

Ten thousand march in Berlin

Funeral procession honours young Kurds slain at Israeli embassy

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Ten thousand Kurds from all over Germany marched through Berlin on Wednesday in memory of the three young Kurds who were shot down by security men at the Israeli Consulate in Berlin one week ago. In driving snow the procession, led by two cars bearing the bodies of the victims, wound its way through the streets of West Berlin. The demonstration was disciplined and peaceful. Turkish and German working people and youth also joined the march, which was escorted by nearly 4,000 police. Numerous police video teams filmed all of those taking part in the demonstration.

Along the route the demonstrators chanted "Freedom for Ocalan! Freedom for Kurdistan!" The relatives of the three dead Kurds plan to fly their bodies back to Turkey for a burial in their homeland in the south-east of the country. Turkish Airlines, however, have declared that they have no room for the coffins in any forthcoming flights. A lawyer for the relatives declared that the families have no idea what will happen to the coffins if and when they arrive in the Turkish capital of Ankara.

In addition, in the last few days new information has emerged about the shooting which took place at the consulate. Contrary to reports that a group of about 30 young Kurdish demonstrators had broken into the consulate, a new police report confirms that an Israeli security policeman opened the door of the building to allow in some of the demonstrators. At the same time, in addition to the 17 shots which were fired at unarmed demonstrators inside the building, a large number of cartridges have been found outside the building where some of the protesting Kurds were also injured. It is now clear that one of the Israeli security men came to the front of the building and fired an entire magazine from his pistol at the protesters out front.

Prior to the funeral march in Berlin a team from the

WSWS visited the Kurdish Community Centre in Berlin and spoke with its chairman, Dr. Hassan Mohammed-Ali, and secretary Kader Al-Yousef concerning the situation facing Kurds following the kidnapping of PKK leader Abdullah Ocalan. The Kurdish Community Centre has existed in Berlin since 1994 and operates as an umbrella organisation for all Kurdish groups. It is a recognised and registered body that acts as the official representative for Kurds in dealings with city authorities, organising legal advice and the reconciliation of conflicts.

"If there is confusion among the local population about the Kurds," according to the chairman Dr. Mohamed-Ali, "then that is understandable. The people are fed with completely one-sided information and pure propaganda from the other side. In this conflict the Kurdish side is not allowed a say.

"Most of the European countries have firm friendships with Turkey. There are definite trade interests. In the Middle East Turkey is a nation with its own status and it occupies a strategic position. But who are the Kurds? They do not count because they do not have their own state. It is not necessary to take them into account. Although it concerns a people of 40 million, they are of no interest for the Europeans."

The committee were asked their opinion of the new Red-Green German government. In the manner of its predecessor, it is evident that this government continues to support terror in Turkey, although previously both the SPD and Greens had a totally different position. In the past they repeatedly called for a political solution, i.e., a negotiated deal, and expressed their support for such a solution to the Kurdish parliament in exile, which was founded a few years ago.

"Yes, I was myself present at the foundation of the exile parliament in the Hague," confirmed Dr. Mohamed-Ali,

"and heard these speeches. There were many high-ranking guests from the Social Democratic and Green parties of Europe. If they only kept to half of what they had said in their speeches then we would not be in this situation today. But they remained pure statements of intent and no action followed. Theory and practice went their different ways.

"One should say, however, that there are still some individuals who favour a negotiated solution. And one must respect such persons. But it is no longer the standpoint of their parties. From the leader of the Greens, Joschka Fischer, German foreign minister and president of the European Community, one does not even hear half-hearted protest. I assume that in opposition the parties speak differently as opposed to when they are in government and have the reins of power in their hands."

To the question of whether the centre had more information over the shooting of the three young Kurds at the Israeli Consulate in Berlin Dr. Mohamed-Ali explained: "We planned to hold a funeral march on Sunday, but it came under the ban on demonstrations that has been imposed by the city council. The lawyer for our centre has negotiated for a funeral march on Wednesday. The three coffins are to be carried through the city before they are handed over for burial in their homeland.

"We have laid a wreath at the consulate. Our delegation spoke with the ambassador. I personally met only with the head of the consulate and said the following: there is no justification for the action against the demonstrators, some of whom were mere children. The response [by the Israeli security police] bore no relation to the nature of the demonstration. It was above all young people who forced their way into the general consulate.

"As you know, one of the victims was a girl of just eighteen and the two others were in their early twenties. Sometimes youth can be hot headed and it is understandable in such a situation. Even when the demonstration took on a rowdy character that was no reason to shoot people. I said with bitter irony--not even in the wild west do you shoot down those who are unarmed. We are waiting now for the report from the state attorney's office. However one must add that it is not easy for us to obtain information from the state authorities. Also we have had no information with regard to the Kurds who were arrested in the course of demonstrations here in Berlin."

Mr. Al-Yousef added: "Before entering the consulate the demonstrators were involved in scuffles with the German police, about 30 were stationed in front of the

building. In the course of these scuffles there were injuries sustained, but although they were outnumbered by demonstrators none of the German police felt so threatened that they used their weapons. Not one of them drew their weapons, although we all know that the German police are not exactly hesitant in such circumstances.

"With regard to the situation in Turkey, tell me of any land in which it is not possible to speak one's own language. Just imagine that it was forbidden to speak Turkish in Germany or to speak Spanish in America. It is absurd. The biggest Turkish newspaper, *Hürriyet*, carries a slogan over the top of the front page: 'Turkey belongs to the Turkish!' Why is necessary to emphasise that every day? In all public buildings in Turkey, airports and bus stations, everywhere one sees the slogan 'What good fortune to be Turkish!' President Demirel made a statement over the arrest of Ocalan, but he did not mention the words Kurd or Kurdish once. Nor did he mention Ocalan's name, he just spoke of 'this person'. It is a continual campaign of chauvinism."

Both men emphasised that there are few problems between the Kurdish and the Turkish populations. In Berlin, for example, roughly 50,000 Kurds and 170,000 Turks have lived peacefully together for years. The chairman explained: "When one excludes the extreme right-wing parties, then we have been living here peacefully for some time. Amongst the ordinary population this is absolutely no problem. I myself have many Turkish friends, I buy from Turkish shops and, in my function as a doctor, I have many Turkish patients. We belong to the same sports associations and sit in the same cafes. One complaint of our association, however, is that although a large percentage of immigrants from Turkey are Kurdish, the authorities responsible for foreign workers here in Berlin ignore the Kurds when it comes to publishing brochures and newspapers."



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