

Young Women and Self-Defense

Interview with YPJ-Commander Nesrîn Abdullah



Young Internationalist Women

'We women have been dismembered by many enemies. Each enemy has taken a part of us.





Our parts are scattered everywhere. We must gather all our parts back together again.'

Dear young women,

With this brochure, you are entering a women's room. What does that mean? *Virginia Woolf* wrote that every woman needs her own room to find her own expression and creativity. The Kurdish women's revolution also attaches great importance to autonomous spaces. These were established with great effort by *Rêber Apo (Abdullah Öcalan)* and pioneers such as *Şehîd Sara*, *Şehîd Bêrîtan*, *Şehîd Zîlan*, *Şehîd Ronahî Alman*, and many other revolutionary women. These are spaces where women can find themselves and their own strength, spaces where women learn to defend themselves against the attacks of the sexist system. The women's revolution is based on a legacy of thousands of struggles and resistance movements since the beginning of human history. At the same time, it is now a source of inspiration for women around the world who are seeking freedom. With this brochure, we want to open up a space for thoughts, discussions and practice on the topic of self-defense. To this end, we interviewed *Nesrîn Abdullah*, co-founder and commander of the *YPJ (Rojava Women's Defense Units)*.





She shared with us her experiences of thirteen years of revolutionary work. In doing so, she emphasized the importance of discussing not only military self-defense but above all the *ideological, philosophical,* and societal self-defense that forms the foundation of the YPJ. She evaluates on who is the enemy that attacks us and what characteristics we as young women need in order to take action against it. Nowadays we as young women are becoming increasingly alienated from ourselves, our society, and our values and principles, and we can hardly answer the questions 'Who am I?' and 'How do I want to live?'. It is time to return to ourselves, our *xwebûn (being yourself)*, and defend this *xwebûn* against the attacks of the system. Because in defending the life of the women, we defend also the life of the people. Therefore, as Young Internationalist Women in *Rojava*, we invite you to join this women's room. The aim of this brochure is to stimulate new discussions, researches and to develop the tools to transform our ideas into action. We therefore hope that it can form a basis for building and strengthening global self-defense structures for young women.

With revolutionary greetings and respect,

November 25, 2025

Young Internationalist Women's Commune in *Rojava*



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What is ideological self-defense and why is it just as important as physical self-defense?

The topic of self-defense is undoubtedly both ideological and philosophical. Without taking both into account, it is impossible to approach the topic of defense in a right way. The current ruling elites want to shape the system according to their own interests. To do this, they use ideology. The ideology they use is liberalism. It is an ideology that attacks society, an ideology that attacks the integrity of human beings. It is an ideology that attacks historical values, art, and culture. It aims to take people's self defense away. There are various defense mechanisms in society. These mechanisms are used to keep society stable. The fact that society has survived to this day for thousands of years is due to these mechanisms. That is the essence of society. Today, only *civakbûn* (*being society*) can protect us. *civakbûn* encompasses everything. It encompasses morality and culture. It encompasses reason, language, art and values that society has created, such as love, faith, trust and the concept of beauty. All of these are defense mechanisms that sustain society. Of course, it has a negative impact on society when these characteristics of society are weakened. That is why we must understand that in self-defense, we cannot ignore neither the ideological nor the philosophical side. These two aspects are more important than physical defense. In today's situation, many ideological attacks are being carried out. Therefore, a very ideologically self-defense is necessary. We must make this clear. It is no longer just

physical massacres that are being carried out. Massacres are being carried out on the mind. Massacres that target the memory, the psyche, the dreams, and the hopes of a society. An all-encompassing massacre. A truly ideological massacre is being committed, even if it appears to be non-ideological. If you look closely, you will see that all these attacks are carried out with full awareness. Therefore, you cannot separate the two issues.

To destroy a society, you have to attack the potential that drives it forward. The potential of a society is its new generation, its youth. These young people will one day take responsibility for society and adopt its values — its historical, cultural, traditional, spiritual, and emotional values.

‘The potential of a society is its new generation, its youth.’

To destroy a society, these values must be attacked. The system is well aware of this because if these values are eliminated, society will also perish. A deep special war is currently being waged. Planned and deliberate attacks are being carried out, special warfare attacks, using many different methods. A widely used method of special warfare is self-alienation. How does one become alienated from oneself? By forgetting one’s own social nature. Looking at today’s generation, you realize that it is slowly being separated from history, culture, art, customs, and the feelings of society. Nihilism develops. Humans transform into individuals. In nature — or let’s say in the universe — humans are the weakest beings. What strengthens them? What keeps them upright? Society. If they are separated from this society, they cannot even come close to surviving as well as any animal. Because an animal is born into the world and can stand on its own two feet. It can feed itself independently.



Consequently, it can develop. But humans cannot do this. The mother takes care of the newborn child. Until it is 15 years old, it cannot take care of its own nutrition in life. If it does not live in a society by this age, it cannot survive afterwards either. Its life would always be deficient. Because humans can only stand on their own two feet within their society. That is why this method, i.e., attacking society, is used extensively in this special war.

Undoubtedly, we must defend ourselves ideologically. What is ideological self-defense? Ideological self-defense means, first of all, that you do not forget your social nature but live it ideologically and philosophically. This means that you also live your self ideologically, that you live your self philosophically. You have to try to defend your mind, defend your spirit, defend your character in any given moment, just like you defend yourself physically. However, most attacks are not aimed at the body but at these other aspects. You must always try to take up a very strong defense position. Because if you take a step back, you cannot simply move forward again. The space you have left empty will be occupied by your opponent. And it is difficult to drive them out of that space again. That is why great attention is necessary. How should we defend ourselves ideologically? We must understand the subject of life well. What is life? How should we live? These are important questions. When we ask ourselves the question 'How should we live?', a path will undoubtedly emerge before us. This path will become our way of life. But we should know which life we choose. We all live. But we need to know how to choose our path in life. Because there are many paths in front of you. You should know how to choose your path correctly. If you choose the wrong path, you will lose yourself once again. We should not deceive ourselves. The methods of special warfare tell you to choose your path based on your emotions, to choose with your instincts, not with your mind. It does not allow you to choose with the unity of mind and feelings. Rather, it brings your emotions and instincts to the forefront. When reason is not enough, your instincts and your small, simple emotions will lead you to choose the most miserable life. Many people have already fallen victim to this. The question 'How to live?' is very important. It is ideologically, philosophically, and socially relevant.

