

Antiwar protests continue throughout Turkey

Our correspondent
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Thousands gathered in squares and took to streets across Turkey over the weekend to protest the US-led war in Iraq. Some 20,000 people joined an antiwar demonstration Sunday in Istanbul organized by a group of peace activists named “Coordination of No to War in Iraq”.

“We say no to a war in Iraq. This means that we say no to pain, tears and blood in our region for the next decades,” said Hasan Toprak, the spokesman of the Confederation of Public Sector Trade Unions (KESK), in an address to the demonstration.

Two artists, Ayse Emel Mesci and Mustafa Alabora, read the joint statement of the organization committee. Calling for an end to the ongoing occupation and massacre in Iraq, the statement called on US and British soldiers to immediately leave the country.

Stressing that efforts are being made to enable Turkey to participate in the crime against humanity being committed by the US, the statement said, “There are ongoing efforts for opening a northern front. US Secretary of State Colin Powell came to Turkey. We are against the pressure and bribes of Powell.”

During the meeting, antiwar supporters shouted slogans such as “Iraqi public is not alone”, “Damn US imperialism”, “No to war in Iraq” and “We won’t be US soldiers”. The statement added, “Everywhere is Baghdad, we are all Iraqis!”

Protests against the war against Iraq continued all around Turkey in unity with those around the world. In Beyoglu, Istanbul a group of women belonging to the Women’s Workers Union left a black coffin near the US Chief Consulate in Istanbul.

Police tried to prevent the group of 20-25 people who at first gathered on Istiklal Street and intended to march towards the consulate. The police warned protesters that they would be arrested if they insisted on marching. After speaking to the press, the protesters dispersed without any incident.

In Ankara, members of the Ankara Antiwar Platform and Contemporary Lawyers Association (CHD) marched along Yuksel Street chanting slogans and carrying signs reading, “The public will put an end to this war.” CHD Ankara Office Chief Sait Kiran condemned the war, saying, “We are supporting the rights of our brother citizens in Iraq.” Later another group gathered in front of the General Directorate on Konur Street and marched towards Ankara Contemporary Arts Centre near the US Embassy in Ankara, chanting slogans and carrying banners.

Antiwar protests continued in Istanbul’s Uskudar. Turkish Public Workers Labour Union (Kamu-Sen) members from the Anatolian Front of Istanbul burned US and British products. The group gathered at Uskudar Democracy Square chanting slogans against the war. Kursat Atmaca, Chief of the Turkish Public Workers’ Labour Union, delivered a speech on behalf of the group.

Atmaca reminded people that Kamu-Sen had boycotted US and British products a week ago and argued that the most severe punishment to these two peace-threatening countries was a boycott. He emphasized the importance of using domestic products and encouraged people not to use foreign currency.

A group of women, members of the Antiwar Platform, held a protest at Taksim Square. Approximately 300 women mourned for the dead of the war wearing headscarves with “No War” printed on them. They then dispersed without any incident.

In Rize, baker Suleyman Demir formed the words “No War” using 4.3 kilos of bread.

In Bursa, the Organization for Human Rights and Solidarity for Oppressed People (Mazlum-Der) Office started a petition demanding the US stop the war in Iraq and that the war criminals to be brought to judgement. Rifat Bakan, chief of Mazlum-Der, said that the war was harming innocent children, women and the elderly,

adding that the civilian losses were larger than military losses. Along with this, a group of women from the Female Workers Union (EKB) in Bursa gathered in front of the Justice and Development Party (AKP) building protesting the war by leaving a child's coffin.

In Izmir, members of the Izmir Female Workers Union chanted slogans against the US bombing of Iraq in front of the AK party's building.

The Turkish Union of Engineers and Architects Chamber (TMMOB) members also called on people to boycott US and British goods.



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