

# Biographies of Political Leaders of the Turkish Republic

## RECEP TAYYIP ERDOĞAN

### Prime Minister of the Turkish Republic since 2003

Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, who is originally from Rize, a Black Sea coastal city, was born on 26 February 1954 in Istanbul. In 1965 he completed his primary education at the Kasımpaşa Piyale Elementary School and, in 1973, graduated from the Istanbul Religious Vocational High School (Imam Hatip Lisesi). He also received a diploma from Eyüp High School since, at the time, it was not possible for the graduates of religious vocational high schools to attend university. He eventually studied Business Administration at the Marmara University, Faculty of Economics and Administrative Sciences (which was then known as Aksaray School of Economics and Commercial Sciences) and received his degree in 1981.

In his youth, Erdoğan played amateur football from 1969 to 1982 in local football clubs. This was also a socially and politically active period in his life. In his student days he joined the National Turkish Student Union, an anti-communist group. In 1976 he became chairman of a youth branch of the Islamist National Salvation Party (MSP) and, in the same year, was elected as the head of Istanbul youth branch of the MSP. He was an active member of this party until the coup d'état in 1980 when the political parties in Turkey were disbanded. Meanwhile, he worked as a consultant and manager in the private sector.

In 1983, he returned to politics with Necmettin Erbakan's Welfare Party (RP) and became the RP head of the Beyoğlu District in 1984. In 1985 he was elected as head of the Istanbul Province office of his party. In the local elections of 27 March 1994, he was elected as the Mayor of the Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality.

On the grounds that he recited a poem during a public speech he made in Siirt in 1997 he was forbidden from holding office and imprisoned for four months. Four years after this incident, Erdoğan founded the Justice and Development Party (AKP) on 14 August 2001. A year later, the AKP victory won the general elections with two-thirds of the seats in parliament. With this result, the Justice and Development Party formed a single-party government nineteen years after Erdoğan's return to Turkish political life. In the 2007 elections the AKP won again with an increase in votes and it has presently been in power for four years.

Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, who is regarded as a charismatic politician, is among the world's most popular leaders. *Time* magazine argued that his aggressive rhetoric is what captures the attention of citizens. His scolding of Shimon Peres, the

Israeli President, has given him heroic status among the general Middle Eastern public. Recently, at the Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly, Erdoğan responded, with strong and clearly critical remarks to the questions of European parliamentarians about sensitive issues in Turkey, for example relations with Armenia, freedom of the press, and the ten percent vote barrier. While Erdoğan's rebukes tend to surprise the international public, Turkish people are accustomed to his style. Moreover, many people believe that this belligerent style is the key to his success and popularity.

Complete version of the Biography of Recep Tayyip Erdogan at:

[www.cidob.org/es/documentacion/biografias\\_lideres\\_politicos/europa/turquia/recep\\_tayyip\\_erdogan](http://www.cidob.org/es/documentacion/biografias_lideres_politicos/europa/turquia/recep_tayyip_erdogan)



Recep Tayyip Erdogan, Prime Minister

## ABDULLAH GÜL

### President of the Republic of Turkey

Abdullah Gül was born on 29 October 1950, in Kayseri, which is in the centre of Anatolia. He is the eleventh President of Turkey since 2007. Before occupying the presidency, he was Prime Minister for four months from 2002 to 2003 and, from 2003 to 2007, Foreign Affairs Minister in the fifty-ninth cabinet.

Gül graduated from Kayseri High School and started his undergraduate studies at Istanbul University in the Department of Economics where he also received a Ph.D. in 1983. Gül was a member of the Islamist-nationalist Millî Türk Talebe Birliği (National Turkish Students' Union) during his university years. He spent two years of his postgraduate studies in London and Exeter doing research for his dissertation and learning English. Gül was a founder of the Department of Industrial Engineering at Sakarya University and taught Economics there for five years. He worked as an economist at the Islamic Development Bank in Saudi Arabia from 1983 until 1991. Abdullah Gül was appointed Associate Professor in International Economics at Istanbul University in 1989.

