# Renewed mass arrests target Kurdish-nationalist HDP in Turkey

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Escalating the ongoing crackdown on the Kurdish-nationalist Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP), police arrested 20 people yesterday over the investigation launched by Ankara's Chief Public Prosecutor in the 2014 "Kobani protests" case. The office declared that 61 more people are sought by police. Furthermore, it will demand the lifting of seven HDP deputies' parliamentary immunity over this same investigation.

This anti-democratic political operation came just a few days after President Recep Tayyip Erdo?an met with the prosecutor.

HDP detainees include Kars Co-Mayor Ayhan Bilgen, former deputies S?rr? Süreyya Önder, Ayla Akat Aka, Emine Ayna, Beyza Üstün and Altan Tan, and HDP Foreign Relations Commission member Nazmi Gür. Önder was a member of "?mral? delegation" during Turkey's so-called "peace process" with the PKK—a strategy to use the PKK to strengthen Turkey's hand in Iraq and Syria. The "peace process" continued in fits and starts from 2009 to 2015, before collapsing when Washington made the Kurdish nationalists its main proxy force in Syria.

According to the Prosecutor's Office, those arrested are accused of being leaders of the Kurdistan Workers Party: "An investigation was launched … against the so-called executives of the Kurdistan Workers Party/Kurdistan Communities Union (PKK/KCK) terrorist organizations and some executives and members of the party."

Imprisoned former HDP co-chairs Selahattin Demirta? and Figen Yüksekda? are also part of the investigation. They were in jail since 2016, when Erdo?an's Justice and Development Party (AKP) passed a constitutional amendment stripping HDP deputies of parliamentary immunity, with Republican People's Party (CHP) support.

The Prosecutor's Office continued: "On October 6–8, 2014, in acts of terrorism generally known as the 'Kobani' incidents in our country; the so-called executives, youth organization, women's organization and armed city organization of the PKK/KCK terrorist organization as well as the HDP Central Executive Committee members and co-chairs made several calls to the people to take to the streets and commit acts of violence via social media accounts and some media outlets."

The "Kobani protests" erupted across the country over the Erdo?an government's refusal to aid the Kurdish People's Protection Units (YPG), the Syrian section of KCK, in Kobani during an Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) offensive. During the protests, centred in predominantly Kurdish cities, more than 40 people have killed by police or lost their lives in armed clashes with Islamist militias. However, at the end of the month, the government allowed Iraqi Kurdish peshmerga fighters to cross its territory to reinforce YPG militias—PKK's allies—in Kobani against ISIS.

Simultaneously, police arrested 24 people in several cities in a separate investigation of the "Movement of the Nameless," an anti-government social media protest movement. According to the state-owned Anadolu Agency, they were arrested over "provocative social media posts" that allegedly "incited people into enmity and hatred, degraded state officials and attempted to erode the elected government."

While Gazete RED writer Hakan Gülseven was later released, others remain in custody: they include author Temel Demirer, journalist Zeynep Kuray, attorney Tamer Do?an and Social Freedom Party (TÖP) spokeswoman Perihan Koca.

These two simultaneous operations, while nominally related to separate investigations, come amid mounting social anger among workers against the government's response to the COVID-19 pandemic. In neighbouring Greece, mass protests have erupted against Athens'

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homicidal herd immunity policy towards the disease.

The Erdo?an government's other concern is a potential alliance developing between the bourgeois opposition parties, including the HDP, aiming to oust Erdo?an and replace him with a regime more openly aligned with Washington and the European Union (EU) imperialist powers.

While the EU acquiesced to the Spanish state's crackdown on the Catalan independence referendum in 2017 and its subsequent jailing of Catalan-nationalist politicians, European Commission spokeswoman Ana Pisonero hypocritically denounced Erdo?an's crackdown on the HDP. She said, "We are waiting for a more formal, high level reaction."

CHP's leader Kemal K?l?çdaro?lu has repeatedly declared that "We will come to power together with our friends in the first elections." These "friends" includes not only its far-right electoral ally, the Good Party, but potentially the HDP as well as two recent AKP split-offs, the Future Party of former AKP Prime Minister Ahmet Davuto?lu and the Democracy and Progress Party (DEVA).

While jailed former HDP leader Demirta? has recently called for "broader and more open alliances for democracy, freedom, peace and economic prosperity," the party announced last week that it "has launched a struggle to create an anti-fascist bloc."

Mithat Sancar, current co-chair of the HDP, stated yesterday: "These operations constitute the government's response to our Call to Peace Declaration and to our anti-fascist bloc work."

K?l?çdaro?lu, one of the HDP's potential supposedly "anti-fascist" allies against Erdo?an, called him to state the CHP's "solidarity," declaring: "Such attacks and operations against the opposition are linked to the fact that that government is trapped, whichever way it turns."

Although Davuto?lu was the prime minister in 2014, his newly founded Future Party's spokesperson hypocritically denounced the crackdown on the HDP, stating: "Regardless of our political views, we must stand firm in the face of injustice and cruelty." As for the DEVA, it said that such lawless conduct would only benefit "terror organizations."

However, the AKP government's increased crackdown on the opposition is also bound up with broader conflicts between Ankara and its NATO imperialist allies, especially over the Syrian war.

Last Sunday, Washington's special envoy on Syria, James Jeffrey, visited a US military base in northeastern Syria to oversee unity talks between two rival Syrian Kurdish factions, to carve up a Kurdish "autonomous authority." This would serve as a political façade for a permanent US military occupation of Syria's oil-producing region.

The negotiations involved the Kurdish National Council in Syria (ENKS) and the Kurdish National Unity Parties led by the Democratic Union Party (PYD), the political arm of the YPG. Previously, Ankara accused Washington and Paris, the initiative's two main backers, of aiming to "legitimise the YPG-PKK" and to build a "terror state" in Syria. Ankara has repeatedly invaded Syria in recent years to drive US-backed Kurdish forces from Turkish-Syrian borders.

There is growing speculation that the Turkish government is a preparing new military operation against the Kurdish nationalist forces.

Commenting on this issue, PYD spokesperson Sama Bakdash told Rudaw that Jeffrey said "Turkey should not attack the Eastern Euphrates or any other part that is currently not under its control. If it does, the US will prevent and sanction it, like it didn't in the past." According to the BBC Türkçe, PYD leader Salih Müslim warned: "With the last operation against the HDP, the door to civil war has been opened."

The direct link between war abroad and police-state policies at home shows that democratic rights, including those of the Kurds, cannot be defended without opposing imperialist war. However, bourgeois opposition parties like the CHP and the Kurdish-nationalist parties are deeply tied to imperialism and are as incapable of waging such a struggle as the Erdo?an government itself. The only force capable of undertaking this struggle is the international working class, mobilized and unified on a socialist and internationalist program.

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