

2nd Mesopotamia Water Forum Final Declaration Diyarbakır (Amed)

For a Water Future Shaped by the Will of the People in Mesopotamia; ‘Integrating Waters, for a Common Life!’

We, as participants in the 2nd Mesopotamia Water Forum, gathered with over three hundred activists, academics, researchers, students, women, ecological organizations, and local government representatives from Turkey, Syria, Iran, Iraq, and the Kurdistan regions within the borders of these states, as well as from nine other countries, on the banks of the ancient Tigris River in Diyarbakır (Amed) from October 17-19, 2025.

Water is the most fundamental element of life in this region, and the future of Mesopotamia depends on organizing the defense of its water basins. On this basis, three working groups were established with the active participation of the forum's members:

- Common ground for the struggle for water, peace and freedom,
- Democratic-ecological water management, and the liberation of water basins.
- People's water diplomacy.

Capitalism, industrialism, and nation-state policies, are producing domination and exploitation of our living spaces that exacerbate ecological and social crises. Almost no land on the Earth remains untouched efforts at profit maximization, Mesopotamia, a land rich in biodiversity and the location of one of humanity's earliest human civilizations, is among the most severely affected by these crises.

The collapse of natural and cultural heritage in our region, the deepening climate crisis, industrial pollution, and regional security policies are placing profound pressure on the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers, almost completely usurping life in the basin. Rivers are fundamental, vital assets that point the way towards ecological integrity, social justice, and lasting peace. Today, however, they have been turned into mere "objects" upon which the ruling powers, through policies of power and short-sighted planning, have established their colonial policies.

The centralized and capital-driven framework pursued for years through the GAP (Southeastern Anatolia Project) transforms water into a commodity. Yet this approach only deepens the water crisis. A chain of dams that cut off the natural flow of rivers is eliminating farming in the submerged valleys and plains, destroying ecosystems and habitats along with it. It is leading, particularly through large irrigation projects, to increased soil salinization within the whole basin and the collapse of local economies. This transformation is creating a new economic model that is pushing the region's youth into unemployment and dispossessing people from their land. Furthermore, years of mega projects, justified in theory by “development” but followed in practice with military interventions and security approaches have displaced millions of people by force and is deepening social and ecological damage.

We are losing water and the rivers of Mesopotamia. The future of water is the shared life of all the people living in this region. For example, in the Kurdistan region within the Iranian state (Rojhilat) 1,300 dams and 120,000 water wells are destroying surface and groundwater resources. The Munzur, Zilan, Botan, Murat, Tigris, Euphrates and Zap Valleys in the Mesopotamian basin in Turkey are being damaged by hundreds of dams. This alone clearly demonstrates the scale of the regional water crisis. The wars waged in the Tigris and Euphrates basins, security-related practices, and dam and hydroelectric power plant projects that disrupt the rivers' ecological cycle have taken their place on the dark pages of world history.

For these reasons, as in the 1st Mesopotamia Water Forum of 2019, we have come together in the 2nd Mesopotamia Water Forum to organize our opposition to the destruction caused by separating water resources from life and abandoning them to market forces and state monopoly. We state that the right to water as a right to life.

We have agreed that the will to liberate waters and to transform the prevailing system of exploitation lies in the hands of the people. The accumulated knowledge of women, farmers, shepherds, and displaced peoples is one of the fundamental foundations for establishing a just water policy.

Just as transboundary rivers have rendered drawn borders meaningless, the people living in the basin will also strengthen their shared life and struggle for water by recognizing no boundaries. The determination of women in the water struggle and the cultural and religious relationship that the people of Mesopotamia have established with water are the strongest memory of common identity.

This declaration is the result of three days of discussions, shared pain, hopes, and collective will. We call on all people to defend the free flow of water, the shared life of the people of Mesopotamia, and work for a future together of peace. We also emphasize that the collective will established at the 1st Mesopotamia Water Forum in Sulaymaniyah to resist the commodification of water, the use of water as a weapon, and regional hegemony policies has grown in Amed today and continues to be the fundamental principle guiding our struggle.

On the Spirit of the Forum

The 2nd Mesopotamia Water Forum has been organized on the basis of the collective power of solidarity with a critical perspective on domination and the language of domination.

Thematic sessions, workshops, and joint assessments focused on the freedom of water. It demonstrated once again that the growing water crisis in this region is far more than a technical issue. The common consensus emerging from the forum's discussions was that the water crisis in Mesopotamia is no coincidence. This crisis is particularly the result of capital accumulation projects, security policies, and patriarchal forms of governance.

