

Second terrorist attack in a month in Turkish capital kills at least 37

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On Sunday March 13, at least 37 people were killed and 125 wounded in a car bomb attack in the middle of Ankara, the Turkish capital. Immediately after the attack, the Radio and Television Supreme Council (RTUK) banned broadcasting images of the scene and of victims, while an Ankara court ordered the blocking of social media, including Facebook and Twitter.

The last terrorist attack was carried out on February 17 by the Kurdistan Freedom Hawks (TAK), a splinter group from the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), near the military headquarters, parliament and other key government institutions in Ankara, killing 29, most of them soldiers. It came four months after a suicide bombing organised by the Islamic State (IS) against a peace rally near the Ankara Railway Station left at least 103 dead.

After the attack, the Turkish ruling elite seized the opportunity to further promote nationalist and military propaganda justifying its ongoing military operations in Kurdish towns of the country.

Immediately after the terrorist attack, both Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan and Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu repeated their resolve to escalate military operations against the PKK. "Our state will never give up using its right of self-defence in the face of all kinds of terror threats. All of our security forces, including soldiers, police and village guards, have been conducting a determined struggle against terror organisations at the cost of their lives," Erdogan said in a written statement.

Although no organization claimed responsibility for the terrorist attack, Davutoğlu said in a written statement that they had "concrete information on the terrorist group behind the attack."

Paving the way for a possible Turkish ground invasion of Syria, Davutoğlu accused the PKK of

perpetrating the attack, adding: "Our country has been targeted by multidimensional terror attacks in a thorny and unstable region. As before, and from now on, the Republic of Turkey will conduct its struggle against terror with great determination for the sake of our nation's unity and serenity, and it will punish in the most severe way treacherous circles that aim at our country."

These statements, and similar remarks of pro-government media commentators, indicate that the Turkish government is ready to jump at the opportunity to pursue its aim of invading Syria.

According to the state-owned Anatolian Agency, four people were arrested in connection with Sunday's car bomb attack in Sanliurfa, a province bordering Syria, in what was taken as a sign implicating the Democratic Union Party, the Syrian offshoot of the PKK, in the attack.

Afterwards, Turkish fighter jets hit arms depots and shelters of the PKK in the mountainous Kandil and Gara regions in northern Iraq, and Turkish police launched an operation detaining dozens of Kurdish nationalists in different cities.

Since the collapse of a fragile truce in June of last year, deadly clashes have resumed between Turkish forces and PKK militants, as Turkish security forces armed with tanks and helicopters launched campaigns in towns of the Kurdish-dominated southeast. In February, Ankara also carried out artillery bombardments on Kurdish fighters acting as US imperialist proxies in Syria.

Citing "escalating terror activity in the region" and the need to ensure the "security of citizens' lives and property", Turkey's ruling AKP (Justice and Development Party) declared further curfews, as security forces prepared for new operations in the

ethnic Kurdish towns of Yuksekova and Nusaybin.

A months-long, devastating anti-terror operation has recently been completed in other Kurdish-populated districts of Cizre, Silopi and Idil in Sirnak province, and Silvan and Sur in Diyarbakir, leaving over 1,000 dead and forcing some 350,000 people to flee their homes.

Ankara has also escalated its attacks on the media and the pro-Kurdish Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP), the third-largest political party in the Turkish parliament. On Erdogan's orders, a request for the abolition of parliamentary immunity of five deputies from the HDP, including its two co-leaders, has already been submitted to the Parliament. In addition, hundreds of HDP mayors, provincial administrators and members have been arrested on charges of being members of, or aiding and abetting "terrorist organisations".

In written statements, three opposition parties in the Turkish parliament condemned the terror attack. The Republican People's Party (CHP) leader Kilicdaroglu denounced it for targeting the "social peace and serenity" of the country, and reiterated his party's determination to take "all kinds of political responsibilities" in the fight against terrorism.

Describing it as a "savage attack" against civilians, the HDP condemned the terrorist attack. The HDP's Central Executive Board stated "that all of these attacks against our people will not be able to estrange us from feelings of fraternity and condemn the attack once more in the strongest way."

Devlet Bahceli, the chairperson of the far-right Nationalist Movement Party (MHP), reiterated his party's full support for the government: "The government should not allow any weakness and negligence on this issue. Turkey's national security is signalling a red alert because our precious nation is openly under attack and is surrounded in a compact and categorical circle of enmity."

The ruling elite is also exploiting the attack in an attempt to remove an unpopular new anti-labour bill from the agenda.

The draft "On Amending the Labour Law and Turkish Employment Organisation Law" aims to extend temp work and widen the activity of private employment agencies. The bill also includes the creation of a severance pay fund, which would exempt the employers from paying compensation to workers

whose job contract is ended due to reasons listed under Turkish Labour Law.

There is also growing dissatisfaction amongst workers, especially in the automotive sector, which has been hit by a wave of layoffs. On March 1, workers at Oyak Renault, a joint venture between French Renault and the Turkish army pension fund Oyak in Bursa went on strike, organised a march and tried to block the main road. The riot police, using tear gas, attacked the workers to disperse the crowd and detained several of them.

On May 14 last year, automotive workers at Renault and Tofas, owned by Italy's Fiat and Turkey's Koc Holding, organised a two-week wildcat strike, which soon spread to other carmakers, including Ford Otosan, Ford's Turkish unit, and several auto parts makers.



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