

Turkish government calls snap election for June 24

Halil Celik
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Trapped by the war preparations of its NATO partners against Syria and confronting a deepening economic crisis, the Turkish government of President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has decided to hold parliamentary and presidential elections on June 24, 17 months ahead of schedule.

The decision came after a short meeting on April 18 between Erdogan and his key supporter, Devlet Bahceli, the leader of the far-right Nationalist Movement Party (MHP). Following the meeting, Erdogan told reporters that his ruling Justice and Development Party's (AKP) executive board had "discussed ... and decided to give a positive response" to Bahceli's proposal "on holding early elections."

On January 8, Bahceli had stated his party's unconditional support for Erdogan in the next presidential election—a crucial move at a time when it became clear that the AKP cannot win 50 percent of the vote to secure the presidency and a parliamentary majority. In return, the MHP, which remains below the 10 percent threshold needed to enter parliament, would get into parliament by means of an electoral alliance with Erdogan.

Admitting that it was "the intensification of Turkey's internal and external agenda" which "obliged" his government "to remove the uncertainties through early elections, as soon as possible," Erdogan was actually referring to growing pressure from Ankara's NATO partners in the context of the escalating war drive against Syria and the worsening Turkish economy.

On the same day Erdogan declared the snap election, the Turkish parliament, with the votes of the AKP and MHP, extended—for the seventh time—the ongoing state of emergency for another three months. Thus, the upcoming early elections will be held under emergency rule.

On April 19, the constitutional committee of the Turkish parliament hastily approved a motion on early presidential and parliamentary elections that will be passed in parliament with the votes of the AKP and MHP. This is despite the fact that the Turkish parliament has yet to pass new laws regulating the electoral procedures in accordance with the constitutional amendments approved by an April 16, 2017 referendum, which replaced the parliamentary system with a presidential one with no checks and balance.

On the same day, the Turkish parliament stripped two more lawmakers from the pro-Kurdish Peoples Democratic Party (HDP) of their deputy status, increasing the number of HDP MPs who have been stripped of their parliamentary seats to 11.

The rush to new elections reveals that powerful factions of the Turkish ruling class are well aware of the growing unrest within the working class and the youth that could erupt into a revolutionary mass movement. This goes along with the danger of a Kurdish insurrection provoked by a further Turkish invasion of the Kurdish enclave in Syria.

The decision to hold elections on June 24 was welcomed by the main pro-Western opposition party, the Republican People's Party (CHP). Its only fear is that the extended state of emergency could cast a shadow over the elections.

On April 18, CHP leader Kemal Kilicdaroglu boasted that his party would be victorious in the parliamentary and presidential elections. According to the Turkish daily *Hurriyet*, Kilicdaroglu told members of the Central Executive Board of his party, "We are ready for the elections. The statement Erdogan made shows that he will lose. The nation will get rid of them. 2018 will be the year for democracy. They will be

given a lesson on democracy.”

The same position was expressed by the HDP. Speaking to a meeting of provincial party leaders in Ankara, its co-chairperson Sezai Temelli vowed that the AKP-MHP alliance would be defeated in the snap elections. He called on “all democratic forces and labor organizations” to join the HDP in “the struggle for democracy.”

Meanwhile, the nationalist Islamist Felicity Party, from which the AKP split in 2001, stated that it wanted to hold a meeting with Abdullah Gul, founding member of the AKP and its former chairperson, who also served as minister of foreign affairs, prime minister and Turkish president under successive AKP governments. The Felicity Party wishes to nominate Gul as its presidential candidate in the upcoming elections. The party’s chairperson, Temel Karamollaoglu, has also stated that it is ready for electoral alliances with other parties, saying, “We are open to dialogues. We’ll meet with everyone.”

The Kemalist CHP is also pursuing a policy of alliances, which provides its only possibility for winning the election. Speaking to reporters on April 19 in Istanbul, CHP leader Kilicdaroglu stated that his party was open to all factions that are for democracy. He will hold meetings with other party leaders and then make a decision. “Whoever stands for democracy, whoever is against a one-man regime, whoever wants people to live in peace and to express their thoughts freely, we invite them to the June elections,” he said.

Bringing together the wide range of Erdogan’s opponents, from Islamists to Kemalist and central-right secularists and Kurdish nationalists, however, is no easy task. They have not even agreed on a common presidential candidate, calculating on nominating their own in the first round of voting, and then lining up behind the one who would stand against Erdogan in the second round.

Moreover, a big question remains of how the pro-Kurdish HDP would form an alliance with the CHP, IYI Party and Felicity Party, all of which supported the AKP’s crackdown on Kurdish nationalists in Turkey’s Kurdish-populated areas and backed the Turkish invasion in northern Syria.

It is, however, not totally excluded that all these bourgeois forces will get together in desperation over Erdogan rule—a feeling that also reigns among petty-

bourgeois pseudo-left circles, who now support the CHP as the only progressive alternative against what they call “Erdogan/AK fascism.”

None of these bourgeois opponents of Erdogan and his party, however, offer any solution to the deepening economic and political crisis of imperialist system other than escalating the drive to war and dictatorship in line with Ankara’s traditional imperialist allies.

They view the crackdown of the AKP government on workers and youth as a useful tool for manipulating democratic and anti-war sentiments, just as imperialist powers use them as a pretext for their regime change operations around the world.



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