In a region characterized by armed conflicts, we experienced that people can speak out together and that solidarity is possible. The discussions demonstrated the power of grassroots will. The forum also conducted in-depth discussions on water ethics, horizontal organization, democratic water communication, the idea of establishing a free ecology academy and the role of education in

raising social awareness. These discussions demonstrated that the struggle for water must be conducted with an international dimension and line.

Our Call: Reclaim the Rivers

We insist on the goal of liberating water and life, that is its indispensable component. We reject the interrupted flow of the Tigris, Euphrates and its tributaries, the captivity created by colonial water policies, and the militarism that encircles our basins. The freedom of rivers is the freedom of the people of Mesopotamia.

When water is liberated, society is liberated. When rivers are cut off, history, memory, and culture also dry up. We reject this "drought." We recognize that the water crisis is not "fate," but rather is the result of political choices, and we are creating a collective will to end this drought and captivity.

The proposals we present below represent the collective wisdom of the people. We call on all local governments, community assemblies, ecological organizations, professional chambers, women's organizations, academia, and all actors struggling throughout the basin to take responsibility for their implementation. This call is not a wish, but an invitation to fight with political resolve.

1. The Path Opened by Rivers to Peace

We declare that in Mesopotamia the freedom of rivers and lasting peace are the same struggle. Against the fragmentation of this region, we defend a democratic society and freedom of life. The flow of the Tigris and Euphrates shows us that rivers are not merely waterways crossing borders. They are the most powerful peacebuilders, connecting the past, present, and future of peoples.

Liberating rivers means breaking the chains of domination that usurp life. This struggle rejects the system of domination that commodifies water and water basins and subjects them to capital accumulation. It is based on a water ethic based on the rights of life and on a foundation for peace built by the collective voice of the people. This is a journey that will be built upon the shared will of the people. We are determined to be the builders of this journey.

1.1 Weaving Peace and Solidarity Around Rivers

Peace brings social justice and freedom throughout the basin, while also removing obstacles to the flow of water. Every conflict, every intervention that imprisons the flow of water darkens the future of the Tigris and Euphrates. Therefore, lasting peace encompassing everyone in Syria, societal stability in Iraq, opening the door to democracy in Iran, and a just and democratic resolution of the Kurdish issue in Turkey are essential conditions for the liberation of the Euphrates and Tigris. The people's approach to peace and the liberation of rivers must unite in the same struggle.

People who liberate waters can also weave peace. Liberating the flow of rivers means liberating the collective life of this region.

1.2 A New Narrative for Shared Life

We call on governments, academia, and the media to abandon the language that makes water a tool for conflict or hegemony. Every approach that confines water to the agenda of capital and power is another blow to the memory of this region. Establishing a language that sees water as a living being and liberates living being is our shared responsibility.

The story of Mesopotamia is also the story of its rivers. This story is the ancient knowledge and memory of thousands of years. It is the resilience of life. This connection established with water is the simplest language of peace. This language is free from the ambitions of capital and states that are far from democracy. It embraces the freedom of life and exists through the collective breath of its people. Anyone who can hear the language of rivers knows: Peace thrives in the sound of water.

1.3 International Solidarity

Peace processes require international solidarity and strong social commitment. The success of the peace quest in Turkey, Syria and the region is possible with the support of all the peoples in the region. The ongoing ecological collapse in Mesopotamia has become a threat to global security. Therefore, the international community is obligated to jointly defend peace and ecological justice. Every support for peace is a support for ecological life, the free flow of rivers, and social justice.

1.4 Our Relationship with Water from the Bottom Up

Water communes should be established, starting from villages, neighborhoods, and cities, with the participation of people, ecologists, researchers, democratic organizations, and representatives of women's and labor organizations. These communes will be the foundation of a new social organization based on the freedom of water and the right of people to speak. The primary goal is to establish the Mesopotamian Water Assembly, a federation of these structures. This assembly will be the institutional expression of the collective will that embraces the freedom of rivers and life and reveals a new political approach that develops a libertarian perspective on water.

1.5 Recognizing Rivers as Living Beings

Rivers are not simply "resources" as defined by patriarchal and capitalist systems but living beings. This characteristic of rivers must be ensured at national and international levels, and a globally organized struggle must be waged to achieve protection for rivers. For the memory, culture, and future of all peoples, the spiritual bond established with rivers should be protected. Rivers must cease to be objects upon which the dominant powers advance their narrow interests or exercise unjust dominion.