He was first elected as a Welfare Party (RP) MP in 1991. His was a member of the Turkish Parliament until 2007, for five consecutive terms. In 1993, he became Deputy Chairman of the RP. He was State Minister and Government Spokesman in the Coalition government between June 1996 and June 1997. After the Welfare Party was banned in 1998 by the Constitutional Court he joined the Virtue Party (FP). In 2000, he presented as a candidate for the FP chair against Recai Kutan. Gül was said to represent the reformist wing in the party. He failed to win the party chair but gained a considerable number of votes. However, FP was also outlawed in 2001 by the Court on grounds of its being the RP successor. He then founded the Justice and Development Party (AKP) with Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and Bülent Arınç.

In the general elections of November 2002, AKP won two thirds of the seats in the parliament and Abdullah Gül formed the fifty-eighth Government as Prime Minister. After Recep Tayyip Erdoğan entered the parliament with the mid-term elections in March 2003, the fifty-eighth Government resigned. In the fifty-ninth Government, Abdullah Gül became Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs. At the time, his candidacy for the presidency was announced but opposition parties boycotted the parliamentary voting sessions on his candidacy. This also mobilised the secularist public, and demonstrations known as "Republic Protests" were organised in April 2007. Despite the mass protests against his nomination as president by the AKP, Abdullah Gül was elected as the eleventh president of Turkey by the parliament on 28 August 2007.

The reaction against Abdullah Gül and his presidency was due to the fact that Gül has an Islamist political background and his wife wears a headscarf. However, during his presidency he has acquired the liberal-democratic profile of a pro-Western conservative-leaning moderate politician.

### CEMİL ÇİÇEK



Presidency of the Republic of Turkey

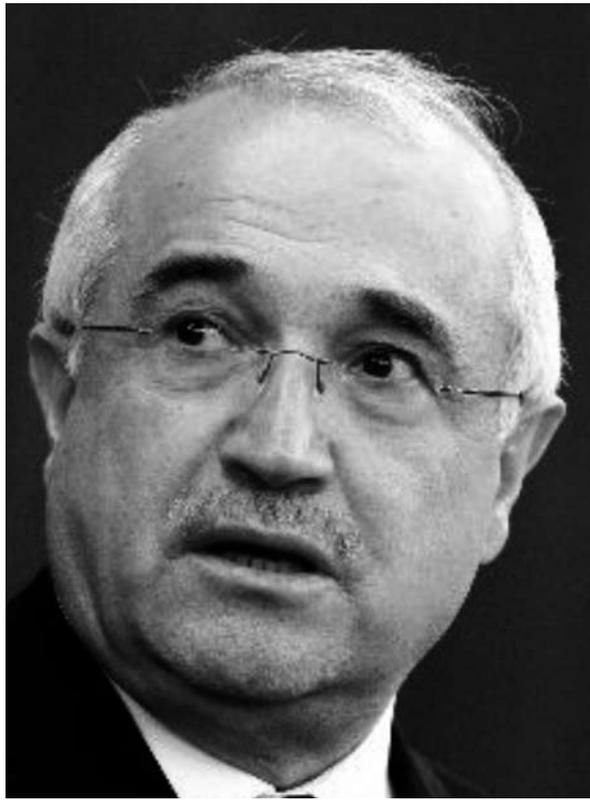
**Abdullah Gül, President of the Republic**

Complete version of the Biography of Abdullah Gül at:  
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### Deputy Prime Minister

Cemil Çiçek was born on 15 November 1946 in Yozgat. He is the Deputy Prime Minister of Turkey and Ankara MP of the Justice and Development Party (AKP). He has been dubbed the "man of all times" since he has occupied several senior state positions since 1983 when he first started his active political life (*Tempo* magazine, 2008).

He graduated from the Faculty of Law at the Istanbul University and worked as a freelance lawyer for some years. Then, in 1983, he joined the right-wing Motherland Party (ANAP-Anavatan Partisi). He was Mayor of Yozgat between 1984 and 1987, after which he became a member of parliament for Yozgat in 1987. Thenceforth, until 1991, he was Minister of State in charge of family affairs. During this time, he attracted attention with his conservative ideas, for example his perceiving flirting as "adultery". He later became Minister of Energy and Natural Resources but was dismissed from the party in 1997 when he voted against the law that raises the age of compulsory primary education from five to



<http://www.dunyo.com>

**Cemil Çiçek, Deputy Prime Minister**

eight years. Thereupon, he joined the conservative Virtue Party (Fazilet Partisi) for which he worked until the party was closed down. He then became a founding member of a new party, the Justice and Development Party (AKP), in which he worked with Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, Abdullah Gül, Abdüllatif Şener, and Bülent Arınç. He was Minister for Justice in the first AKP government from 2003 to 2007. Since August 28, 2007, he has been regarded as one of Erdoğan's most effective Deputy Prime Ministers, along with Bülent Arınç and Ali Babacan.

