordingly. In our southeast region – in many cities, towns and villages – armed militants belonging to YDG-H and TAK, which were fronts for the PKK, and other insurgent elements were run-

ning wild. As terrorism has been politicized, these groups have tried to influence the populace in the region, provoking them into a massive rebellion by reaching out to the masses.

Among the leaders of PKK, Karayılan, the Chief Snake (a play on words as the last name Karayılan means black snake in Turkish) declared on July 11, 2015 an act that started the most contentious wave of rebellion in Turkish history. This amounted to an endeavor of terrorism in urban terrain based on the organization's provincial presence.

PKK not only instigated clashes in residential areas, but also built trenches, tunnels, barricades, mines, booby traps and other weapons. It has also deployed snipers, heavy weaponry and rocket propelled explosives in residential areas. In addition to Diyarbakır, Sur and Şırnak, other cities in the region were subjected to substantial destruction, resulting in massive migration out of the region. Soldiers, police, gendarmerie and rangers, in cooperation working as the Little Mehments (Mehmetçik), have succeeded in defeating this rebellion attempt in Republican history, resulting in seven hundred twenty-six fatalities and 3,000 injured. Among the veterans, more than nine hundred lost their limbs. The military buildup included anti-aircraft and anti-tank rockets, and DShK (dochka) heavy machine guns, as well as thousands of weapons and millions of tons of ammunition. Hundreds of caves were dug or expanded in the mountains of the southeast region with the help of drills, and explosives. Meanwhile, tunnels, mazes, gutters and basements were built while thousands of shelters, sanctuaries and depots were formed.

We have observed that the actions of ISIS serve the interests of PKK, and vice versa. Meanwhile at the same time, both of their attack strategies serve FETÖ⁽¹⁾, and the latter's terrorism and manipulations have helped PKK and ISIS as well as other unsanctioned left wing and all other terrorist organizations. The days of hybrid terror have arrived, which stoke social sensibilities, fragilities, phobias, animosities and social media terrorism. This is "a new generation war," which applies the nonlinear war concept. Another label describes it as the snatching of our sons to be used as tools against us. And this is our biggest vulnerability. Our biggest mistake

(1) FETÖ (FETO): Fetullah Terrorist Organization. Posing as a religious foundation, this terrorist organisation has exploited Islam and ideas of moderation and tolerance in order to slowly infiltrate into the politics and military of the Turkish Republic, gaining key positions to seize total control. They revealed their true colors on 15 July 2016 with an unsuccessful coup attempt in which 251 citizens were killed and more than 2,000 were wounded.

was to allow it to blow up in our face. This confrontation is a war. Those who have initiated combat want to win this war so that is why they continue to prosecute it. They will attack at any one moment one or more of the elements of our national power – be it the economy, demography, politics, geography, science and technology as well as military, religious and ethnic factors.

The attacks might entail targeting our symbols, values and concepts. They might come from the inside as well as external sources through provocation and terrorism following linear and asymmetrical tactics of combat. Consolidating power is essential in these struggles but, more importantly, deterrence through power is of utmost importance. Otherwise it becomes impossible to stop an advancing enemy. Strategic and diplomatic deterrence are of the essence.

And there is one way to prevent the realities we have endured: Face death head on. Death cannot be prevented. The only way to evade death is to face it directly. In Turkey, attack strategies vary depending upon the element of national power that is being targeted in a specific fight. The stakes of taking effective precautions are raised because the severity of consequences can be unexpectedly harsher in certain combat venues than others. That is why the spirit of our struggle is predicated on our capacity to work, in particular, with the Mehmetçik.

A nation that ignores or becomes cavalier in its defining ideals cannot survive physically. One of Turkey's most significant but confounding questions is: What is the basis of faith? Among Muslim societies, the failure to read, interpret and comprehend the Quran as a platform for unity and conscience of responsibility is what has led to a crisis of faith and has provoked sectarian skirmishes and even a full-blown war. The fact that one's idiosyncratic beliefs about faith have motivated strategies of murderous vindication is one of the most significant defeats for contemporary civilization. The future of our geography portends darkness because there is no cohesion of state or unity that also accepts the diversity of identity. We are imperiled by many lost causes.

It also is worth noting that the disease of declaring people as infidels is not confined to ISIS.