We will wage a comprehensive legal struggle to recognize the status of rivers as living beings. A working group is necessary to establish a legal framework that recognizes the rights of rivers, in response to dams and other water intervention projects, security policies, and capital initiatives that damage rivers.

1.6 Mesopotamian River Cities Coalition

Solidarity networks should be established among the cities that form the heart of Mesopotamia, such as Amed, Sulaymaniyah, Basra, Hasakah, Mosul, Baghdad, and Ahwaz. These intercity ties should be strengthened through people's diplomacy. Mutual support networks established by the people's own initiative will enhance water freedom and peacebuilding, while also demonstrating the meaninglessness of artificial nation-state borders. This alliance will protect the basin, combat obstacles to river flow, and create a collective axis that will overcome the domination established by dominant powers.

1.7 Fundamental Principles for Justice

The foundation for people's equitable access to water is the protection of water and all water ecosystems. Mesopotamian rivers, marshes, wetlands, lakes, forests, and the agricultural lands are the collective memory of this region. Protecting these areas is essential for both ecological and social justice. The freedom of water and life must be defended. Water cannot be commodified or commercialized. Water cannot be turned into a tool of hegemony for security reasons. Any policy that seizes water must be perceived as an attack on the will of the people. Therefore, the freedom of water is the most fundamental condition for the freedom of the people.

2. Water and Climate Justice Against Ecological Destruction: Freedom of Water and No Structures of Domination

The destructive, centralized, and corporate-based approach to water policies must be abandoned. This approach is a system of domination that confines rivers and people's lives to the interests of capital accumulation. The people's social contract rejects this system and establishes a line of resistance based on the freedom of water. This resistance strengthens the will of the people against the hegemony built by security-oriented capital policies. Therefore, every policy that protects water protects the common future of the people. Every policy we develop in this effort will prioritize the free flow of water and the life of Mesopotamia.

2.1 Let's Stop Destructive Mega Projects and Mining

The ongoing Silvan Dam, Cizre Dam, and newly planned mega projects including dams, hydroelectric power plants, and large irrigation projects; must be stopped. These projects constitute a systematic intervention targeting water, land, and the shared culture of Mesopotamian people, and have produced no results other than ecological destruction.

Energy investments, including all mining and hydrocarbon activities that lack an independent environmental assessment process and that do not serve the needs of the people, must be terminated. These activities destroy forests and biodiversity, pollute groundwater and surface water, and transform basins into areas of capitalist domination. All shale gas drilling must be stopped immediately.

2.2 Removal of Existing Harmful Infrastructures

Large, destructive dams must be gradually dismantled for water freedom. Considering the global experience of recent years, the ecological and social benefits of each dam removal project exceeded initial expectations. These structures imprison rivers and threaten the lives of people. Removing dams is a necessary step to restore the natural flow of rivers and return displaced people to their centuries-old habitats. It is also crucial for restoring biodiversity and restoring submerged cultural heritage in our basins.

2.3 Agroecology and Food Sovereignty

Intensive monoculture practices must be abandoned. The exploitation of industrial agriculture's soil and basin model is depleting the water resources of this region. Instead, agroecological production, incorporating the wisdom of traditional agriculture, should be the foundation. The agroecological approach preserves the soil's natural cycle and fosters a production model that nourishes life, not one that imprisons water.

This transformation is essential for achieving food sovereignty. Food sovereignty means that people determine their own production according to their own needs, and that the fertility of the land depends on the will of communities, not corporate interests. When agroecological production is combined with the freedom of water, people's potential for self-sufficiency increases.

2.4 Institutional Solutions

Professional and labor organizations, women's councils, ecological and urban organizations, local governments, universities, and state governments should support solutions emerging from the local level, rather than exacerbate the devastation caused by megaprojects. This support will be the foundation of an approach that prioritizes the will of the people, prioritizes water freedom, and protects ecosystems. Any project that disregards the people's voice is illegitimate. Communes established by the people, local councils, and basin organizations are the true drivers of this policy. Therefore, all institutions should assume responsibility in a way that strengthens the will of local communities.

2.5 Local Monitoring and Data Sovereignty

Community-based monitoring systems should be established in river basins. Water information is a shared common and cannot be left to the control of any single entity. Therefore, all data should be available and accessible to the public. Data transparency is crucial for protecting ecosystems. A social control axis must be established to counter the commercialization of water and its destruction through security policies. At the same time, science must be freed from the monopoly of capital and power. Because the knowledge that will defend water freedom can only be produced by independent and free academies based on social needs and grounded in the ancient knowledge of society. People's right to speak is strengthened by access to information. Reports must be prepared and updated frequently, and the resulting data must be shared openly with the public.