## BÜLENT ARINÇ

### Deputy Prime Minister

Bülent Arınç was born on 25 May 1948 in Bursa. He has been an MP for Manisa since 1995. He was the twenty-second House Speaker of the Parliament between the years 2002 and 2007. A present he is a State Minister and Deputy Prime Minister and an influential figure in the sixtieth cabinet. Bülent Arınç completed his high school education in Manisa and then attended the University of Ankara. After receiving a degree in Law in 1970, he worked as a freelance lawyer in Manisa.

He became an MP for the conservative Welfare Party (Refah Partisi) after the 1995 general elections. After the Welfare Party was disbanded by the Constitutional Court in February 1998, he joined the Virtue Party (Fazilet Partisi). He was



<http://bulentarinc.com.tr/>

**Bülent Arınç, Deputy Prime Minister**

elected in the 1999 general elections as an MP for Manisa again. He served in the Foreign Affairs Commission of the Parliament. On 22 June 2001 the party he was affiliated with, the Virtue Party, was banned by the Constitutional Court. Bülent Arınç then became one of the founders of the Justice and Development Party (Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi) together with Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, Abdullah Gül, Cemil Çiçek and Ali Babacan.

Bülent Arınç became an MP for Manisa in the 2002 general elections. Later, on 19 November 2002, he was elected Speaker of the Parliament, a position previously held by Ömer İzgi. He remained in the office until 2007. On 1 May 2009 he was appointed as State Minister responsible for state organisations such as the General Directorate of Foundations, General Directorate of Media and Information, TRT (state TV channel) and Radio and Television Supreme Council ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/RT%C3%9CCK\\_-\\_cite\\_note-O\\_\(RTÜK\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/RT%C3%9CCK_-_cite_note-O_(RTÜK))). At present, he is Deputy Prime Minister in the second cabinet of Erdoğan, serving with Ali Babacan and Cemil Çiçek.

## ALI BABACAN

### Deputy Prime Minister

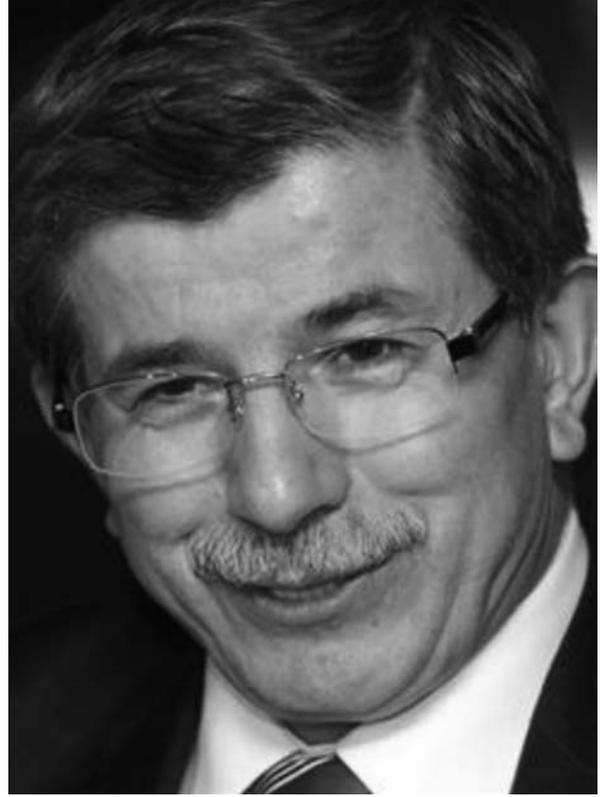
Ali Babacan is Deputy Prime Minister of Turkey and State Minister responsible for the economy. He was born in Ankara on 4 April 1967. He graduated first in his class





**Ali Babacan, Deputy Prime Minister**

Business Turkey Today



**Ahmet Davutoğlu, Foreign Minister**

<http://www.trt.net.tr>

from the TED Ankara College in 1985 and received his degree in Industrial Engineering in 1989 from the Middle East Technical University in Ankara as the valedictorian of his class. In 1990 he went to the USA with a Fulbright Scholarship and received an MBA degree from the Kellogg School of Management at Northwestern University in Evanston, Illinois in 1992. After graduation, he remained in the United States working for two years for a financial consulting company in Chicago, Illinois. When he returned to Turkey, he became an advisor to the Mayor of Ankara. Moreover, he ran the family business in the wholesale textile trading sector from 1994 until 2002.

