

Opposition parties meet with Turkish President Erdogan

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In a meeting Monday in the presidential palace with Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan and leaders of his ruling Justice and Development party (AKP), leaders of the main opposition party, the Republican People's Party (CHP), and officials from the Nationalist Movement Party (MHP) agreed on the need to restructure the state apparatus in the aftermath of the failed military coup of July 15. The reforms would be sanctioned by means of small-scale constitutional changes.

Presidential spokesman Ibrahim Kalin said in a statement: "At the meeting on steps to be taken for the freedom, security and welfare of our nation, which is united around democracy and the rule of law, there was an evaluation of the state of emergency, security measures, work on the new constitution and economic policies."

The pro-Kurdish Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP) was excluded from the meeting. Its co-chair, Selahattin Demirtas, criticized the exclusion as an "unreasonable policy." HDP's parliamentary group leader Idris Baluken complained of the decision, saying, "The HDP was the first party to propose a leaders' summit. Our co-chairs announced this to the public. But today we face an attitude that excludes the first party to propose a leaders' summit."

The meeting came a day after an anti-coup demonstration organized by the CHP in Istanbul's Taksim Square, which involved the participation of members of several political parties, including the ruling AKP. The participants also included pro-CHP trade unions and pseudo-left organizations.

At this "Republic and Democracy Rally," CHP leader Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu announced the Taksim Declaration, which states in its first paragraph: "The coup attempt of 15 July targeted our parliamentary

democracy. Although the Turkish Grand National Assembly was under bombardment, it continued to perform its duties and managed to repel the coup. We condemn and denounce the perpetrators, their supporters in the country and, if there are any, abroad."

The declaration also called for "restructuring the state," stating, "We should bury in history the concept of 'usurping the state' rather than 'governing the state.' In this respect, restructuring the state is a must." In its declaration, the CHP warned the government, "The state should not be governed by anger and revenge. The culprits of the putsch should be tried lawfully with an understanding of abiding by the rule of law."

Meanwhile, an intensive media propaganda campaign is underway aimed at whitewashing the highest level of the Turkish military and declaring it innocent and clean. In an effort to cover up the fact that one third of the generals and admirals were directly involved in the coup attempt and the rest of the top command echelon did not lift a finger to fight back, all of the media outlets are promoting narratives about how the commanders-in-chief and the general chief of staff himself supposedly resisted the coup.

As it turned out, they were informed of the looming coup attempt as early as 4 pm on Friday, July 15, but launched their operations against the putschists only hours later, in the early morning hours of July 16, and only after the coup's failure in the face of mass resistance had become clear.

The CHP's "Republic and Democracy Rally," the consensus apparently reached in the meeting of three main bourgeois parties in the presidential palace, and the HDP's desire to participate in the meeting indicate a convergence that will inevitably mean severe anti-working class measures, carried out under the cover of

fighting coup plotters and normalizing Turkish politics.

The decree law, which was published in the *Official Gazette* on July 23, increases the detention period to 30 days and orders the closure of some 1,229 schools, hospitals, associations and trade unions linked to the US-based Gulen movement. The decree also bans “individuals from returning to work in a state institution after being suspended from another in a bid to prevent suspended state employees from returning to their jobs.” On July 25, a detention warrant was issued for 42 journalists.

The anticipated “reconstruction” of the state apparatus will primarily affect the Turkish Army. Prime Minister Binali Yildirim told Bloomberg News on July 25 that there was “a serious need for restructuring in [public] institutions, especially the Armed Forces.”

Using the now commonly employed phrase “security gap,” which aims to obscure the initial passive complicity of the top command echelon, Yildirim said: “There is a security gap, as we have seen during the coup attempt. There are problems in the hierarchy between lower level and senior level. We will restructure [the Army] in a manner that will resolve these problems.”

Along the same lines, the prime minister said in an interview with *A Haber* on July 24: “This incident showed us that the presidency of [the] Turkish General Staff can easily be invaded. It should not be so easy to enter and invade these places. It is the heart of the Armed Forces.”

It is not clear how the command echelon will react to the ongoing arrests and projected reorganization of the Army. However, one thing is obvious: the ongoing blockade of the barracks by means of heavy machinery and trucks, which implies the possibility of further coup attempts, is a heavy blow on the prestige of the Turkish Army.

While seeking to consolidate the rule of his government through a consensus with opposition parties, Erdogan has arranged an official visit to St. Petersburg for August 9. Announcing the visit, Deputy Prime Minister Mehmet Simsek said yesterday that the scheduled meeting between Erdogan and Russian President Vladimir Putin would help normalize bilateral ties between the two countries, which dramatically deteriorated after the downing of a

Russian warplane by the Turkish Air Force last November 24.



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