

Turkish Trotskyists hold international online meeting on student protests

Our reporters

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The Sosyalist E?itlik (Socialist Equality Group, SEG) and International Youth and Students for Social Equality (IYSSE) in Turkey held an online meeting January 17 titled “Amid the global breakdown of democracy, the way forward for the Bo?aziçi University protests,” to discuss ongoing student protests in the country. It was chaired by Ula? Ate?çi, a leader of the SEG and writer for the *World Socialist Web Site*, and several IYSSE supporters addressed the event.

Most importantly, it was an international meeting—featuring Joseph Kishore, national secretary of the Socialist Equality Party (US), and Peter Schwarz, secretary of the International Committee of the Fourth International (ICFI)—that took place shortly after the attempted fascist coup on January 6 in Washington. The recording of the livestream is available here.

Kishore spoke from Detroit, underlining the global character of the attack on democratic rights, the catastrophic response of the governments to the coronavirus pandemic, falling living standards and rising inequality. He raised the necessity for the international unity of workers and youth all over the world in a common struggle.

In his contribution, Kishore reviewed the situation in the United States over the past two weeks and the details of Trump’s coup attempt. He exposed the reactionary role of Democrats, who are doing everything they can to cover up the extent of the conspiracy.

Kishore explained that the greatest fear of the Democrats is “the emergence of a movement of the working class against Trump’s coup attempt that will develop into a conflict with the entire ruling class and the capitalist system.”

He went on to expose the campaign of Bernie Sanders, who by his orientation to the Democratic Party “represents a type of ‘left’ politics that is universal” and explained that the outcome of his campaign has in fact been “a further shift to the right.”

Exposing the reactionary character of identity politics, which claims that the fundamental social division is not

class, but race and gender, Kishore said: “Racial politics is a particular form of national politics ... It is aimed at dividing workers, pitting one race against another, one nationality against another. It is reactionary and must be opposed relentlessly.”

In his conclusion, Kishore underlined the significance of understanding that “there is deep opposition within the working class of the United States to the entire reactionary framework of American politics.” There are two Americas, he said. “It is not ‘white America’ and ‘black America,’ however. It is the America of Wall Street, the Pentagon, the CIA, the oligarchy, on the one hand, and the America of the working class on the other.”

Emphasizing that “the United States will not descend into fascism without enormous social explosions and opposition,” he concluded his remarks with a strong call: “A new political movement must be built, rooted in the lessons of history and aimed at the conquest of political power by the working class throughout the world and the abolition of the capitalist system.”

The other international speaker, Peter Schwarz, explained the international context of the student protests. Noting that “a coup attempt is taking place in the United States, the so-called leading nation of the Western world, demonstrates that we are dealing with an international development.”

He explained: “Authoritarian or openly fascist rulers were already in power in a number of major countries—Bolsonaro in Brazil, Duterte in the Philippines, Orbán in Hungary, Kaczy?ski in Poland.” This move towards authoritarian forms of rule has already expanded to Western European countries such as Spain, France, Italy and, of course, Germany.

Explaining the rise of far-right and fascist forces in these countries, he asked: “What is the reason for this worldwide shift to the right by the ruling class and the collapse of democracy?” He explained, “The only possible answer is that the crisis of capitalism has developed to such an extent that is no longer compatible with democracy.”

Schwarz also stressed that the pandemic has accelerated

this development: “While two million people died of the coronavirus worldwide, the enrichment of the financial oligarchy continued unchecked.”

He explained that these facts “make clear that the defense of democratic rights, as well as the social rights of the working class, is only possible within the framework of a socialist program that aims to overthrow capitalism and build a socialist society.”

Schwarz made clear that the ICFI’s practice over the past year clearly demonstrated the “strength of its historical foundations and the power of the Marxist method.” From the earliest stages of the pandemic, it warned of the global danger, exposed the conspiracies of the ruling elites, and advanced a program and perspective for the working class to stop the deadly virus. “There is not a single publication in the world whose coverage of the pandemic compares to that of the *World Socialist Web Site*.”

He concluded his remarks by urging the audience to “read the *World Socialist Web Site*, study the history of ICFI and participate in the building of its Turkish section.”

The main feature of the meeting was its international character, in both its participants and perspective, underlining the close collaboration between the ICFI and the SEG in Turkey.

This international and socialist perspective informed the contributions from Turkey. In his opening remarks, Ula? Ate?çi explained the international character of mass protests against antidemocratic measures, police violence and social inequality, especially after the ruling elites’ homicidal response to the pandemic.

Developing under conditions where the global crisis of capitalism has deepened with the pandemic, this movement has shown the social force that students and young people should turn to—the international working class. “Because the working class is the only social force that can defend democratic rights and defeat the ruling class’ drive to dictatorship on the basis of an international and socialist perspective,” Ate?çi said.

He also pointed out that the conditions driving the ruling class to dictatorship and authoritarianism in the US, the center of world capitalism, were not unique to the US, but global.

Under conditions of intensification of the class struggle with the aggravating impact of the pandemic and uncontrollable levels of social inequality and anger, the ruling classes of all countries turn to authoritarian regimes to defend their interests against the overwhelming majority of society, that is, the working class and youth.

It was necessary to place the crisis of the authoritarian political structure under the leadership of President Erdoğan and the developing social protest in this framework.

It is moreover crucial to build an independent political movement of the working class and youth, hostile to the bourgeois opposition led by the Republican People’s Party (CHP) as well as the Kurdish nationalist People’s Democratic Party (HDP), who aim to install a new government more openly aligned with the NATO imperialist powers in the interests of Turkish and Kurdish bourgeoisie.

Ate?çi concluded his remarks by stating that “the way forward for the Bo?aziçi University protests and the student movement in general is to orient politically towards the working class and participate in the struggle for the development of a revolutionary socialist alternative independent of all establishment parties.” This means joining the building of the Socialist Equality Party in Turkey as a section of the International Committee of the Fourth International.

After this introduction, IYSSE supporters from several universities, including Bo?aziçi, Bursa Uluda? and Mersin, spoke out. One of them explained the development of protests at Bo?aziçi University and the perspective advanced by the IYSSE, while others focused on the IYSSE and what it is fighting for.

They referred to campaigns waged by the IYSSE at Humboldt University in Germany, for freedom for WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange, to oppose the imperialist war drive and back-to-school campaign.

During their remarks, the students explained the international socialist basis of the IYSSE, reflecting its orientation to the international working class on the basis of the strategy of world socialist revolution advanced by the ICFI. The meeting was unique in every aspect and represented another significant step in the building of a section of the ICFI in Turkey.



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