The right path is the path of becoming one with society. The right path is the path of communality. The right path is the path of socialism. We, as the Kurdish people, have gained a great deal of experience in this regard. We, as Kurdish women, also have experience. There have been many revolutions in Kurdish history but these revolutions were mostly national in orientation. They were based on national ideology. Not on the ideology of civakbûn. Not on the ideology of xwebûn. The focus was more on the national. The best Kurd is the one who lives with their history, who does not accept oppression, who fights for independence and freedom, and who makes their own decisions in life.

In the current situation, however, it is not enough to defend oneself nationally. Because in this age, nationalism is attacking us comprehensively. With racism, with the dream of an independent homeland, and with the dream of an independent state, it is driving us into its traps. After experiencing 29 revolutions, we are no longer concerned exclusively with the national question. There are other things we need to work on as well. What are they? First of all, we live a life with our Kurdish identity. But how do we want to live beyond that? For 52 years, the freedom revolution has been deepening with the leadership of Rêber Apo and the further development of our ideas. It has reached the point where Rêber Apo has



developed a paradigm, the paradigm of democratic society. In it, Rêber Apo articulates the right way of life, the truth of a free life. Because the systems of domination have veiled everything. They have veiled our minds, our spirits, and our psyches. They have turned people into veiled beings. With his ideological struggle for defense, Rêber Apo has opened up these veils one by one. This is also a matter of self-defense. Removing these veils is a matter of self-defense. Because they were carried out in society and in our personalities and they have blinded us. They did not allow our minds to work, they did not allow our hearts to work. They did not allow true feelings and they did not allow us to train our drives.

Rêber Apo's 52-year ideological struggle is not only a guide for our struggle, but also for our defense. Above all, ideological and philosophical defense. During past revolutions, it was mainly Kurdish women who participated. Women have not missed a single revolution. Although these revolutions were fought on the basis of long-term people's war, self-defense was always present in it. Women took their place both in war and in defense. But they were not organized. The issue of organization is very, very important. Organization is an ideological matter. We have also had our experiences with this. In order to defend ourselves ideologically, we must organize ourselves. We have gained so much experience with revolutions in which we as women did not achieve an existence, in which we could not achieve our Xwebûn because there was no autonomous organization. Women have taken their place everywhere, but because the issue of organization was not solved, they could not defend themselves. In an ideological framework, organization is also self-defense, isn't it? It was necessary in the past, but today it is even more necessary. On the one hand, we defend ourselves ideologically, and on the other hand, we must organize ourselves.

Secondly, there is the topic of unity. Unity is also connected to an ideological defense, it carries great importance. For a people, and for the women, unity is of significance. If peoples do not have unity, they will become extinct through heavy attacks. If women do not build up unity, they will surely be attacked and be dispersed. That is why organization alone is not enough, within it there needs to be unity.

Furthermore, the goal is very important, it is also a matter of self-defense. A person should never be aimless. If your goal is clear, your path will also become clear. Organizing oneself without having defined a goal is pointless. It is also important what goal you set for yourself. We often define a goal that is of no use to our defense because it is not a goal that defends you. The goal we set ourselves, even on an ideological level, is important. On the other hand, there is strategy. Without strategy, defense is impossible. A strategy without an ideological foundation is impossible, so it is very important to define your own strategy. Strategic things are permanent; they transform into a system. If you don't have a strategy for self-defense, and its ideological foundation is not strong, no system can develop. We also need a strategy to be able to defend ourselves ideologically. Tactics are just as important. This is because your short- and long-term goals play a role here. It's about how you can shorten long ways. You should be



aware of this. The method is also very important. The method is often the problem. We often bring up many clear points but because the method is wrong, we don't achieve our goal. It is said: "Not every route will take you to the village you want to go to." Method is also an ideological issue. We should know how to avoid *Macchiavelli's approach*, which allows any method to achieve the goal. Even living at the expense of those around you is not a solution. Your method must be clear. Rêber Apo says, "If your goal is as clear as the sun, you will also find the right method."

All these things are necessary for ideological self-defense, of course. It's not just about physical self-defense. It's not just something you need on the battlefield. Life is a war. So if life is a war, if life is a struggle, then you undoubtedly have to assess yourself-defense well and plan it well, otherwise you will lose yourself in this life. For example, most members of the YPJ

are young. How did the YPJ organize itself? We have built up a wealth of experience. When we decided to set up our self-defense groups, we didn't just understand this in physical terms. We researched and discussed it very thoroughly. We established our connection to history. We established our connection to society. We established our connection to women, to personalities with life experience. It wasn't that we simply founded a women's organization. We researched numerous women's movements around the world, in the Middle East, and Kurdish women's



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movements. We compiled their experiences. How should we understand and build our system of self-defense in Rojava (Western Kurdistan) accordingly? We saw that we needed to focus on three aspects of defense in particular. First of all, ideology. What ideology do we defend? Second, philosophy. What philosophy do we practice? And finally, civakbûn. What kind of civakbûn do we want to move forward with? We considered these three aspects. When we decided on our ideology, the line of free women, the ideology of women's liberation, we immersed ourselves in it in order to transform ourselves into an ideological vanguard. Because ideological mistakes cannot be made. That is why we researched, read, and discussed.

Furthermore, philosophy. What philosophy do we use to defend ourselves? We have taken Rêber Apo's understanding of 'You can only defend yourself to the extent that you know yourself' as our basis. We must get to know ourselves, our history, our civakbûn, and our womanhood. Because we saw the necessity of this, these were our first steps we took in the YPJ.

