

After state crackdown, Turkey's HDP halts its parliamentary activities

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On Sunday, Turkey's pro-Kurdish Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP) declared that it would halt all its parliamentary activities. In a press conference on Monday, HDP spokesperson Ayhan Bilgen said that they would not attend to the general assembly or commissions of the Turkish parliament, saying, "We have decided to halt our work in the legislature."

The decision came as a response to the arrest of nine HDP lawmakers on November 4, including its co-chairs Selahattin Demirtaş and Figen Yüksekdağ, who were imprisoned for alleged links to the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), a Kurdish nationalist organisation waging guerrilla war against the Turkish state.

The legal grounds of the detentions were prepared last May, when the immunity of more than 130 representatives, largely from opposition parties, was lifted by a parliamentary vote with the support of the social-democratic Republican People's Party (CHP) and the far-right Nationalist Movement Party (MHP).

The political beheading of the HDP came days after the arrest of Gültan Kışanak and Fırat Anlı, the co-mayors of the Kurdish-populated southeastern province of Diyarbakır for alleged links with the PKK, on October 30. Since the last general elections of November 2015, thousands of Kurdish politicians and activists, from both the HDP and its sister party, the Peace and Democracy Party (BDP), have been arrested on similar charges.

Also, on November 5, an Istanbul court arrested nine journalists and executives of *Cumhuriyet*, one of Turkey's oldest and best-known newspapers. This stunning operation, following the last wave of bans on some 20 television and radio stations a week ago, was based on accusations that the suspects were "committing crimes on behalf of the 'Fethullahist

Terror Organisation' (FETO) and the PKK."

This all takes place as Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan and his Justice and Development Party (AKP) move towards an authoritarian presidential system by drafting a new constitution. Erdogan and his government have already gained the full support of the fascistic MHP, which incessantly calls for the arrest of HDP deputies as "legal extensions of the PKK", the reintroduction of capital punishment, and the invasion of northern Syria and Iraq.

The latest state of emergency decree on October 29—which dismissed an additional 10,000 civil servants and banned 15 media outlets—has also given Erdogan the power of appointing rectors to universities directly without considering the preferences of academics. Authority to directly appoint rectors was part of an omnibus bill that the AKP sought to pass in recent months, but that was ultimately retracted.

Having largely acquiesced to the government's authoritarian measures, especially since the failed coup attempt of July 15, the opposition CHP was finally alarmed by the last wave of detentions of *Cumhuriyet* journalists and HDP lawmakers.

Covering up his support to the parliamentary vote to lift the HDP's legislative immunity, Kilicdaroglu condemned the detention of the HDP deputies, saying: "We are against the jailing of politicians, scientists and journalists over their views. If you defend democracy, then you should recognise that those who come to power with elections should go with elections. If not, you will slaughter democracy."

Speaking to supporters in Izmir, on November 4, Kilicdaroglu also criticised the AKP government for its cross-border operations in Syria and Iraq. In fact, Kilicdaroglu has declared his party's support to the Turkish army's cross-border operations, so long as they

target the PKK in northern Iraq.

Meanwhile, the Turkish military continues to deploy tanks, armoured vehicles, and thousands of troops to Silopi, a Kurdish-populated town near the Iraqi border, challenging the Iraqi government's decision opposing Turkish participation in the offensive on Mosul. Ankara has insistently demanded that Turkish troops be allowed to actively participate in the attack against the Islamic State in Mosul.

On Saturday, Erdogan threateningly said that his government would have a "different response" for Shi'ite militias if they "cause terror" in Tal Afar, a city west of Mosul largely populated by Iraqi Turkmen.

The state terror launched by the government at home is tightly coupled with Ankara's escalating warmongering moves in the Middle East, which would easily spark a conflagration—a regional war in the Middle East, and a broader war between NATO and Russia.

All events of the last decade have proven that CHP or HDP and their satellite trade unions cannot and do not want to oppose the authoritarian and militarist agenda of the imperialist powers and the Turkish ruling class, carried out by the AKP government. For years, these two bourgeois "left" parties sought a reconciliation with the AKP, under cover of a impotent calls for "peace and democracy."

Just a few months ago, the CHP, in the name of fighting the July 15 coup attempt, obeyed the so-called Yenikapı spirit—i.e., national unity behind the AKP government. The HDP complained for its part of its exclusion from the "national consensus" reached by the AKP, CHP and MHP after the attempted coup.

Now, even as they are targeted by the government, these two bourgeois opposition parties and their allied trade union bureaucrats and pseudo-left followers are swearing allegiance to the "rule of law," calling on workers to respect the rule and order, and relying upon the support of US and European imperialism.

This docility is not accidental; the difference between the AKP government and these opposition parties is not of principle but on tactical differences over how best to serve the vital interests of the imperialist system. Thus, both the CHP and HDP support the predatory, US-led war in the Middle East in the name of "human rights and democracy" and "national interests", as does the AKP. Their conceptions of what these "national

interests" are differ from each other, however.

The CHP—together with the AKP and MHP—supports the Turkish invasion in Syria, while the HDP aims to exclude Ankara from the ongoing imperialist re-division of Iraq and Syria, so long as Ankara does not accept the Kurdish nationalists as its main partner.

The role of the Kurdish nationalist movement, constitutionally represented by the HDP, is no less reactionary. A movement serving as US imperialism's main proxy force in Syria and Iraq—whose leader, PKK head Abdullah Ocalan, has for years called for a Turkish-Kurdish axis based on the "National Oath" of the Ottoman Parliament in 1920 (a declaration recognising parts of Greece, Bulgaria, Georgia and Iraq as Turkish territory)—cannot seriously oppose the dictatorial and militarist drive of the Turkish government.

Whatever decision the HDP may take, it will not be in the interests of either the working class and the youth or of Kurdish suffering masses in their struggle for social and political liberation. On the contrary, seeking a greater share of profits from the exploitation of Kurdish working class and poor peasants by global conglomerates, the HDP's actions, based on the perspective of identity politics, inevitably escalates the social counterrevolution and the danger of war.



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