

Forum: Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC)

Issue: Assessing the financing of Peacebuilding in the conflict between Turkey and armed Kurdish groups

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INTRODUCTION

Funding peacebuilding is an important but often ignored part of resolving conflicts. In the long-running conflict between Turkey and armed Kurdish organizations, peacebuilding goes beyond just paying for ceasefires or short-term humanitarian help. It also means funding the social and institutional foundations that are needed for long-lasting peace.

The dispute has deep historical, political, and cultural roots that affect millions of people in Turkey and the surrounding area. As communities in affected areas continue to endure displacement, few job possibilities, and safety issues, it becomes evident that there is a need for better peacebuilding funding. However, it is still hard to make sure that financial systems are in line with what is going on. This is because it is important to find a balance between honoring state sovereignty, meeting local needs, and making sure that resources are used in a fair way.

It is very critical to address how finance that is sustainable, open, and based on local knowledge can help develop peace in this situation. This issue requires fast and effective solution attempts due to the fact that it has led to many civilian and military casualties in the past decades, alongside vast financial resources.

This issue requires a valid and immediate solution, due to the vast human costs and economic burden it creates. Alongside thousands of dead, tens of thousands are displaced and traumatized. The conflict limits economic and infrastructural development in the region, minimizing national and international investments.

DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS

Peacebuilding¹

“Peacebuilding refers to a broad range of activities aimed at preventing the recurrence of conflict by addressing its root causes and strengthening the foundations for sustainable peace. This often includes supporting dialogue between conflicting parties, promoting economic development, strengthening institutions, and fostering social cohesion within affected communities.”

Financing of Peacebuilding²

“This term describes the financial resources and funding mechanisms allocated to support peacebuilding activities. It includes domestic government spending, international aid, and contributions from private or non-governmental actors to projects that aim to reduce conflict and promote stability in a region.”

Armed Kurdish Groups³

“This term generally refers to Kurdish militant organizations, such as the Kurdistan Workers’ Party (PKK), that have engaged in armed conflict with the Turkish state, primarily over demands related to Kurdish autonomy, rights, and identity. These groups are considered terrorist organizations by Turkey and several other countries.”

Conflict-Affected Regions⁴

¹ “Peacebuilding |.” United Nations, United Nations, www.un.org/peacebuilding/. Accessed 19 July 2025.

² “Fund | Peacebuilding.” United Nations, United Nations, www.un.org/peacebuilding/fund. Accessed 19 July 2025.

³ “Conflict between Turkey and Armed Kurdish Groups | Global Conflict Tracker.” Council on Foreign Relations, Council on Foreign Relations, www.cfr.org/global-conflict-tracker/conflict/conflict-between-turkey-and-armed-kurdish-groups. Accessed 19 July 2025.

⁴ “Defining “conflict-Affected” and “High-Risk Areas,” www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/Documents/Issues/Business/ForumSession2/Events/3Dec.1.SideEventProposal_GenevaAcademy.pdf. Accessed 18 July 2025.

“Areas directly impacted by the ongoing conflict are often experiencing heightened security concerns, economic instability, displacement of populations, and weakened local governance structures.”

Ceasefire⁵

“A ceasefire is a temporary or permanent agreement between conflicting parties to stop fighting, either to enable negotiations, deliver humanitarian aid, or as a step towards a peace agreement.”

Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration (DDR)⁶

“A process often used in post-conflict peacebuilding, DDR involves the collection and disposal of weapons (disarmament), the disbanding of armed groups (demobilization), and the social and economic integration of former combatants into civilian life (reintegration).”

Sovereignty⁷

“Sovereignty is the authority of a state to govern itself without external interference. In peacebuilding discussions, it refers to the need to respect a country’s control over its internal affairs while addressing conflict and promoting stability.”

Humanitarian Aid

Material or logistical assistance provided for humanitarian purposes, typically in response to crises, including conflict, aimed at saving lives, alleviating suffering, and maintaining human dignity.

Displacement

⁵Ceasefire | English Meaning - Cambridge Dictionary, dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/ceasefire. Accessed 18 July 2025.

⁶“Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Peacekeeping.” United Nations, United Nations, peacekeeping.un.org/en/disarmament-demobilization-and-reintegration. Accessed 19 July 2025.

⁷Sovereignty | English Meaning - Cambridge Dictionary, dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/sovereignty. Accessed 18 July 2025.