In 2001 he was among the founders and board members of the Justice and Development Party (AKP). He subsequently became an MP from Ankara on 3 November 2002. These were his first steps in politics. At the age of 35, he was appointed Minister of State in charge of Economy and was the youngest member of the cabinet. Babacan managed an IMF-supported economic reform programme to help Turkish economy to recover after the economic crisis. Within this context, he organised relations with the World Bank, credit agencies, banks and the Treasury.

In 2005 he was appointed by the Prime Minister as Chief Negotiator in charge of the accession talks with the European Union, after which he served as Foreign Minister in 2007 succeeding Abdullah Gül. Since 1 May 2009 Babacan has been State Minister in charge of coordination of the economy.

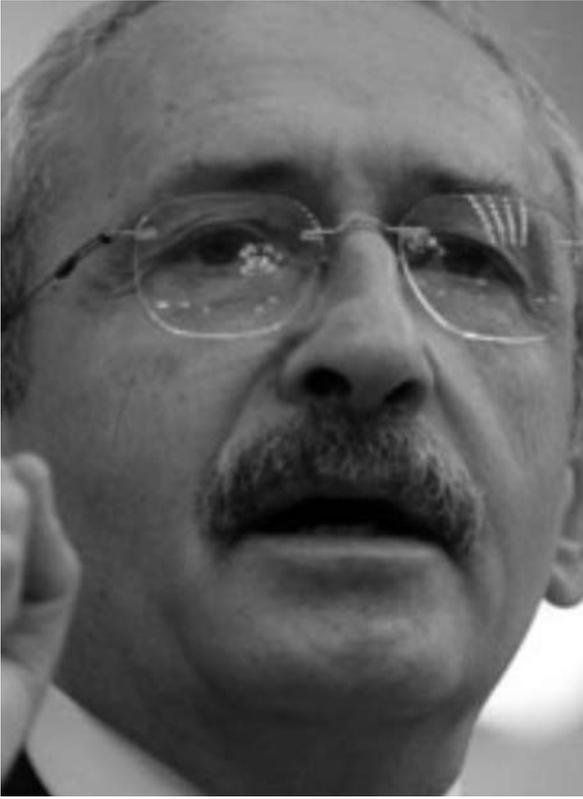
## PROF. DR. AHMET DAVUTOĞLU

### Foreign Minister

Ahmet Davutoğlu was born on 26 February 1959 in Konya, Turkey. He completed his secondary education at Istanbul Erkek Lisesi, an elite high school recognised by Germany as a German international school. He then obtained a degree from the Department of Economics and Political Science of the Boğaziçi University, Istanbul in 1983. He received a master's degree in Public Administration and a Ph.D. in Political Science and International Relations from Boğaziçi University.

After gaining a worldwide reputation as an international relations specialist with his articles challenging Huntington's "Clash of Civilizations" thesis, Davutoğlu was invited to work as an Assistant Professor at the International Islamic University of Malaysia in 1990. He founded the Department of Political Science which he headed until 1993 when he became an Associate Professor. Between 1995 and 1999 he worked at the Marmara University, Istanbul and became a full professor in 1999. Later, he became the chairman of the Department of International Relations at Beykent University. Meanwhile, he worked as a visiting lecturer at the Armed Forces College and the Army War College between the years 1998 and 2002.

After the 2002 elections and since AKP came into power, Davutoğlu has been politically active. First, he was appointed as Chief Adviser to the Prime Minister and in 2003 as



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**Kemal Kılıçdaroglu, Head of the CHP**

Ambassador. Then, on 1 May 2009, he became Minister of Foreign Affairs of the sixtieth Government of Turkey. He is the leading figure behind Turkey's new foreign policy approach which aims at becoming more than just a regional power while also having a more dominant position in world politics. This policy has been characterised as "zero problem with neighbours".