Nothing works without philosophy. That is why we have made 'Know yourself, defend yourself' our principle. To this day, we continue to rely on it. Civakbûn is also important to us because we are part of society. We have given ourselves the role of pioneers. That is why we considered it a strategical shield to live with the culture of society. Because our society is our shield. As much as we are the defenders of society, society is our defense-shield. That is why we have focused a great deal on the social side. How do we live with our society? With its history, its culture, its language, its customs and traditions, and its morals. Because even if we are highly organized, it is meaningless if we do not resonate with our people. We must resemble our society. Our people must recognize themselves in us. When our people look at us, they must say, 'That is us.' This is important.

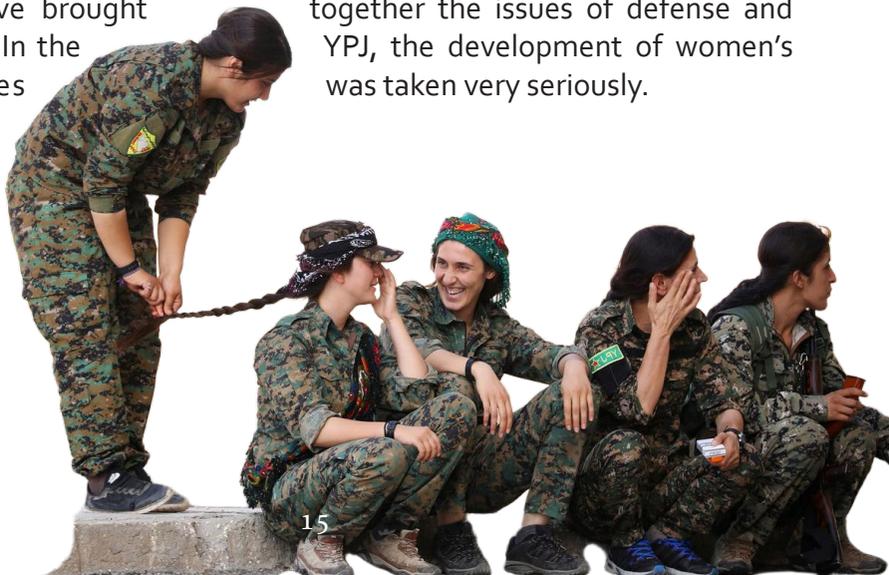
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Only then, we came to the question of how to defend ourselves against the enemy's armed attacks. The enemy is, of course, an important topic. You have to get to know and recognize your enemy properly. We did not perceive the enemy only as the state, for example, the *Baath regime*, the Turkish regime, or the Iranian regime. We must recognize the ideological, philosophical, and social enemy. That was very important for us. We also considered the enemy on the side of the mind, the drives, and the spirit. You have to know who your enemy is. You have to know how your enemy attacks you. What is their thinking, what is their strategy, what are their tactics, what are their methods, what is their goal? You have to be very clear about your enemy. That is why we analyzed the enemy in all these areas, including physical defense. Physical defense was also very important. We relied on two pillars. First, we set ourselves the goal of never resembling our enemy. We defend ourselves against becoming like our own enemy. What did we do to achieve this? We relied on ideology and reflected on the principle of legitimate self-defense so that we would not start to resemble the enemy. We also established a principle for this. What did we say? 'If the whole world unites against us and attacks us, we

will defend ourselves. But if we had the power of the whole world, we would not attack anyone.' We set ourselves a clear line. Because if you don't set your line, you will adapt to your enemy. Then there is no longer any difference between you and the enemy. Then you both have the same goal. And what is that? Oppression. That's one side. What's the other side? To defend yourself, you have to develop professionalism in defense.

Our first conference took place on April 4, 2013. We as women, actually as young women, organized this conference. After lengthy discussions, we made strategic decisions at this conference. We decided to defend ourselves in two areas. First, the defense of our xwebûn. In order to defend ourselves, we must be ourselves. Second, defense against the enemy. Therefore, in order to reach the xwebûn, we have focused on *academic* education. About history, about society, about philosophy, about culture. Education about becoming a woman and becoming oneself. We have established scientific academies. For the second area, we have established military self-defense academies. Especially in view of the reality of the enemy and our social system, we had to position ourselves well. Ultimately, society was built on a male mindset. As much as there are traces of goddess culture, *Sati culture* is also very strongly present. Women are still not recognized as independent beings, but are considered to belong to men. And for men, any method is legitimate to make women their property. To subjugate them. Such a man prevents you from finding yourself. He doesn't let you work. Society supports him in this. That is why we have brought together the issues of defense and of struggle. In the YPJ, the development of women's personalities was taken very seriously.





Because we had to defend ourselves against attacks from society. What were these attacks? 'You are a woman. You cannot fight. You always need a man to care for you.' Although so many Kurdish women took part in past revolutions, a society marked by sexism continued to persist.

A woman who does not believe in herself does not trust in the power of women. She sees herself as a copy of her mother. She says, 'This is my fate. I can only exist with a man. If

there is no man, I do not exist.' That is why I spoke of the Sati culture. Because it still influences our society, even though there have been so many developments in the revolution. A 30-year-old woman is portrayed as functionless. As if she had no function in society. Why? Because she did not choose a man. That means she is small, she is not pretty, she is backward. Because no man has chosen her either. The woman's existence is determined by men. That has a strong influence. It is very important to defend oneself against this. Although there were many participants in the revolution, it was necessary to build up a defense against the male perspective afterwards. Because, ultimately, it is also young men who join the revolution. They were raised with a certain understanding of masculinity. They are suspicious of women, view women as inferior, and consider women to be only housewives. Women must always be defended. They see themselves as women's owner. There is a disbelief in their physical strength, a disbelief in their mental strength, and a disbelief in their emotional strength. All these approaches existed.