Displacement refers to the forced movement of people from their homes, typically due to conflict, violence, or natural disasters. In the context of the Turkish-Kurdish conflict, displacement involves individuals and families leaving their communities in southeastern Turkey due to security concerns, military operations, or fear of violence, often resulting in the loss of livelihoods, disruption of education, and challenges in accessing healthcare and housing.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION



“Turkish Strikes Target Kurdish Allies of U.S. in Iraq and Syria - The New York Times”⁸

The image above shows the result of a military-wise successful Turkish operation on a Kurdish military site. Because they identified the site and its inhabitants as terrorists, the strike was deemed reasonable, but as mentioned in the article by The New York Times, these organizations, which Turkey views as terrorists, were allies to the United States, thereby complicating the situation.

Historical Background

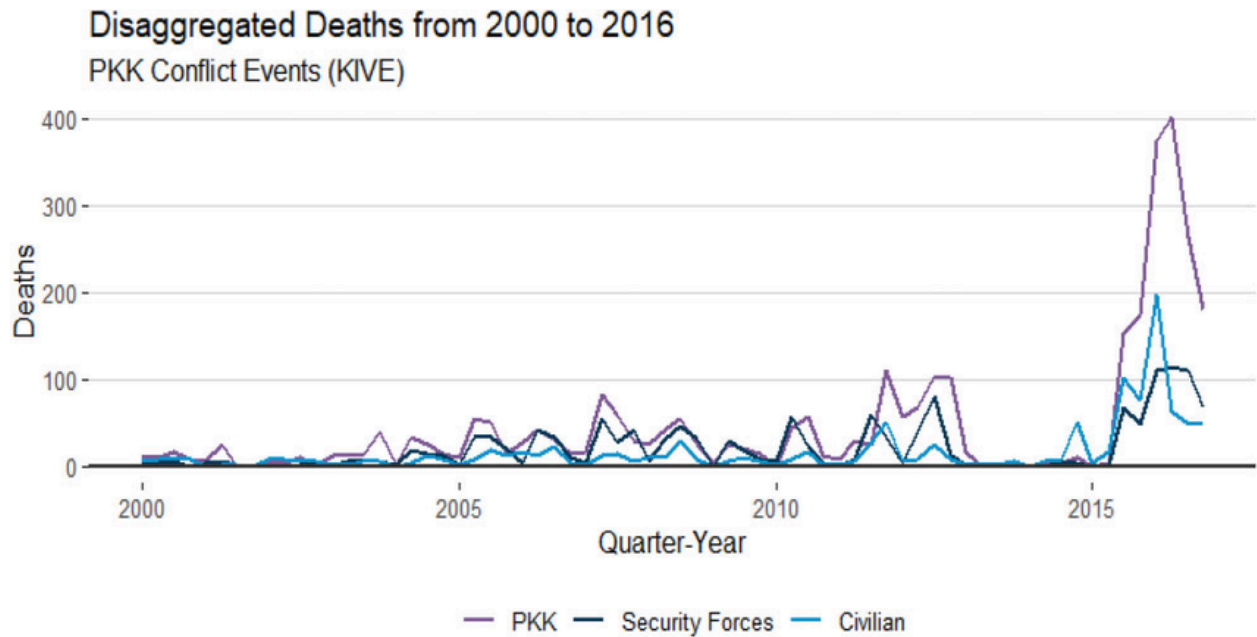
⁸Gordon, Michael R. Turkish Strikes Target Kurdish Allies of U.S. in Iraq and Syria, The New York Times, www.nytimes.com/2017/04/25/world/middleeast/turkey-kurds-airstrikes-iraq-syria.html. Accessed 19 July 2025.

The conflict between Turkey and armed Kurdish groups, primarily the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), started in 1984 and has cost tens of thousands of lives and forced many people to move, especially in southeastern Turkey. The dispute started because of disagreements over Kurdish cultural rights, political representation, and differences in the economies of different regions. There have been several efforts at a truce, including a well-known peace process in the early 2010s. These efforts, on the other hand, have failed, and violence and tension continue to rise and fall.

Casualties and Deteriorating Living Conditions

The violence has had a lot of negative effects on people and the economy, such as forcing a lot of people to leave their homes, interrupting education and healthcare services, and slowing down economic growth in the region. Damage to infrastructure, persistent instability, and limits on movement have all made poverty worse and made it harder for people to find work. Trauma in impacted areas and problems for displaced people trying to return home continue to alter the humanitarian situation.