He has written numerous books and articles on foreign policy and they have been translated into many languages. Among his works are *Alternative Paradigms: The Impact of Islamic and Western Weltanschauungs on Political Theory* (1993), *Civilizational Transformation and The Muslim World* (1994), *Strategic Depth* (2001) and *The Global Crisis* (2002). His book *Strategic Depth* is very significant as a key to understanding the recent changes in Turkey's foreign policy orientation. Foreign Minister Davutoğlu was chosen among the top 100 global thinkers of 2010 by *Foreign Policy* magazine.

Ahmet Davutoğlu ran as an AKP candidate for Konya in the general elections which were held on 12 June 2011.

Complete version of the Biography of the biography of Ahmet Davutoglu at:  
[www.cidob.org/es/documentacion/biografias\\_lideres\\_politicos/europa/turquia/ahmet\\_davutoglu](http://www.cidob.org/es/documentacion/biografias_lideres_politicos/europa/turquia/ahmet_davutoglu)

## KEMAL KILIÇDAROĞLU

### Head of the Republican People's Party (CHP)

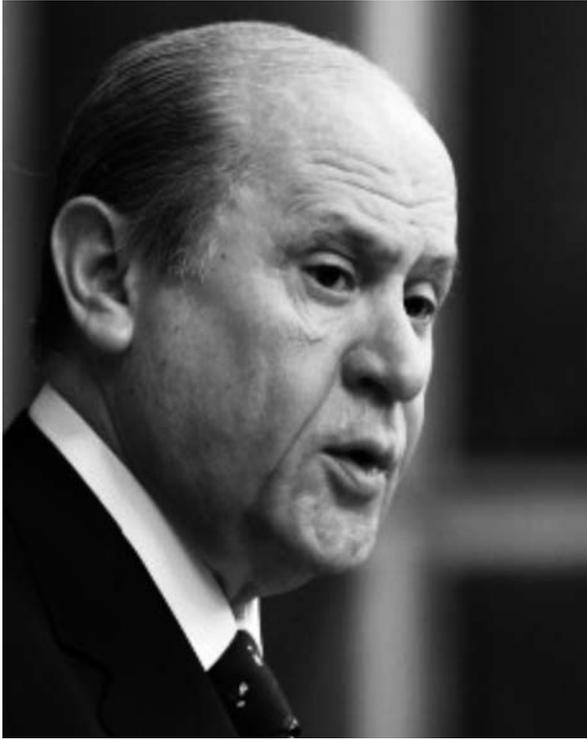
Kılıçdaroglu was born on 17 December 1948 in Tunceli. He is a social democrat and presently the leader of the Republican People's Party (CHP), the main opposition party. He has been an MP for Istanbul since 2002.

Kılıçdaroglu completed his primary and secondary education in different cities of Eastern Anatolia and graduated from the Elazığ Trade High School in 1967. In 1971, he received a bachelor's degree from the Department of Economics at the Ankara Academy of Economics and Commercial Sciences, which is today's Gazi University.

After completing his undergraduate education, Kemal Kılıçdaroglu started working at the Ministry of Finance as a junior accounting specialist in 1971. The Ministry then sent him to France for a year's professional training. Kılıçdaroglu, who worked as an accounting specialist until 1983, was subsequently appointed Deputy Director General of the Revenues Department in the same ministry. In 1991, he was nominated Director General of the Social Security Organisation for Artisans and Self-Employed (Bağ-Kur) and then the Social Security Organisation (SSK). He was named "bureaucrat of the year" by the magazine *Ekonomik Trend* in 1994. The Special Expert Commission on the Informal Economy during the Eighth Five-Year Development Plan was headed by Kılıçdaroglu. Later, he taught at Hacettepe University, Ankara and then served as a board member of Türkiye İş Bankası, which is Turkey's first private bank. When he retired in 1999, Kemal Kılıçdaroglu entered politics in Bülent Ecevit's Democratic Left Party (DSP). However, he was not nominated as a candidate in the 1999 general and local elections. Meanwhile, he was invited by the leader of the Republican People's Party (CHP), Deniz Baykal, to join his party. Following the 2002 general elections, he entered parliament as an MP from Istanbul. In the 2007 general elections he was re-elected to this position, which he still holds. Kılıçdaroglu became an influential political figure when he made public some important documents supporting claims of corruption against former AKP members of government, who resigned after these revelations. Moreover, he brought to light documents on corrupt practice by the Deniz Feneri (Lighthouse) Charity Foundation, which is based in Turkey and Germany. During these political discussions he remained calm and was thus named as "Gandhi Kemal", a reference to the pacifist Indian leader Mahatma Gandhi.