Therefore, we had to defend ourselves. Because we were women who made the decision to become revolutionaries and defenders and to fulfill our social duties to defend society, the country, and the homeland. We had to defend ourselves accordingly. We had serious difficulties with these issues. However, we focused firstly on knowledge, secondly on strengthening our will, and thirdly on not taking a step back. This is very important in the ideological struggle. We have gained a lot of experience. Many friends joined us and left their families behind, because we ultimately live in a feudal society. They broke away from their families and joined

the revolution. But they were unable to defend their thoughts, their will, and their decision. They separated themselves from the revolution and returned to their families, to this society, and these men. However, there are also those who have developed their ideological knowledge, who have strengthened their will with the principles of women's liberation, who have become martyrs and who continue to fight to this day. Without ideological defense, the struggle of women would not have continued until now. But we must remain steadfast on the ideological level. We should not perceive ideological defense as merely personal defense. Our ideological struggle defends the whole of society, all women, and you too. Ideological defense must be given importance. We should not succumb to the illusion that we are defended when we take up arms, put on our military uniforms, and fight on the front lines. We should not deceive ourselves. As young women of the YPJ, we have gained faith through our thirteen years of experience. If you want to be successful in military defense, you must first be successful in ideological struggle. In particular, an extensive special warfare, using many methods, is being waged against the young women of the YPJ. If there was no ideological depth, it would have negatively impacted the YPJ. We are in the age of the digital world. Special warfare thus opens up the possibility of losing yourself and falling apart. It attacks in

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such a way that you yourself join its ranks, that you attack yourself. That is really the case. But because we have taken ideology as our foundation, we are still standing. We have not lost our line of defense. I emphasize once again: ideology, philosophy, civakbûn. We must combine all three. And physical self-defense. But physical self-defense comes last. Not first, but last. Outside of this, no results can be achieved. We can give an example from our experience. We have dozens of ideological academies.

There are two-month, three-month, four-month, and six-month academies. Of course, education is not a one-time thing. These courses are periodic. Official education is always provided in the academies. In addition, there is an education system in every team, every group, and every brigade. No day should pass without education. Because with education, you defend yourself. Education for self-defense is especially important for young women. You should always have access to an education system. What will be the goal of this? Xwebûn. You become yourself. And to secure your xwebûn, you need education again. On the one hand, education is necessary to build your xwebûn, and on the other hand, to keep it safe at all times. This is also how the YPJ defends itself. Perhaps that is even the reason why we catch everyone's attention.

The topic of self-defense should also be considered fundamental in the areas of culture and morality. The YPJ combines social and revolutionary morality. Morality is also a topic of self-defense. Ultimately, we are feudal societies. We are not just Kurdish society. Women from all nations join the YPJ. The societies of the Middle East are all feudal. Yet despite this, families accept that their children join the revolution. They don't just accept it, they are even proud when their daughter joins the revolution. This has to do with morality. It has to do with the existing culture, because they know that when their daughter joins the revolution, she is joining a new morality. And that is a deeply social morality. This daughter develops strength, willpower, dreams, goals, and beautiful feelings. She also develops a confident attitude towards men. She becomes a woman who is loved. The principle 'The struggling woman becomes beautiful, the beautiful becomes free, the free becomes loved' is lived in practice. Society sees these women and is at ease, because these women defend themselves and their daughters. The YPJ becomes a place of defense for women, which is why many families bring their daughters there. Hundreds of families from different ethnicities agreed for their daughters to join the YPJ, because they recognize these principles. Their daughters become beautiful, free, and loved there. Because families believe in this formula, they accept their daughters joining the YPJ. This is linked to the ideological struggle, it is why the issue of ideological defense should be addressed. People are enslaved in spirit. Critical thinking is very important in order to free ourselves from this enslavement.



The principle 'The struggling woman becomes beautiful, the beautiful becomes free, the free becomes loved' is lived in practice.



Against which enemy must young women build their self-defense? How can we perceive this enemy in our lives? Against which enemy must young women build their self-defense?

First of all, young women must see themselves as the new blood of society. They are the ones who defend society's historical memory. Culture, morals, customs, and the meaning of society are defended by young women. One issue that young women must address is knowledge, they have to educate themselves. On the one hand, they must get to know society, and on the other hand, they must get to know the enemies of society. In order to recognize the enemy, one must be educated. Young women must educate themselves in any moment. Without a doubt, you cannot educate yourself if there is no organization. You must first organize yourself in order to educate yourself properly. The organization of young women should definitely focus on education. If we educate ourselves, we can also get to know our enemy properly. Knowledge is necessary for us. Secondly, young women should know that the enemy is not only the enemy in front of us. For example, the Baath regime was our enemy. But not only that. We cannot only consider the regime as the enemy. The enslavement we experience is our enemy. The sexist mentality we face is our enemy. The role of the traditional, enslaved woman is our enemy.

The Sati culture embedded in our society is also our enemy. It is said that the Sati culture was practiced mainly in India. I think that is wrong. Sati is a culture of masculinity. Wherever there is a dominant man, the mentality of the Sati culture exists. It is wrong to link this only to Indian geography. That is why it is important to properly research and understand the Sati culture. We women have been dismembered by many enemies. Each enemy has taken a part of us. We should not view the enemy from just one side. Which parts of me were taken away by the male mentality? What has the Sati culture taken away from me? How have I been indoctrinated by the language of society? In what light has it placed me? There is a saying: 'The woman is a broken branch of a tree.' This is a linguistic issue. What has this language taken away from me? To rediscover my xwebûn, I must gather all my parts back together. I don't think it's right to view the enemy only as a system, such as the Baath regime. The enemy is more than that. We must understand it well in order to gather our parts back together. We have been dismembered. Rêber Apo often refers to the epic of *Enuma Elish*. Marduk divided Tiamat into two parts. He sent one part to heaven and formed the earth out of the other. In the figure of Tiamat, the woman was dismembered. Not just into two parts. She was completely dismembered. Our parts are scattered everywhere. We must gather all our parts back together again.