In this case, peacebuilding means working on the root causes of instability and encouraging social and economic growth in communities devastated by violence. This includes helping people talk to each other, strengthening local government, protecting human rights, and putting in place disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) programs for former soldiers.



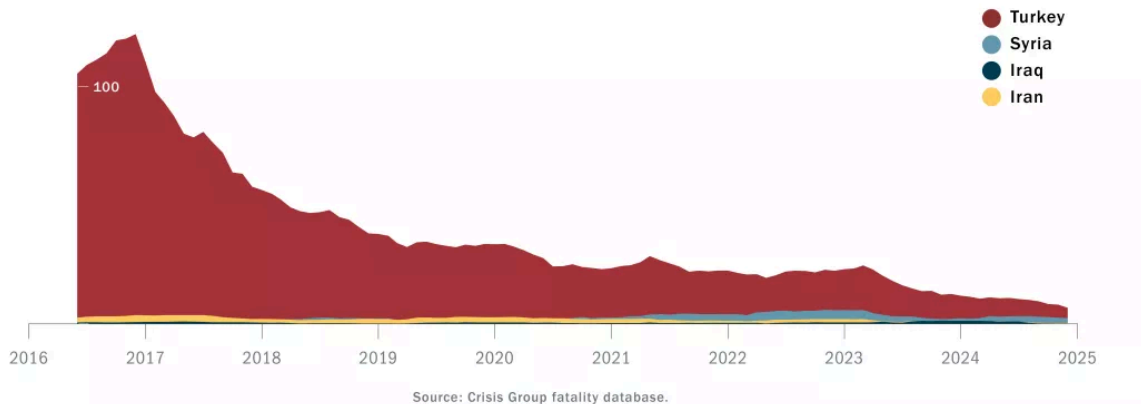
“Temporal patterns in deaths in the Kurdish conflict in Turkey (2000-2016)”⁹

The graph above shows all deaths from 2000 to 2016, including civilians, military officials, and PKK members, who are identified as terrorists by the Turkish government. The significant increase around 2016 is often associated with the coup attempt in Turkey, which happened on the 15th of July 2016. This prevented coup attempt was an action by the Fethullah Gulen-led terrorist organization FETO (also referred to as FETÖ).

⁹Beyond Collateral Damage: The Politics of Civilian Victimization in a Civil War - Scientific Figure on ResearchGate. https://www.researchgate.net/figure/Temporal-patterns-in-deaths-in-the-Kurdish-conflict-in-Turkey-2000-2016_fig2_374230746 Accessed 19 Jul 2025

PKK Militant Fatalities, 2016-2024, by country of birth

Deaths per month, 12-months moving average



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However, this graph above shows the PKK militant deaths after 2016, with a significant and obvious decrease in the numbers. While the graph before illustrates the number of PKK militant deaths in 2016 as approximately 400, this graph shows a decrease of more than 90%. This graph is also critical in the sense that it shows how many PKK militants who have died were born in which countries. Turkey, having the vast majority, proves that a significant factor of PKK militants were Kurdish people born and most likely raised inside the Turkish borders.

In this case, peacebuilding needs long-term, open funding to pay for things like restoring infrastructure, community-based economic development, providing education and healthcare facilities, and projects that let people talk to each other and ease tensions. Developed finance should meet local demands while making sure that resources are used responsibly.

The Turkish government has started development projects in the southeastern parts of the country, with the goal of improving infrastructure, healthcare, and education services. But security issues and ongoing violence have made these efforts less effective in some areas. At

¹⁰ Türkiye's PKK Conflict: A Visual Explainer | International Crisis Group, www.crisisgroup.org/content/turkiyes-pkk-conflict-visual-explainer. Accessed 19 July 2025.

the same time, political factors continue to affect how peacebuilding projects are set up and carried out in the country.

The European Union, UN agencies, and non-governmental organizations are among of the international groups that have helped with humanitarian aid and development projects in parts of Turkey that were devastated. However, governments are still being careful about getting involved because they are worried about Turkey's sovereignty, the fact that some countries have labeled the PKK as a terrorist group, and the continued security issues in the areas affected by the conflict.

In this case, there are problems with funding peacebuilding because of security risks that make people less likely to invest or give aid, political tensions that make it harder to work with local actors, and problems with making sure that funding priorities match the needs of affected communities while still being open to everyone. Also, people who want to help achieve lasting peace in this conflict still have to deal with the problem of how to balance short-term humanitarian aid with long-term development ambitions.