* * *

This book presents numerous short episodes from the combat field struggles of the Mehmetçik, which not only affects the future of Turkey but could portend our overall global capacity to resolve conflict. Despite

the impact and power of the terrorists, they have not been able to break the Turkish soldiers at a single location, regardless of whether it was in a residential neighborhood or in the highest most forbidding reaches of Turkey's tallest mountains.

The broader story of this book is about those who face and evade death under the riskiest circumstances imaginable. It relates the recent history about the Mehmetçik, who have faced the biggest threat in republican history in the residential areas and in the mountains, including in Syria under the aegis of Euphrates Shield. They have won every battle. Many of these incidents occurred invisible to the world, barely meriting a mention in the international press outside of the Turkish diaspora. Some of these incidents already have been forgotten, the expected casualty in a volatile, always present news cycle, but they definitely should not be forgotten because lessons of war always are among the most critical. The book also chronicles what we have experienced in the Turkish mountains, especially near the borders of countries enduring endless combat.

Due to security reasons, the names of many individuals and details of events have been changed. The war is very much in active status. Only the real names of the beloved heroes are mentioned so that "they could continue to live on" as legacies in the efforts to preserve their country. The title of the book honors Captain Özgür (Free) Çevik, but it narrates extensively the stories behind all of the fallen soldiers of the Mehmetçik, who themselves have reached 'absolute freedom' for the liberty of homeland and nation. Captain Çevik was killed in the mountains after giving me the extensive oral history which provides many stories in this book.

It is the intention that this book will inspire efforts to bring about a peaceful, unified Turkey with the confidence that the nation reconnects with the values and ideals that led to its independence nearly a century ago.

Abdullah Ağar
September 2019



PROLOGUE

**Saime,
the Kurdish Baby**

The following events occurred during the early hours of October 22, 1993, in the village of Gümbüldü within the Derince hamlet in Baykan, which is the Siirt province in Turkey.

They were waiting. Protecting their villages, hearths, homes, kids and women ... their land, trees, vineyards, fields and tobacco... more importantly, their honor and homeland.

In the night's cold, they waited for the terrorists. Cemal, the village guard passed one of the cigarettes he had rolled the night before to Reşit. He lit his cigarette, initially trying to hide the igniting spark which was reflected in his eyes, and then gave the lighter to his fellow soldier. They inhaled the bitter taste of *Bitlis* tobacco.

They usually were on guard in their village whenever they did not go on a mission with fellow soldiers. Their numbers were few, which was why they were unable to guard the entire village. Thus, they needed to shift their positions frequently in order to guard the area. Sometimes they would wait for an ambush and tonight was just the same. They had sent a squad for an ambush and the soldiers were scattered throughout the village. Reşit muttered, "Thank, God."

These words surprised Cemal, as they had been sitting in silence for a long while. "What is up, bro?" he asked. "What is there to be thankful for?"

Reşit responded, "We only eat the bare minimum."

He was correct. In the midst of terrorism, they could not afford the risk of starting a fire to cook meat. Also, the animals had disappeared, as shepherds no longer dared to bring animals to graze in the mountains or the prairies. Some dared to continue doing so but they also lost their livestock and occasionally their own lives. The terrorists killed most of the animals with Kalashnikovs. They also burned down their fields, trees and vineyards. What was left of a previously thriving village agriculture were few trees and orchards.

Serving in commando bridges and special forces for many years, entering countless skirmishes and got shot in the belly with three bullets in the Iraqi mountains, Abdullah Ađar went back to this region years later. For 4 years, 1 day and 7 hours, he lived in these lands that were scorched with the fire of terrorism. When he returned back to Turkey, he wrote a very comprehensive book about ISIS titled: *İŞİD ve Irak*.

He then went to Southeast Turkey, where he had served for so many years. He interviewed the soldiers fighting in the most adverse conditions. Then he went to the Euphrates Shield region... Er-Rai, El-Bab, Dabık... *Özgür: The Free Beloved Hero* is the result of this work. The title is based on the name of Captain Özgür Çevik who was killed in action shortly after his interview with the author but it also symbolizes all the heroes that sacrifice their lives for the freedom of the country.

This book is the story of the greatest challenge that Turkey had to face since the foundation of the Republic and "the spirit of assault" that the nation clinged on to after September 15th. coup attempt in order to fight terrorists urban areas, mountains and the Euphrates Shield campaign.



Urban terrain combat was so severe and so intense, bullets intersected in midair much like at the Dardanelles.

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