We must carefully analyze these legends. In the '*Manifesto for Peace and Democratic Society*', Rêber Apo refers to *Inanna*. He writes that, in Inanna's temples, the women would first marry the men, then kill them, and finally eat their livers. This might be a legend, but these events must

be analyzed. Why did this happen? Does it have anything to do with self-defense? I am currently thinking about this. To what extent are these events related to self-defense? Did we simply practice such rituals? What was Inanna defending herself against? Why did she not include the man in her leadership? What was she afraid of? Many historical findings have recently come to light. Archaeological findings from 4800 years ago were found in the *Bashur Höyük* burial site in the city of Sêrt (Northern Kurdistan). Young women were sacrificed and buried there. What were these young women sacrificed for? Traces of this culture are still visible today. Sacrifices still exist in our society. I remember that I myself am one of these women. I was still in my cradle when I was promised to my cousin. I was still drinking milk and was promised to him. Isn't that a sacrifice? I was sacrificed for their customs and traditions. When I was 12 or 13 years old, my uncle came and said, 'She's grown up. When are you finally going to give her away in marriage?' My cousin was 8 or 9 years older than me. My mother said, 'My daughter is still young, and your son is old.' My uncle replied, 'I have another son. If now it's too early for one, it will be fine for my other son.' At that time, I joined the party. But imagine that. That's a sacrifice. Maybe young girls used to be buried alive. That's one version. My story is another version of the same tradition of sacrificing.



Nowadays, young women feel more free to a certain extent, but they should never forget their history. They should remember their history. They should not live without memory. To what extent do we refer to the legacy of young women's struggle? How strong is our connection to history? That is a question of defense. The more we engage with history, the better we can defend ourselves. An attack on us is to make us forget our own history. History is our protective shield. Secondly, we need to strengthen our social memory. There are two rivers flowing in history. One river embodies oppression, the other resistance. How have we defended the river of resistance so far? With our social memory. I see a mistake among young women today: They stay in small groups among themselves. They only stay among themselves. That is why they cannot become one with

society. This needs to be worked on so that they can defend themselves. Are young women today in contact with wise women in society? No, they are not. It is very important to exchange ideas with experienced women. This is how social memory is created. Nowadays, memories are separated from each other. The new generation is separated from social memory. How can we as young women connect with other generations? Intergenerational exchange is very important. What is my relationship with my grandmother like? What is my relationship with the wise woman in my



village like? How do I feel about the old women in the city? How much do I listen to her wealth of experience? It is important to listen to the stories of older women. That is why young women need to immerse themselves in society. To learn to think and feel with this social memory.

In this revolution, we focused on one thing. We focused on traditional Kurdish clothing. When we talk about social memory, we are also talking about social culture. In Rojava, Kurdish clothing could no longer be found. No one wore it anymore. There were no Kurdish clothes anywhere. With the revolution, they came back. Now Kurdish clothing is fashionable again. It is now considered shameful to go to a revolutionary celebration without wearing Kurdish clothing. But this is not just about aesthetics. It is an expression of our history. In fact, it is an expression of our civakbûn. There are things from which we can derive great benefit. Our mothers' memories are full of the struggles of young women. In Kobanê (Rojava), there is the girls' cave, that is, the cave of young women. In their language, they call it 'Şikefta Qizika.' *Şehîd Şîlan's* mother told me about it. She said that her older sister used to take her by the hand and bring her to this cave. All the young girls would gather, go to the cave, and live there together from morning to evening. They cooked together and ate together. They embroidered together. They discussed things together. They formed their own society. To this day, this cave is called the 'girls' cave'. Kobanê has always been a very feudal place. It is said that a long time ago, a group of young women from Kobanê rose up against the male-dominated society. They moved into this cave and announced that they would protest

against the male-dominated society until the end of their lives. And these women remained in the cave until they died. After that, it developed into a tradition. Young women kept going to this cave. They set up their room. Rêber Apo writes about the woman's room in his defense writings, based on Virginia Woolf's philosophy. He says, 'I gave them not only a room, but the mountains.' And even in this day and age, the women in Kobanê build their own rooms, their women's rooms.

Mythology is an important topic. How much do young women know about mythology? Mythology also has to do with self-defense. The more we strengthen our knowledge, the better we can defend ourselves. There is the Misîsana Valley around Mount Qereçox (Rojava). It is said that there were horsemen in this valley. There were male and female horsemen. The men were called Egîd (the brave) and the women Gulîsor (the red braided hair). Since Kurdish women are proud of their hair, the women were called Gulîsor. This story still has a great influence on society today. It shows that women are a force. Another example is Gundik hill. There is a cradle there. Women who cannot have children go there and rock this cradle so that they can have children. Interestingly, it actually works. Mythology is full of energy. How do we as young women relate to mythology? I know a lot about this because it is my region. In every village there is the grave of a girl with a braid. These graves symbolize the immortality of women. They still existed in my time. When we went to the village, my mother would say, 'Go to the girl's grave and make a wish.' We would place something, such as a ring or a necklace on her grave, we would say our wish, and an energy would arise that used to make the wish come true. This has everything to do with self-defense. Living with a social memory can be associated with this. We should not understand the enemy in a crude and physical way. The more we distance ourselves from society, the more enemies we make for ourselves. We create our enemies ourselves. It is our self-alienation: alienation from our history, from our society, from our culture. We must protect ourselves from backwardness so as not to create enemies for ourselves. Young women should not understand the enemy too physically. How can we defeat the enemy ideologically? By making ourselves society and society ourselves.



‘How can we defeat the enemy ideologically? By making ourselves society and society ourselves.’



What characteristics do we need in order to defend ourselves? How can we develop these characteristics within ourselves?

1. Women must have an inquiring mind. They must be explorers. They should explore the universe, nature, society, and womanhood.

2. She must be aware of her own womanhood. She must explore her womanhood. What is my connection to the universe? What is my connection to nature? What is my connection to other women? What is my connection to men? What is my connection to myself? Because the more you immerse yourself in your womanhood, the more you immerse yourself in your xwebûn.