Map of The Kurdish Inhabited Area in the Middle East and Türkiye¹¹

The map below, even though it is open to controversy, very effectively illustrates the areas that significantly hold the Kurdish population. As seen on the map, this area has parts in Turkey, Iran, Iraq, and Syria. However, it must be noted that how large the area is in a certain country does not directly indicate how large the terrorists' operations in that nation are.

MAJOR COUNTRIES AND ORGANIZATIONS INVOLVED

The Republic of Turkey

The Republic of Turkey is the primary country involved in this conflict. It is in charge of security operations, development projects, and talks with armed Kurdish parties about peace. Turkey has labeled the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) as a terrorist group and has sent troops to fight it in its own country and in nearby areas. The Turkish government has also put money into development projects in southeastern Turkey to improve infrastructure and services. However, these efforts have not been very successful because of continuous security concerns. Turkey has had a big role in the conflict, peacebuilding efforts, and the humanitarian crisis in the affected areas by making policies that have had a big impact on all of these things.

The United States of America (USA)

The United States of America (USA) has had a complicated part to play in the larger regional factors that have an impact on the Turkish-Kurdish conflict. The US has helped Kurdish forces in Syria battle the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) while also calling the PKK a

¹¹Limited, Alamy. "Kurdish-Inhabited Area Political Map. Kurdish Lands, Also Kurdistan. Cultural Region Wherein Kurdish People Form a Majority Stock Photo." Alamy, www.alamy.com/stock-photo-kurdish-inhabited-area-political-map-kurdish-lands-also-kurdistan-123754227.html. Accessed 19 July 2025.

terrorist group. This has caused problems with Turkey, which sees these groups as being connected to the PKK. The US has backed Turkey as a NATO ally and called for stability and the protection of civilians in areas hit by conflict. The USA's involvement has had mixed effects; it has helped Turkey fight terrorism, but also caused problems because it has worked with Kurdish forces in Syria.

The Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK)

The Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) is a Kurdish militant group that has been fighting the Turkish government since 1984 for more Kurdish rights, autonomy, and even the formation of an independent Kurdish nation. Turkey, the US, and the EU all call the PKK a terrorist group since it has attacked Turkish military and security targets with firearms. During the peace negotiations in the early 2010s, the PKK said it was eager to talk about reconciliation. However, ceasefires have repeatedly failed, causing violence to flare up again. The PKK's presence and actions are a key part of the conflict, affecting security and making it harder to create peace in the area.

The European Union (EU)

The European Union (EU) has backed humanitarian and development projects in southeastern Turkey that focus on human rights, regional development, and helping refugees and those who have been forced to leave their homes. The EU has also talked to Turkey on topics like minority rights and democratic reforms, especially when it comes to talks about Turkey joining the EU. However, the EU's involvement has been limited by political sensitivities and the security situation, which has made it harder for the EU to directly help resolve conflicts while still providing steady funding for development and humanitarian needs in the impacted areas.

The Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS)

The Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) is not directly involved in the Turkish-Kurdish conflict, but it has changed the security situation in the area. The rise of ISIS caused a lot of

instability along Turkey's borders, which led to military operations by Turkey and coordination with foreign entities, including the US and NATO allies. The fight against ISIS had an indirect effect on the Turkish-Kurdish conflict by changing alliances and moving the focus of security in the region. This changed the overall situation of peacebuilding and conflict in southeastern Turkey.

The United Nations (UN)

The United Nations (UN) has helped with humanitarian work and development in southeastern Turkey through groups like the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). The UN's main focus has been on helping people who have been forced to leave their homes, building up local capacities, and promoting sustainable development goals. Even though it hasn't been very involved in the political side of the conflict, it has made a positive impact on the humanitarian and development landscape.