2.6 Energy Sovereignty

Nuclear, geothermal, solar, and wind projects that fail to address the needs of the people and are owned by private companies are the deceptive face of "green capitalism." These projects, under the guise of ecological transformation, reproduce the dominance of capital and once again dominate people's living spaces.

Our goal is not energy models that advance corporate interests. Our goal is to make energy models that belong to communities, are locally organized, and prioritize the people's voice and ecological justice. Need-based energy cooperatives should be established, and these cooperatives should transform into a path of freedom and independence that enables people to produce their own energy through their own initiatives.

2.7 Pollution Prevention

The destructive, polluting, and toxic effects of construction, industry, agriculture, mining, energy production, and military waste on life must be stopped. These policies pollute the soil, air, and water, disrupting the integrity of basins, disrupting the water cycle, and destroying the habitats of species. Chemical waste, industrial discharges, pesticides, and toxic residues left by mining poison rivers. This poisoning threatens all life dynamics, from fish to birds, humans to plants.

For example, the Lake Van basin is rapidly being destroyed by pollution, waste discharge, and uncontrolled construction, and this destruction threatens all the lake ecosystems. To protect Lake Van from pollution and to prevent the future of all lakes in Mesopotamia from collapsing as Lake Urmia has, protecting Mesopotamia's water resources is an integral part of the fight for water. Pollution is not just about water; it is about human health and livelihoods. Therefore, all activities that produce pollution must be stopped, and holistic prevention strategies must be established to protect water.

3. People's Water Diplomacy

Language is how politics is realized, and the language of water diplomacy should be grounded in the cultural memory of the people and the multilingual and religious culture of Mesopotamia. A collective diplomatic working group should be established where people speak in their own languages.

Water diplomacy should be removed from the monopoly of states and corporations and transformed into a multilayered, community-centered structure shaped by the will of the people. Decisions regarding river flow should not be made behind closed doors. These decisions should be made in communes and assemblies established by the people. No diplomacy that ignores the knowledge and will of the people can build peace. Therefore, water diplomacy should become a collective struggle emerging from the local level, where women, peasants, ecological organizations, democratic mass organizations, and labor institutions equally participate.

3.1 Inclusiveness and Transparency

We must not allow water agreements to be made behind closed doors. Such secret negotiations isolate rivers from people and ecosystems. They transform water into a tool for state power struggles and corporate profits. The will of the collective and democratic structures established in river basins should be the basis for regional decisions. These structures should represent the people's right to speak and become the sole legitimate platform for protecting water freedom. Decisions that will determine the future of rivers can only be made by these collective structures established by the people.

3.2 Ensuring the Freedom of Waters

Until the waters and rivers in the Mesopotamian Basin are fully liberated, the will of the people must be recognized as a common principle in diplomatic processes through the Mesopotamian Water Forum Network. This network is a legitimate structure representing the will of the people and is the primary interlocutor in all regional decisions advocating for water freedom. The future of the rivers will be determined by the collective will of the people, and this network will be the political driver of the liberation process. This network must draw its power from the streets and from the public realm.

3.3 Implementation of International Agreements

Existing agreements must be effectively implemented. When the will of the people is not reflected in these agreements, the future of water is determined behind closed doors, and this is illegitimate and unacceptable. Agreements should not be made with a logic that enslaves water and turns it into a tool for profit. Policies that protect life and water should be the basis. When drafting new agreements, the people's right to a voice must be decisive, and the principle of freedom of water and

life must form the basis of all decisions. Any agreement that fails to prioritize the flow of rivers, the integrity of ecosystems, and the will of the people is illegitimate.

3.4 The Role of Local Governments

Local governments of riverside cities and settlements should take an active role in diplomatic processes and water-related policies. The future of rivers cannot be left to decisions from distant centers. In matters of local concern, the collective will of the local people should determine the process. Therefore, local governments should prioritize the will of collective structures that will protect water. These structures will be legitimate structures representing the people's right to a voice and the dynamics that organize diplomatic processes from the grassroots level. From a social ecological perspective, within the scope of democratic-ecological water and basin policies, all local governments, especially municipalities, should establish and adhere to principles, policies, and objectives related to water management.

