

Security forces raid homes across Turkey as top officials threaten military crackdown

Thomas Gaist
19 June 2013

Turkish counterterrorism forces carried out mass arrests Tuesday morning, grabbing scores of people from private homes and offices during sweeps in 21 of the country's provinces and the major cities of Ankara, Istanbul and Eskisehir.

The arrests targeted parties active in the ongoing protest movement, including the Socialist Party of the Oppressed (ESP) and the Marxist-Leninist Communist Party (MLKP), the *Gulf Times* reported. According to the Progressive Journalists Association (ÇGD), at least eight journalists were also taken and many more have been subject to police intimidation.

Two days earlier, police arrested over 500 protesters, deploying truncheons, rubber bullets, water cannon and tear gas indiscriminately against crowds that included many families and young children. Doctors reported that the water cannons were laced with chemical agents, leaving first degree burns on many of the victims.

In a further escalation of the repression, top Turkish officials vowed to mobilize the military to crush opposition should the current police actions prove insufficient. On Monday, Deputy Prime Minister Bulent Arinc told an interviewer, "Our police, our security forces are doing their jobs. If it's not enough, then the gendarmes will do their jobs. If that's not enough ... we could even use elements of the Turkish Armed Forces."

Arinc stated unequivocally that the "innocent protests had ended" and that any further street actions would be considered illegal.

In recent remarks to members of his ruling AKP [Justice and Development Party], Prime Minister Tayyip Erdogan celebrated the successes of the Turkish police in their repression of the protest movement: "In the face of a comprehensive and systematic movement

of violence, the police displayed an unprecedented democratic stance and successfully passed the test of democracy."

"The people and the AKP government have foiled the plot ... hatched by traitors and their foreign accomplices," Erdogan continued. In an obvious threat against further protests, he warned, "From now on, there will be no question of showing any tolerance to people or organisations who engage in violent acts."

The "democratic stance" deployed against the demonstration in a series of vicious attacks beginning May 31 has resulted in 5 deaths and over 7,500 injuries, including the loss of eyes by 10 individuals due to rubber bullet impact.

Also on Monday, Turkey's interior minister Muammer Güler announced new laws cracking down on social media users.

"We have a study of those who provoke the public via manipulations with false news and lead them to actions that would threaten the security of life and property by using Twitter, Facebook or other tools of social media," Güler told the *Hurriyet Daily News* on Monday.

Prime Minister Erdogan referred to social media as a "troublemaker in societies."

Hundreds of thousands of youth, workers, and professionals have taken to the streets during the past three weeks in opposition to the reactionary policies of the Turkish government, which have enriched the corporate and financial oligarchy at the expense of the working class.

While the protests were sparked by a confrontation over the planned redevelopment of Gezi Park, the root cause lies in the global economic crisis and enormous growth of social inequality it has generated. Turkey has the second highest level of income inequality of the 34

Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development countries, according to a 2011 study. Since 2008, the capitalist elite in Turkey has taken advantage of the global financial crisis to slash wages and lay off masses of workers.

The Erdogan regime is a loyal friend of American and European imperialism, which are striving to subjugate the entire region in pursuit of their financial and geopolitical interests. Indeed, Washington has promoted Erdogan's "moderate Islamist" regime as a model for the entire Muslim world. During his visit to Washington in mid-May, Obama praised Erdogan as "a strong ally and partner in the region and around the world."

Speaking in early June, White House spokesman Jay Carney made clear that the Obama administration was untroubled by the crackdown: "Turkey is a very important ally. And look, all democracies have issues that they need to work through ... I think that we continue to work with Turkey on a range of issues—as a NATO ally and as a key player in the region—and we look forward to doing that."

The CIA operates a major command and control center on Turkish soil, from which it coordinates the flow of weapons, supplies and billions of dollars in cash across the Turkish-Syrian border as part of the rapidly escalating US-led war against the Assad regime.

The vast majority of Turkey's population opposes the use of their country as a staging area for imperialist conspiracies, and rightly fears the Al Qaeda-linked extremists promoted by the US, who appear to have been involved in the Reynahli bombings on May 11. The intensity of the protests against the regime reflects the growing hatred of the population for imperialism and its agents within the Turkish ruling elite.

Nevertheless, the protest movement is dominated by pseudo-left and nationalist forces—including the Kemalist Republican People's Party (CHP), the Freedom and Solidarity party (ODP) and the (Maoist) Labour Party (EMEP)—who are hostile to the working class and incapable of rallying the vast majority of the population against Erdogan's AKP.

The one-day strike and march action called by five major trade unions this week, including the Confederation of Public Workers' Unions (KESK), the Confederation of Revolutionary Trade Unions (DİSK), the Turkish Doctors' Union (TTB) and the Turkish

Union of Engineers and Architects' Chambers (TMMOB), exemplify the class collaborationist orientation of these forces. The real purpose of such limited strike actions is to "let off some steam" without posing any alternative or mounting any challenge to the status quo.

Turkey's unions have strong institutional ties to the European Union and have already supported austerity policies in Greece and elsewhere. They are becoming discredited in the eyes of the population as a result of their efforts to cut a deal with the ruling elite. Like unions in every country around the world, they now act as police forces on behalf of capital.

Middle class protest politics, including the passive resistance of the "Standing Man" phenomenon, are insufficient to break the power of the Erdogan regime and the capitalist elite it serves. For this, the working class must be mobilized independently from and in opposition to the pseudo-left, Stalinist, nationalist and trade union leaders, as part of an international struggle for socialism.



To contact the WSW and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact