

# Turkey's chief prosecutor seeks to ban the ruling AKP

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2 April 2008

On March 14, Turkey's chief prosecutor, Abdurrahman Yalcinkaya, filed a case against the ruling AKP (Justice and Development Party), accusing it of "being a focal point of anti-secular activities" and "trying to turn the country into an Islamic state." He asked for the closure of the party and the banning from politics of Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan and his 70 top colleagues, including President Abdullah Gul, for a period of five years.

Almost a month ago, the Kurdish nationalist DTP was taken to the Constitutional Court with a plea for its closure. The DTP is under continual attack from both security forces and the civilian fascist movement. Less than a year ago, an article posted on the *World Socialist Web Site* pointed out the strong possibility of such a case aiming at the closure of the party.

This time, a political party that recently gained the votes of 47 percent of the Turkish electorate is under threat of closure.

The prosecutor declared that the AKP is the successor of Turkey's previous Islamic parties, which, he claimed, based their policies on a struggle against "republican values," especially secularism. "The AKP is founded by a group that drew lessons from the closure of earlier Islamic parties and uses democracy to reach its goal, which is installing Shariah in Turkey," reads the indictment.

The 162-page indictment cites several incidents as evidence of the AKP's Islamist motives. It also criticises the new head of the Higher Education Board (YOK), the body that supervises Turkish universities, for backing constitutional amendments sponsored by the government aimed at easing a ban on women students wearing the Muslim headscarf at university.

It is possible to download the full text of the indictment, albeit only in Turkish. It is full of deliberate misinterpretations and distortions.

First of all, the indictment contains no evidence unknown to a regular reader of a daily newspaper. More importantly, for the most part, the prosecutor takes such "evidence" out of context and distorts it to serve his own objectives. The weakness and shallowness of the indictment clearly show that the prosecutor compiled it in a hurry.

Such a move cannot be the outcome of the individual decision of the prosecutor. It is undoubtedly the military that made the decision and also made the necessary arrangements behind the

scenes to ensure the ruling of the Constitutional Court.

This is a one-shot bullet, and they can't afford to miss the target. Otherwise, Yalcinkaya would not put his personal prestige as well as the institutional prestige of his office at risk.

At the moment, there are lots of post-AKP closure scenarios circulating. In addition to the possibility of an interim technocratic cabinet or a full-fledged military takeover, some observers are speaking of a coup staged with the support of Russia!

Many of those scenarios are based on pure speculation or reflect the fantasies of certain individuals or circles. In other cases, they may be floated with the aim of spreading disinformation. The poisonous political environment created by the case filed against the AKP creates a fertile breeding ground for such ominous scenarios.

The results of the July 2007 national elections were a huge blow to the so-called "secularist" camp led by the Turkish military. Armed with its landslide election victory, the AKP managed to demoralise and silence its opponents and effectively minimise the military's power to intervene into the political life of the country—albeit temporarily.

A few days ago, Erdogan assured his deputies that the AKP will once again increase its votes in local elections slated for next year. This was a direct message to the military and its civilian supporters: "We humiliated you in the elections before; we will do the same this time round."

The AKP's election victory was a serious setback for the campaign led by the military, and the generals were forced to draw a low profile for months. Two months ago, when he was asked about his views on constitutional amendments to ease the ban on women students wearing the Muslim headscarf at university, Chief of the General Staff Yasar Buyukanit said, "Everyone knows what we think about the issue. There is no need to repeat it once again."

Some took this compliance as a sign of a lasting reconciliation between the military and the AKP. But the attempt to ban the AKP and overthrow a democratically elected government through a court ruling proves the opposite.

Another and even more direct blow to the military is the ongoing and quite successful police operation against the so-called Ergenekon gang—a Gladio or contra-guerrilla type

criminal organisation, composed of retired generals, top bureaucrats, mafia members, leading members of the Kemalist-Maoist Workers Party and even journalists. Popularly called the “deep state,” its aim is to topple the government.

Critics targeting the military in connection with the Ergenekon gang have become so outspoken that Buyukanit was forced to say two months ago, “There may be some military men involved in wrong practices; however, no one should try to represent the Turkish military as if it were a criminal organisation.”

The operation against the Ergenekon gang also demonstrated that the AKP now has full control over the police organisation.

The recent land incursion and ongoing cross-border air operations against PKK targets in northern Iraq have helped the military by partly restoring its image. Nevertheless, the top generals are not in a position to carry out a direct attack on the AKP, as they did just before Gul was elected president by the parliament.

In Turkey, the president has some critical powers. For example, when some 22 university rectors retire this year, Gul will select Islamist successors and effectively place the universities under the control of Higher Education Board President Yusuf Ziya Ozcan, who was hand-picked by him. In two years’ time, three Kemalist members of the Constitutional Court will retire and the new ones will be appointed by the president. The court consists of 11 judges, 8 of whom are presently reliable Kemalists.

The suits brought to close down the DTP and the AKP are utterly anti-democratic and reactionary. After the military last April posted a thinly disguised takeover threat on its web site against the election of Gul as the new president, the Constitutional Court stopped the election process, and Gul was elected only after a massive victory for the AKP in early parliamentary elections. Now, an attempt is being made to overthrow the democratically elected government and the president through the Constitutional Court. The *World Socialist Web Site* emphatically opposes these two suits, without giving political support to any of these bourgeois parties.

Turkey once again is in the grips of a regime crisis. The roots of this crisis can be found only in the deep historical chasm between two wings of the Turkish bourgeoisie.

The Islamist movement managed to pick up strength rapidly in the early 1990s, took hold of the municipalities of most big cities in the local elections of 1994, and came to power through a coalition government in 1996.

This movement had always represented a certain faction of the bourgeoisie, mostly concentrated in provincial cities and towns, which had an inferior position relative to the bigger monopoly groups in industrial and financial centres such as Istanbul, Ankara, Izmir, Kocaeli and Adana. This political rift expresses a deep-going division within the ranks of the ruling elite, coupled with a socio-cultural division of society at large between the so-called “secularist” and “Islamist” camps.

Along with sharp shifts within the Turkish bourgeoisie in general, the wing with Islamist sympathies had also changed profoundly. The industrial wing of the Turkish bourgeoisie had transformed itself into finance capital through a process that started in the 1960s and 1970s and matured in the 1980s. Under the conditions created by liberalisation, pro-market policies and globalisation of production, a section of Islamist capital itself had grown into the same status of finance capital. Turgut Ozal’s move to legalise Islamic banking in 1983 played an important role in this process.

Given the extreme divisions and a loss of credibility and strength on the part of the “secularist” parties—the once mighty “centre-right” parties have no representation in parliament at the moment—only one force could act on the behalf of the Western wing of finance capital. This is the military. And due to the developments explained above, the military is using the judiciary against the AKP as a last resort.

The removal of a democratically elected government by the Constitutional Court would represent a massive attack on the democratic and social rights of the working class. If an interim regime or another regime backed by the military materialises, it will implement even more severe austerity programmes and will resort to increasingly repressive measures to suppress the demands of the masses.

Opposing the action of the state prosecutor and the Constitutional Court does not mean, however, placing any confidence or giving any support to the AKP and the Erdogan government. They represent another wing of the same venal ruling class that, notwithstanding the sharp clashes and differences, makes common cause with the military over and over again. In order to defend its democratic and social rights, the Turkish working class needs its own independent party, fighting for an internationalist socialist perspective.



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