3. She must have an organized character. Why? Rêber Apo says, 'The more organized you are, the more you exist.' An organized woman can also build organization.

4. She must be able to love. To love, she needs knowledge. We must learn to love consciously. And we must also learn to hate consciously.



5. Life. We must know how we want to live. Our principles should be clear. Our standards and goals in life must be clear.



6. We must familiarize ourselves with philosophy. We should have a connection to philosophy. Meaning. The more we deal with meaning and strengthen our ability to give meaning, the more intense our emotions will be.



7. Will. Willpower must be present in women. But what does will mean? Will is the foundation of xwebûn. Free will is very important. What do I say yes to, what do I say no to? Do I say yes and no with my own will? I must be able to take decisions with my free will. And I must act on the basis of these decisions.



8. Trust is also important. You have to believe in yourself. If you don't have confidence in yourself, you can't do anything. You also have to believe in the power of change and transformation. So you have to protect yourself against dogmatism.

9. Just as much as a woman needs to know her own truth, she also needs to know the truth about men. It is not about hatred. A woman must know how to build a true friendship. What is our common friendship contract? What does my friendship with women look like? What does my friendship with men look like? What does my friendship with society look like? What is my friendship to nature? What is my friendship to the universe? A woman should be clear about her friendship principles.

10. Love for one's own gender is important. We must learn to love our gender. As long as we do not love our gender, we cannot become strong. What brought us success in the YPJ? We have achieved a situation where women trust each other. To do this, it is necessary to love being a woman. But we should be conscious about loving our own gender. This does not mean that I love all my friends' weaknesses. Loving one's gender is about knowing how to fight. It is about strengthening the positive character traits and helping to overcome the negative ones. In order to love my gender, I must know what I need to destroy and what I need to build. I must be aware of this.

11. Your power to dream must be strong. Everything begins with a dream. Only when you dream something you can decide to do it. First you dream something, then you make the decision. Then you make it your goal. And what you cannot achieve in your dreams, you cannot achieve in life either. Women with a broad horizon of dreams. A dream is not just a question of the mind. It is also a question of the spirit. Without a doubt, you also need knowledge to become aware of your dreams. Because defending the mind is necessary.

12. We must live with consciousness. We must defend our minds. What should I take in and what should I not? If the defense of my mind is strong, not every thought can creep in. If you do not defend your mind, anything can creep in. I should know how to defend my spirit. I should not let everything affect my spirit. I should know how to defend my feelings.

Not everything should set my feelings in motion. Why does Rêber Apo say 'political feelings'? So that no one can play with your feelings and distort them.

13. Creation. We as young women must be creative. Because the universe wants to express itself in us. Society wants to express itself in me. Women want to express themselves in me. Life wants to express itself in me. Freedom wants to express itself in me. That is why young women should be creative. We should work on ourselves. How creative are we? Today's capitalist system erases our creative mind. It does not allow it to develop. We must become creative women. Rêber Apo says, 'Be like a goddess, a force of creation.' Be creative like a goddess, aesthetic like *Aphrodite*, and pure like an *angel*. We should unite these qualities within ourselves.



It is interesting that we are not even aware of the phases we have gone through. We women have lived as goddesses. We have lived as angels. We have lived like Aphrodite. We don't have to ask ourselves whether this is possible or not, it just happened. It happened anyway. All of this is present in the hidden history of women. We must search for ourselves in this history. Which traits of goddesses do I carry within me? I must search for them. Which traits of Aphrodite do I carry within me? I must search for them within myself. How many of my traits resemble those of an angel? I must search for all of this within myself. We should not always view ourselves negatively. We should not always look for the negative sides in ourselves. The negative sides are obvious. The system in which we grew up always puts the negative sides in the foreground. And our positive sides were hidden. We must search for our hidden sides. On the one hand, there is the hidden history of women, on the other hand, ourselves. When we find the truth within ourselves, we can give meaning to our existence and our xwebûn. Our freedom will gain significance. Who am I? What am I? What do I want to become? These are Rêber Apo's questions. First, Rêber Apo asked himself. He asked, 'How to live?' He asked, 'Who am I?' And he found answers with his philosophy. Rêber Apo said, 'I am me, I am time, I am space.' I am me. But who am I really? Am I already at the point where I can say, 'I am me'? I am the universe, I am time, I am space. 'How to live?' is a very important question. Rêber Apo wrote three books just about this question. However, young people do not read these books. We must bring these questions back to life.



‘How to live?’

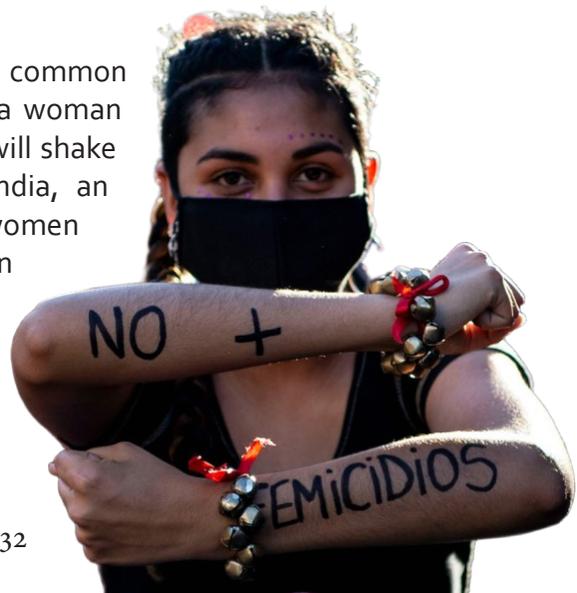
We are in the midst of World War III. What could a global self-defense strategy for young women look like in the context of Rêber Apo's call for peace and a democratic society?