TIMELINE OF EVENTS

DATE	DESCRIPTION OF EVENT
1978	Abdullah Öcalan founded the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) and, at first, supported

	Marxist-Leninist ideas and Kurdish independence in Turkey.
15 August 1984	The PKK started its armed rebellion against the Republic of Turkey, which marked the start of active fighting, mostly in southeastern Turkey.
17 March 1993	The PKK called for its first one-sided ceasefire to start talking with the Turkish government, but fighting started up again within a few months.
February 1999	International intelligence services helped catch Abdullah Öcalan in Kenya and brought him to Turkey, where he was given a life sentence. The PKK called another ceasefire after his detention, which made the fight less intense for a short time.
2001	The PKK once again declared a one-sided ceasefire, due to unknown reasons.
June 2004	The PKK declared that its one-sided ceasefire is over, and fighting with Turkish security forces started up again.
29 July 2009	Turkey initiated the "Kurdish Opening," which was later called the "Democratic Initiative." Its goal was to protect Kurdish cultural and

	political rights in order to lower tensions. This included allowing broadcasts in Kurdish and setting up channels for conversation.
21 March 2013	The Turkish government and the PKK started peace talks. Abdullah Öcalan called for a ceasefire and for the PKK combatants to leave Turkey. This started a time of less bloodshed.
20 July 2015	After a suicide attack in Suruç and ensuing fighting, the ceasefire and peace process fell apart, and large-scale warfare between the Turkish state and the PKK started up again.
15 July 2016	After a failed coup in Turkey, the government stepped up military actions against the PKK and other Kurdish factions, both inside Turkey and across the border in Iraq and Syria.
9–17 October 2019	Turkey began a military operation in northern Syria against Kurdish forces that are part of the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), which Turkey views as connected to the PKK. This made things more complicated in the region and affected Kurdish movements across the border.
2022	In Turkey and northern Iraq, Turkish security operations against PKK sites went on. At the

	<p>same time, talks about regional security, including the US, EU, and regional parties, had an indirect effect on the conflict environment.</p>
2024	<p>Even though there are security concerns, development projects in southeastern Turkey also proceeded. International organizations were only able to provide limited humanitarian aid, and the region's political and security situation was still unpredictable.</p>
2025	<p>After the Turkish government and Kurdish leaders began negotiating again, there is further discussion about disarming or possibly self-dissolving the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK). The PKK has not formally said it is closing down yet, and conversations are still continuing on because of political and regional issues. The first formal disarmament ceremony is expected to take place on July 11.</p>



RELEVANT UN RESOLUTIONS, TREATIES, AND EVENTS

Resolution adopted by the General Assembly on 20 December 2005¹²

This resolution established the United Nations Peacebuilding Commission, underlining its aims and objectives. It has also explained potential interventions and operations, alongside the financing of peacebuilding.

United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000), S/RES/1325 (2000)¹³

This resolution, even though not directly address the issue, calls for women's wellbeing in disadvantaged areas and the involvement of women in peacekeeping operations.

Resolution 1373 (2001) / adopted by the Security Council at its 4385th meeting, on 28 September 2001¹⁴

This resolution explicitly states that all member states must “prevent and suppress the financing of terrorist acts”. This could have been a turning point for the humanitarian crisis in the region and the Turkish-Kurdish conflict if it had been effectively implemented and monitored.

UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy adopted on 8 September 2006¹⁵

This document further builds on the creation and aims of the UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy, an essential strategy ratified by all member states to decrease terrorist efforts.

¹² “Document Viewer.” *United Nations*, United Nations, docs.un.org/en/A/RES/60/180. Accessed 19 July 2025.

¹³ “United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000), S/RES/1325 (2000) | She Stands for Peace.” United Nations, United Nations, www.un.org/shestandsforpeace/content/united-nations-security-council-resolution-1325-2000-sres1325-2000. Accessed 19 July 2025.

¹⁴ “Resolution 1373 (2001) /.” United Nations, United Nations, digitallibrary.un.org/record/449020?ln=en&v=pdf. Accessed 19 July 2025.

¹⁵ UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy | OHCHR, www.ohchr.org/en/special-procedures/sr-terrorism/un-global-counter-terrorism-strategy. Accessed 19 July 2025.

The Lausanne Peace Treaty adopted on 24 July 1923¹⁶

This treaty actively established the modern borders of the Republic of Turkey, preventing the creation of a potential Kurdish independent state inside the aforementioned borders.

Adana Agreement adopted on 20 October 1998¹⁷

This agreement between Turkey and Syria was to increase regional cooperation and security by halting all Syrian support to the PKK. It must be noted that the official document is not open to the public, but the link has a sufficient explanation of the meeting and its conclusions.