In 2009 Kılıçdaroglu was a Republican People's Party candidate for the position of Mayor of the Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality but was not elected despite the fact that his candidacy considerably boosted the votes for his party. After Deniz Baykal resigned on 10 May 2010 following a video tape scandal, Kılıçdaroglu announced his candidacy for his position on May 17, and became the seventh chairperson of Republican People's Party.

Kemal Kılıçdaroglu has published three books: *Unemployment Insurance Act: Review and Comments* (1993), *1948 Turkey Economy Congress* (1997), and *Informal Economy and the Need for Restructuring the Bureaucracy* (1997).



<http://www.mhp.org.tr>

**Devlet Bahçeli, Head of the MHP**



<http://www.ntvmsnbc.com>

**Selahattin Demirtaş, Co-chair of BDP**

## DEVLET BAHÇELİ

### Head of the Nationalist Movement Party (MHP)

Devlet Bahçeli was born on 1 January 1948 in Osmaniye, a small city in the south of Turkey. He is the leader of the Nationalist Movement Party (MHP), a far-right nationalist party. Bahçeli, who is an economist and politician, is among the founders of Ülkü Ocakları (Grey Wolves), an ultra-nationalist youth organisation.

Bahçeli received his higher education in Foreign Trade at the Scientific Academy in Ankara in 1967 and obtained a Ph.D. in Economics from the Gazi University in Ankara. He served as General Secretary of the Turkish National Students Federation between 1970 and 1971. In 1971, after obtaining his bachelor's degree, he started to work as an assistant in the Department of Economics at the Academy of Economics and Commercial Sciences in Ankara. At Gazi University, where he earned his doctorate, he was a faculty member at the Institute of Social Sciences until 1987.

In 1987, Bahçeli became a board member of the Nationalist Task Party (MÇP), which later became the Nationalist Movement Party (MHP). In 1997, following the death of its leader, Alparslan Türkeş, Devlet Bahçeli took over his position. In the 1999 general elections, MHP took the second place, along with ANAP (Motherland Party) and DSP (Democratic Left Party). Bahçeli therefore became a state minister and Deputy Prime Minister in the coalition government. In the general elections of 2002, his party failed to gain any seats in parliament. He then resigned from the party leadership but was re-elected to the position after a year. In the 2007 elections, the Nationalist Movement Party won 71 seats in parliament.

## SELAHATTIN DEMİRTAŞ

### Co-chair of Peace and Democracy Party (BDP)

Selahattin Demirtaş, a Zaza-speaking Kurdish politician, is a member of the Turkish parliament and co-chair of the Peace and Democracy Party (BDP-Bariş ve Demokrasi Partisi) together with Gülten Kışanak.

Demirtaş was born on 10 April 1973, in Elazığ, an eastern Anatolian city of Turkey. He graduated from the Law Faculty of Ankara University and, after graduation, worked for a while as a freelance lawyer. He was also on the Board of Directors of the Diyarbakır Branch of the Human Rights Association (IHD). Selahattin Demirtaş was elected to the Turkish Parliament in the 2007 elections as a Democratic Society Party (DTP) MP for Diyarbakır. DTP was disbanded on 11 December 2009 with the Constitutional Court decision on the grounds that the party supported the PKK (Kurdistan Workers' Party). He then joined the Peace and Democracy Party (BDP). In the extraordinary congress held on 1 February 2010 Selahattin Demirtaş was elected as the head of the party, succeeding Demir Çelik.

In September 2010, he was given a suspended sentence of ten months in prison, after being accused of propagandising for the PKK after he mentioned the need for reconsideration of Abdullah Öcalan's role in the resolution of the Kurdish question in one of his speeches in 2006.

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