As a self-defense strategy, we need a joint organization of young women. An organization with the spirit of loyal young women who want to take a leading role in this world. A consensual, organizational strategy is needed. This organization will, of course, be built on the basis of the paradigm of a democratic society. This paradigm is not just about *Apoism* or a party. Every society needs democracy. This organization should unite the most diverse colors under the umbrella of democracy. It should reflect many important areas. What is needed for us, as young women, to develop a common spirit, a common feeling, and a common goal?

1. Education. We need a common education program, a program of education that connects the young women of Somalia with the young women of *Abya Yala*. Attacks on young women are global. Therefore, we should also unite our spirit. For example, internationalist friends come here to Rojava to further their education. They come from different countries and form a unity here.

2. Action. How can we build a common action network? For example, if a woman is attacked in Estonia, the world will shake here. If there is an attack in India, an uprising will start here. Young women will rise up. In short, young women around the world will rise up.

3. Joint work. In the field of ecology, for example, collective projects can be developed.



The establishment of ecological villages by young women is one example for such joint actions. Back to nature, back to the essence.

4. Health and healing. The capitalist system is spreading in society like a cancer. Lots of sicknesses, viruses and diseases are consequences of the way of life that capitalism imposes on the society. The health and pharmacy sectors of today are taking profit from the sicknesses, that they create and spread in the society by themselves. This exploitative mentality is male mentality. There are plenty of young women who are knowledgeable about health. There are women who have completed scientific studies and there are also natural healers in society. How can we connect all these women? *Jineoloji* is working on such a project.

5. The area of young women artists. There are Kurdish, German, and Indian female artists, for example. How can we unite them all? How can we make art social again? How can we defend sociality in this area? Can we not organize global art festivals?

6. The area of culture. How can we create the area of culture in line with self-defense? There are many peoples without a state, such as the Kurds or the Assyrians. There are dozens of indigenous peoples without a state. These peoples are all under attack and their culture is being massacred. How can we build a strong cultural area that strengthens these peoples?

7. The field of law. Hundreds of young women have studied law. How can we build the field of social law? How can we defend women's rights there? This is a defense strategy. Without a doubt, national identities should not separate us from one another. We are all women. We say: I am Kurdish, I am Arab, I am Assyrian, I am Circassian, I am German, I am American, I am English. But we are all one.

8. Common slogans. We need common slogans. 'Jin Jiyan Azadî' has become such a slogan. But we need more of them.

9. The area of self-defense. One example of this is armed self-defense. Most YPJ fighters are young women. In Myanmar, there are young women, in Colombia, there are young women. How can we get in touch with each other? How can we unite all these self-defense units? All armed organizations could establish a symbolic battalion. This battalion would be coordinated. Wherever women are attacked, this battalion would take action. Of course, appropriate methods should be

developed for this. How can we establish a global self-defense structure for women? It is necessary that we also organize ourselves within this framework.



10. The field of sports. Rêber Apo says that one of the areas that is most speculated about and has become a sector of capitalism is the field of sports. How can we reshape sports in society? The Olympic Games and similar events all serve hegemonic forces. How can we create sports that serves the society?



11. The field of economics. The economy is the administration of the necessities of the community. How can we build a common economy that serves the society and not the state? In order not to become slaves to capitalism, we must build our own economy. A network of cooperatives can create an alternative.



12. Psychology. Psychology is a very important topic for young women today. Women's psychology is in a state of chaos. We must free ourselves from this psychological chaos. We must overcome psychological enslavement. Therefore, we must work effectively in this area. Depression is not a personal problem. Suicide is not a personal problem. Hopelessness is not a personal problem. Behind them all, there is a system that wants to suffocate young women.

Young women of this era are building on a legacy. Society expresses itself through them. A great deal of experience has been gained. Many young women from different countries have come here. Some went into defense structures, others into press works or into organizations, and some into communes and council structures. How can we spread this organization globally? We need a strategy for this. Only then can we defend ourselves. Only in this way can we build an alternative life to capitalism. An alternative strategy. Self-defense does not mean simply retreating into a defense position. In defense, there is also attack. Of course, we still have a lot of work to do. But there are examples. The *Jin Jiyan Azadî Revolution* has demonstrated this. We have a strong belief. So it is possible. But we should not make it just in a short time frame, it must always continue. Rêber Apo says that we must delve into hidden history. We have the principle: 'History is hidden in the present day, we are hidden at the beginning of history.' The further we go back to the beginning of history, the more we understand the present. That is why it is important to sociologize history and to historicize sociology. With all this knowledge and all these qualities, we become free young women. Character should not be understood in a narrow-minded way. Where there is a predetermined character, no free personality can develop. That becomes a profile. There is no profile of society. Society is free. There are principles and standards. As young women, we do not need a narrow profile. However, we should never forget that we are part of this society.



‘Self-defense does not mean simply retreating into a defense position. In defense, there is also attack!’



Now it's up to us!

Commander Nesrîn Abdullah responded to our questions about young women and self-defense. When we discussed the brochure with her, she said, 'We always provide answers. But in this era, there is a lack of right questions. It is necessary to ask the right questions in order to encourage young women to think, reflect and conduct their own research'. She hopes that young women will discuss the topics raised in the brochure and develop their own thoughts and answers. This is why we have compiled a list of questions that Rêber Apo asked women comrades of the Kurdish freedom movement in 1995, as well as questions asked by Commander Nesrîn during the interview. We call on all young women to discuss these questions with each other. Send us the outcomes of your discussions!



Some of the forty-nine questions that Rêber Apo asked the militant women at the first Women's Congress in 1995:

2. Who are the enemies of women's freedom, both internal and external, and how can they be identified?
6. Who are those who flee from revolutionary approaches?
9. When should an existing relationship be overcome or rejected?
14. In relationships, what are the criteria for acceptance and rejection?
20. Why should women take the lead in a revolutionary approach to the women's issue?
21. What can be said about respectful love and passion, and what is its current level of advancement? (In concrete terms)
30. Women have to create men from anew. Why?
35. Who is the woman who has consistency between word and deed?
39. A woman who moulds herself according to a man's demands is a slave.
40. In universities, the enslavement of women under the guise of freedom is even worse.

