

Imagining Peace and Conflict: The Kurdish Children and Youth in Diyarbakir ¹

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Abstract:

This study is an attempt to give voice to the Kurdish children and young people in Diyarbakir, and to explore their peace images and conflict perceptions. Motivated by the assumption that peace in Southeastern Turkey would have to involve not only willingness of the youth in the region, but also their ability to imagine peace and to act as peace-builders at grassroots, it seeks to understand their perceptions and interpretations of the current conflict based on their every day experiences and observations, and accordingly to highlight their expectations from a future peace process through the use of focus group methodology. In this respect it also aims to highlight and guide further research and initiatives that needs to be undertaken about and with youth.

The research reveals that the peace definitions of young Kurds basically evolve around not only having equal citizenship rights (socially, politically, economically and in their relations with the state) in Turkey, but also having constructive relations with the Turks at a societal level. It also reveals that, in addition to being victims of the conflict environment in multiple ways in their everyday life, they are also social and political actors that play a multiplicity of roles. Finally the research suggests that the children and youth of Diyarbakir, for the time being, are willing to take on constructive responsibilities to contribute to a peace process at the grassroots level, drawing attention to the need for research and initiatives that promote their involvement and empowerment.

Keywords: Kurdish question, children, youth, peace, conflict, empowerment, focus group method

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