PREVIOUS ATTEMPTS TO SOLVE THE ISSUE

Ceasefire Attempts

After Abdullah Öcalan was captured in 1999, the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) called a ceasefire on its own to encourage the Turkish government to negotiate. While the ceasefire attempts were going on, the PKK leaders expressed that they were willing to find a common political solution to the issue, but mutual distrust and lack of a structured negotiation mechanism with guarantors led to the failure of this attempt. Thus, the ceasefire came to an end without a formal agreement.

The “Kurdish Opening”

The Turkish government started the "Kurdish Opening" (Democratic Initiative) in 2009 to improve cultural rights and ease tensions. Some of the steps taken were to allow broadcasting and teaching in Kurdish, but the process stopped because of political conflicts and security worries. This attempt did indeed lead to a possible shift in the public perception of Kurds;

¹⁶ Lausanne Peace Treaty / Republic of Türkiye Ministry of Foreign Affairs, www.mfa.gov.tr/lausanne-peace-treaty-part-i_-political-clauses.en.mfa. Accessed 19 July 2025.

¹⁷ Statement Made by İsmail Cem, Foreign Minister, on the Special Security Meeting Held between Turkey and Syria October 20, 1998 (Unofficial Translation) / Republic of Türkiye Ministry of Foreign Affairs, www.mfa.gov.tr/p_statement-made-by-ismail-cem_-foreign-minister_-on-the-special-security-meeting-held-between-turkey-and-syria_br_october-20_-1998_br_unofficial-translation_p_en.mfa. Accessed 19 July 2025.

however, it was definitely not sufficient. The plan lacked legal guarantees for ex-militia members and a common ground with the public. Thus, it faced serious opposition from nationalist groups.

Peace Talks

The most important effort was in 2013, when the Turkish government and the PKK started official peace talks. This led to a truce and the PKK combatants leaving some of their positions. The goal of these talks was to find political and disarmament solutions, but they fell apart in 2015 when violence broke out again. The breakdown of the peace talks was because of the Suruç Bombing Attack, which increased political and public polarization. Since the PKK did not take responsibility for the attack, the public support for dialogue diminished.

Support of the EU and Other Intergovernmental Agencies

The European Union (EU) and other international organizations have backed development and human rights projects in southeastern Turkey. This has helped foster peace, even if they haven't personally mediated the dispute. These projects included educational and infrastructural improvements, alongside safer refugee integration and support.

POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

Effective Communication

With help from UN agencies and the EU, encouraging community leaders and authorities to communicate with each other can help develop confidence and ease tensions. However, since there have been peace negotiations for decades and all have been unsuccessful, a change must be made in the process. A potential solution could be the effective usage of guarantor states.

To enhance effective communication, Berghof Foundation or similar UN organizations or NGOs could be a part of the dialogue. For more information on how to structure negotiations

and peace talks, please see local peace processes in Colombia or the Philippines. The idea of guarantor states such as Norway or Switzerland, known for their neutrality, could help monitor compliance and build trust on both sides.

Reintegration of Ex-Militia Members

Reintegration programs for former militants, such as job training and finding work, can help keep the peace in the long run and lower the danger of violence starting up again. However, a very significant concern regarding this solution idea, which is often debated in Turkey right now, is how families of military casualties would feel if militia members were given freedom.

For a fruitful debate, please think if it is possible to be an “ex” militia member and get forgiven after involvement in terrorist activities.

Monitoring The Distribution and Use of Aid and Development Funds

Making sure that aid and development funds are better monitored and held accountable helps make sure that the money is spent in the right way and meets local needs. However, without validating their sustainability, these aids would not stop the problem; they would only decrease its potential negative consequences.

To monitor the usage and distribution of these aids, assistance of independent bodies such as Transparency International can always be requested, as long as found necessary.

The improved usage of development funds and initiatives could include expanding Turkey’s existing Southeastern Anatolia Project (GAP) through targeted international co-financing. UNDP could be a possible financial sponsor of this or similar projects.

Public-Private Partnerships

Looking into public-private partnerships (PPPs) can provide money to areas damaged by war, which can help repair infrastructure and create jobs. A potential concern with this issue is that there seems to be no reason for private companies to invest in a region that is vastly unstable and insecure. There is no guarantee that they would be able to securely invest or allocate their employees to the region.

Peacebuilding Groups

Delegates may also think about setting up a technical peacebuilding task group within or external to ECOSOC to help with collecting data, coming up with funding plans, and coordinating efforts in the area. However, this requires a detailed approach, considering the requirements of all parties involved and the lack of security, stability, and financial resources in the area.

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