42. The petty bourgeois liberal approaches.

47. In light of these truths that have come to light, each of our comrades must assess their level of progress, approach their problems and responsibilities honestly, and become a force of solutions



Questions that commander Nesrîn proposes to discuss:

1. How does one become alienated from oneself?
2. What strengthens humans? What keeps them upright?
3. What is ideological self-defense?
4. How should we defend ourselves ideologically?
5. What philosophy do we use to defend ourselves?
6. How should we live?
7. How do we live with our society?
8. Which parts of me were taken away by the male mentality?
9. How have I been indoctrinated by the language of society? In what light has it placed me?
10. What was Inanna defending herself against?
11. To what extent do we refer to the legacy of young women's struggle?
12. How strong is our connection to history?
13. Who am I really? Am I already at the point where I can say, 'I am me'?



Word explanations:

Abya Yala: Abya Yala is the anti-colonial name for Latin America, meaning 'fertile land' in the indigenous language Kuna.

Academy: In the Kurdish freedom movement, an academy is a period of education, in which research, discussion and the sharing of knowledge take place.

Angel: When Rêber Apo talks about 'becoming like an angel', he means having a clean, clear and ethical character.

Apoism: The ideology and movement surrounding the thoughts and reality of Rêber Apo.

Aphrodite: In ancient mythology, Aphrodite is the goddess of love, beauty, pleasure and procreation. When Rêber Apo talks about 'becoming Aphrodite', he is not just referring to physical beauty, but also to spiritual aesthetics.

Baath regime: The term 'Baath regime' refers to governments under the Arab Baath Party, an authoritarian political party. Syria's Baath regime, which was ruled by the Assad family from 1971 until its fall in December 2024, was the last remaining Baathist government.

Bashur Höyük: Located in Northern Kurdistan's Sêrt, Bashur Höyük is a 4,800-year-old Bronze Age burial site. Many of the individuals buried there with the most opulent artifacts were young girls.

Civakbûn: Civak (Kurdish for 'society') bûn (Kurdish for 'to be'). In a system that is increasingly splitting the society into individuals, Civakbûn describes the state and the process of 'becoming and being society'.

Enuma Elish: Enūma Eliš, meaning 'When on High', is a Babylonian creation myth from the late 2nd millennium BC. It tells the story of the goddess Tiamat. Tiamat was brutally massacred and cut into pieces by her son Marduk.

Ideology: In the Kurdish movement, ideology describes the values and principles that you adhere to and how you express them in life.

Inanna: Inanna is the Mesopotamian goddess of love and warfare. She was a respected social and political leader in the Mesopotamian society (around 2000 BC). In several stories, she fights against dominant male gods or personalities. This symbolizes the struggle of women against the uprising patriarchy at that time.

Jin Jiyan Azadî Revolution: Following the brutal killing of Jîna Emînî, a Kurdish woman, in Tehran, Iran, in 2022, women all around the world rose up for women's rights under the slogan Jin Jiyan Azadî – Women Life Freedom.

Jineolojî: Jineolojî is a science developed around the woman, proposed by Rêber Apo and practiced by women in the Kurdish freedom movement across the Middle East, Europe and Abya Yala.

Machiavellianism: This is a personality trait characterized by cunning, manipulation, and a cynical disregard for morality in order to achieve personal goals. It is named after the Italian philosopher Niccolò Machiavelli.

Manifesto for Peace and Democratic Society: The newest book of Rêber Apo in 2025 which he describes as the outcome of his thoughts of the last 10 years.

Philosophy: Philosophy means studying and bringing to life deeper approaches of existence, knowledge, mind, reason, language and value.

Rêber Apo: Rêber Apo is the name in respect for Abdullah Öcalan. In Kurdish, Rêber means 'the one who shows the way' but it is translated as 'leader' into other languages. 'Apo' is a nickname for his first name 'Abdullah'.

Rojava: Rojava (Kurdish for 'West') describes the Western part of Kurdistan which was liberated from the Syrian state in 2012. As Arab areas such as Deir ez-Zor and Raqqa also joined the self-administration, it is now known as the Democratic Administration of North and East Syria.

Sati-Culture: In India, Sati was the practice of Hindu women immolating themselves alongside the corpses of their husbands — an act also known as saharjan, or 'dying together'. Rêber Apo views Sati as a mentality that suggests women cannot live without a man and that their entire existence is bound to a man.

Şehîd Şîlan Kobanê: Şîlan Kobanê was a revolutionary woman who joined the Kurdish freedom movement in Aleppo in 1988. She struggled in the mountains as a woman guerrilla and in the cities of Rojava and Syria as a revolutionary. Şehîd Şîlan was martyred in a Syrian secret service assassination attack on 29 December 2004.

Virginia Woolf: Virginia Woolf was an English writer and one of the most influential modernist authors of the 20th century. In her essay 'A Room of One's Own', published in 1929, she discusses women's lack of self-expression. She argues that every woman needs a room of her own in order to express herself. Rêber Apo draws inspiration from this thesis in his philosophy of reaching the Xwebûn.

Xwebûn: Xwebûn (Kurdish for 'self' and 'to be'). In an era that alienates people from their history, culture, and identity, Xwebûn encapsulates the concept of 'becoming and being yourself'.

YPJ: The YPJ (Women's Defense Units) are the military self-defence units of women in Rojava and North and East Syria.

Contacts:

E-Mail: younginternationalistwomen@riseup.net

Website: www.younginternationalistwomen.com

Telegram: [young_internationalist_women](https://t.me/young_internationalist_women)

Instagram: [young_internationalist_women](https://www.instagram.com/young_internationalist_women)

YouTube: [YoungInternationalistWomen](https://www.youtube.com/YoungInternationalistWomen)

X: [womensfront](https://twitter.com/womensfront)

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