3.5 A Strong Communication Network

Regular webinars, email groups, and joint monitoring mechanisms will be established. These networks will be a communication line that will share the knowledge of people, strengthen collective structures to protect water, and ensure continuity of solidarity throughout Mesopotamia.

3.6 Heseke Urgent Action Plan

The Alouk Water Station, located near Serekaniye and occupied by armed groups affiliated with Turkey in 2019, must be removed from the control of these armed groups and declared a zone fully accessible by humanitarian efforts. This will prevent the interruption of Heseke's drinking water supply. This step is urgent to prevent water from becoming a tool of oppression and war and to protect the people's right to life. Due to the urgency of the situation, a delegation should be appointed to monitor, contact, and report on the damage in the region. International actors should be called upon to raise awareness on this basis and resolve the problem as soon as possible.

3.7 'Women's Water Diplomacy' Working Group

A water diplomacy group consisting of ecofeminist activists, women's councils, and organizations will be established to authenticate the praxis against patriarchy in water diplomacy in the region. The Women's Water Diplomacy Group will create a collective platform for gender equality, women's liberation perspectives, and the leading role of women in the water struggle for ecological justice and social freedom.

3.8 Cross-Border Solidarity

Solidarity mechanisms will be strengthened to protect water defenders, develop common cause strategies, and jointly combat ecocide. These mechanisms will be a collective resistance network where people stand together, and defenders of water freedom unite in a common struggle.

3.9 Legal and Academic Capacity Development

Information-sharing and experience-sharing networks will be established to effectively utilize international water law. These networks will establish a solidarity pipeline that defends the rights of rivers, conducts legal processes based on the will of the people, and protects water freedom.

3.10 Multi-Channel Diplomacy

We will adopt the principles of the [2025 Kathmandu Declaration](#), which emphasizes inclusive water diplomacy and cooperation that reaches local communities and considers non-human actors. This approach respects the traditions, culture, and dignity of local peoples and fosters intercultural solidarity.

In Conclusion:

The 2nd Mesopotamian Water Forum was a step that expanded the struggle launched in Sulaymaniyah. This gathering, founded by the will of the Mesopotamian people, created a new threshold for water freedom. It demonstrated that peace can be established through a political framework that prioritizes rivers, and that people who liberate water can also liberate their own future.

As we leave Amed, we no longer see ourselves as scattered individuals. We are now part of a common path. We are a united movement expanding the Mesopotamian Water Network. We will carry the freedom of rivers, the will of the people, and the language of peace to all corners of Mesopotamia.

We will put into practice in our own areas our commitment to establishing water communes and collective structures to protect water. We will establish water advocacy structures in villages, neighborhoods, and cities, and bring these structures together at the Water Assemblies, which will meet throughout Mesopotamia. These assemblies will be the bearers and implementers of our new social contract defending the freedom of water and life.

We pledge to carry the spirit, words, courage, and resolve of this forum to our own regions. We will march shoulder to shoulder for the right to access water and the right to living rivers. We will intensify the common struggle against dams, mines, security-oriented water policies, and ecocide throughout Mesopotamia.

In preparation for the next forum, we will establish an independent inter-communal Water Committee between Iran, Iraq, Syria, and Turkey. We will strengthen international solidarity to protect our lakes, rivers, marshes, and all living species.

With every step we take, we will meet at the Mesopotamian Water Forums, to work for peace, and build freedom. We know that when rivers flow freely, peace takes root. The shared life of Mesopotamia will be rewritten in the freedom of water.

We are beginning preparations to hold the next Mesopotamian Water Forum in Southern Iraq. It is our shared commitment to gather in these lands, where the Tigris & Euphrates meets the sea, where the Mesopotamian marshes and reeds have nourished life for centuries. We invite all peoples, communities, and organizations that defend the free flow of rivers to be a part of this gathering. Liberating the rivers of Mesopotamia means defending the right to life of all living beings. No freedom struggle is complete without preserving species diversity. By reestablishing a symbiotic relationship with nature, we will live with trees, water, insects, and all beings based on the perspective of "living together in diversity," and we will continue our struggle based on this principle. We wish success to all the contributors to the meeting and to our valued friends whose hearts are beating in this endeavor, and we extend our greetings and respect.

Ay Hebûn to! Av Jiyan to! Av Aşîfî to!

We are based on peace, communizing water, land, and energy, and building a free life.

People who liberate water liberate life and foster peace...

2nd Mesopotamia Water Forum Committee