Rank-and-File Committee for Safe Education in Turkey supports call for IWA-RFC

Our reporters
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The Rank-and-File Committee for Safe Education in Turkey supports the International Committee of the Fourth International's (ICFI) call for the formation of the International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees (IWA-RFC). At its latest online meeting on Sunday, following the resolution adopted by the Network of Action Committees for Safe Education in Germany, the Committee in Turkey passed the following resolution:

"The Rank-and-File Committee for Safe Education in Turkey supports the ICFI's appeal for the building of an International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees. The murderous pandemic policies pursued by the capitalist class and its governments have led to a catastrophe around the world. Only through independent rank-and-file committees unified internationally can workers coordinate their struggles in various workplaces, industries and countries against these policies and the corporatist trade unions.

"In Turkey, the 'herd immunity' policy implemented by President Recep Tayyip Erdo?an's government in line with the interests of the ruling class since the beginning of the pandemic has officially led to 43,000 deaths. As bourgeois opposition parties and trade unions do not oppose this policy, after the schools reopened for in-person education in March 2021, April became the worst month of the pandemic in Turkey. However, the pandemic can be contained and deaths can be stopped. The only way to put an end to the mass death is the international mobilisation of the working class. We therefore call upon students, parents, educators and other sections of the working class to support the building of the International Workers Alliance."

The meeting of the Rank-and-File Committee for Safe Education was held shortly after a significant workers struggle took place in Istanbul. More than 2,000 electricity workers at Beda? company went on a wildcat strike on April 30 in defiance of an official ban on strike activity in the electricity sector.

It also developed in a fight independently from the pro-company trade union, raising and exposing many important issues on the reactionary character of the trade unions and their pseudo-left supporters. The Istanbul electricity workers' wildcat strike also constituted a vindication of the perspective advanced by the ICFI.

The Rank-and-File Committee for Safe Education also passed the following resolution to support the Beda? workers:

"Beda? workers, who have illuminated Istanbul:

"We are parents, education workers and students who have come together independently from the trade unions, demanding: 'Close schools and nonessential workplaces until the pandemic is contained' in order to stop mass deaths. We support your struggle and express our solidarity with you. Your struggle against the miserable conditions imposed on you by the owners of Beda? and the state behind them and your revolt against the complicity of the pro-company union sets an example and inspires the working class in Turkey and internationally.

"Your struggle is not only a resistance to the social onslaught by the ruling class that has intensified after the pandemic but also a challenge to the official ban on strike activity in the electricity sector. The wildcat strike launched by rank-and-file workers in defiance of the union on April 30 shows how you can gain your social and economic demands, as well as the right to strike. The struggle at Beda? is part of a large number of workers struggles in Turkey against layoffs, forced unpaid leaves and post-pandemic austerity measures.

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But your fight is also part of the struggles of workers all over the world, who are facing similar conditions and the same class enemy due to capitalism.

"The only way forward for all of our struggles is to realize that we are part of this international working class, to unite and mobilise internationally. This is only possible by organizing rank-and-file committees independent of the unions that divide us and prevent our struggles. We urge you to set up an independent rank-and-file committee to take the struggle into your own hands and to take part in the International Workers Alliance of the Rank-and-File Committees."

The last issue discussed at the meeting was the possibility of the schools reopening after May 17, when the Erdo?an government will end its so-called "full lockdown" launched at the end of April. This lockdown includes closing schools to in-person education until this date.

Although the reopening dates have not been determined yet, Health Minister Fahrettin Koca recently said, "We should see [daily] cases drop below 1,000 before schools open."

This statement is a confession that the government is pursuing a policy of social murder. When President Erdo?an announced a "gradual normalisation" process, including school reopenings with in-person teaching across the country at the beginning of March, there were more than 10,000 daily coronavirus cases in Turkey.

As a result of this murderous policy, without any serious objection from unions, the pandemic erupted totally out of control in April, killing 8,000 people in a month. More than 40 teachers have lost their lives since March 2021.

The Rank-and-File Committee for Safe Education in Turkey reaffirmed the need for an independent organisation and mobilisation of the working class to oppose this policy of mass death. It explained in its statement: "Taking urgent measures to prevent further death and suffering depends on the independent intervention of the working class and youth, including educators, from all establishment parties and trade unions."

Under conditions where only 12 percent of the population is fully vaccinated, the overwhelming majority of teachers are not vaccinated, and the pandemic is not under control, the reopening of schools will again mean another massacre.

The Rank-and-File Committee for Safe Education calls on all educators, parents and students who oppose this murderous policy to contact us, to establish rank-and-file committees for safe education and to expand this struggle, which is vital for public health.

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