Far-right mobster Sedat Peker’s accusations shake Turkish government

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24 May 2021

In recent weeks, far-right mobster Sedat Peker has released videos making detailed allegations of ties between the mafia and the Turkish political establishment. It is shaking President Recep Tayyip Erdo?an’s Justice and Development Party (AKP) government, already discredited by its politically criminal record in the COVID-19 pandemic.

Peker began issuing these videos after the AKP launched police raids on April 9 to arrest members of his gang, detaining 52 people. The AKP also issued an Interpol order to arrest Peker, who has lived in Germany and the Balkans and is now reportedly exiled in Dubai. He claims that in his flight from Turkey, he had the blessing of Interior Minister Süleyman Soylu, who briefly offered to resign in April 2020 amid mounting public anger at his ministry’s mishandling of the pandemic.

Social anger is reaching explosive levels among workers, and Peker’s accusations—which are plausible, as he is a high-ranking insider, and the Turkish ruling elite is well known to be hopelessly entangled in official corruption and organized crime—have circulated widely. His videos posted to social media have already received over 50 million views. The liberal *Gazete Duvar* went so far as to promote Peker, claiming that he “seems to have already become an icon of protest.”

In reality, while it is in the nature of operations launched from the criminal underworld that their political origins and goals are initially obscure, one thing is clear: Peker is neither a whistleblower nor speaking as a friend of the working class.

Convicted in 2007 of crimes, including abduction and forgery, and later of “forming an armed terrorist organization” in the 2013 Ergenekon trials, Peker is part of the milieu of fascistic mafia syndicates he claims to be exposing. Moreover, he helped organize NATO operations in the war in Syria and has boasted of close ties to US officials. He is not an opponent of the policy of boosting capitalists’ profits at the expense of lives, by keeping open schools and nonessential workplaces amid the mass spread of the virus.

In his first videos, Peker attacked Mehmet A?ar, who was interior minister in 1996 amid a spate of extrajudicial state murders against the banned Kurdish-nationalist Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK).

A?ar, who still has close ties to the AKP, came under suspicion of ties to drug cartels at that time. Peker claimed A?ar owned five tons of drugs seized while en route from Colombia to Turkey and protected the factory in Izmir, which was to handle the drug shipment. He also alleged that A?ar seized the marina of an Azeri businessman, and that his son, AKP deputy Tolga A?ar, raped a Kyrgyz woman who was later found dead in her home.

Peker’s later videos won a broader hearing by targeting AKP ministers, especially Soylu and Erdo?an’s son-in-law, former Finance Minister Berat Albayrak. Addressing Soylu, Peker said: “Wasn’t it you who gave me my police guard? Wasn’t it you who extended the duty term of the police guard? He is now intimidating me.” He added, “Didn’t you turn me against Mr. [Berat] Albayrak? Didn’t you say, ‘I don’t govern ?stanbul, Berat does. They are preparing a file on Sedat Peker. I will inform you if there is anything dangerous.’”

In what appears to be an attempt to protect Erdo?an, he added: “Everyone knows you are undermining Mr. Erdo?an. … You have surrounded big brother Tayyip, you have cut his contact with the world, saying that the country is growing and all.”

The bourgeois opposition parties, unsurprisingly, have criticized the AKP. Republican People’s Party (CHP) leader Kemal K?l?çdaro?lu accused it of allowing Peker to escape Turkey: “Didn’t they know how guilty Sedat Peker was when he was going abroad? They knew. Did they give him a passport? Yes. Was he sent abroad? Yes.” Mithat Sancar, co-chair of the Kurdish nationalist Peoples’ Democratic Party (HDP), demanded a parliamentary investigation.

The hypocrisy of these criticisms is apparent from the CHP’s alliances with the HDP and the far-right Good Party, a splitoff of the far-right Nationalist Movement Party (MHP)

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linked to the Grey Wolves. Good Party leader Meral Ak?ener briefly called Peker's accusations "dire" and "a complete disgrace." However, Ak?ener served as interior minister from 1996-97 and is a former MHP leader. Indeed, Peker complained in one video that Soylu "made me an enemy of Sister Meral."

What emerges from these accusations, in the aftermath of the historically unprecedented January 6 coup attempt by Donald Trump on the Capitol in Washington D.C., is the universal degradation of capitalist rule. All factions of the bourgeoisie in Turkey, deeply tied to imperialism and hostile to the workers, are connected to far-right mafia circles and incapable of establishing democratic rule. Their political criminality has been starkly exposed by the unanimous hostility of the Turkish bourgeois parties towards a scientific social distancing policy during the pandemic.

To assess the context in which Peker's operation is unfolding, one must recall that NATO recently supported a failed coup in July 2016 aiming to topple and murder Erdo?an in retaliation for the AKP's pursuit of closer economic ties with Moscow and Beijing. Moreover, in December 2019, while he was still running as a presidential candidate, US President Joe Biden provocatively denounced Erdo?an as an "autocrat" and pledged to seek his ouster.

While Biden felt compelled to publicly deny that he was calling for a coup, he nonetheless made his views clear. Biden called for "a very different approach to [Erdo?an] now, making it clear that we support opposition leadership. … He has to pay a price." Biden called on opposition parties "to be able to take on and defeat Erdo?an. Not by a coup, not by a coup, but by the electoral process."

In this context, it is significant that Soylu, currently the main target of Peker's videos, defended Erdo?an and denounced Washington during the 2016 coup. Soylu, who was labor minister at the time, publicly declared: "The United States is behind the coup." A month later, Erdo?an named Soylu interior minister to run Turkey's internal police machine.

Soylu has responded to Peker's videos by bitterly denouncing them as a political operation. "For months, I had been expecting that such a scenario would come to pass. This mafia jerk, who is operations personnel in the hands of certain individuals, has hurt so many people with threats and blackmail in this country." He called on Peker to return to Turkey to face prosecution.

He also attacked the bourgeois opposition, addressing Peker and saying, "You have an elder brother like Kemal K?l?çdaro?lu, anyhow." Soylu also alleged, implausibly, that the PKK supports Peker, a member of criminal far-right networks with a long record of violence against the Kurds.

Soylu is a widely hated right-wing figure, but the allegation that Peker is linked to NATO intelligence operations is no less credible than Peker's own allegations.

Peker has made no secret of his ties to Washington. In 2015, he helped the AKP send supplies to Islamist Free Syrian Army (FSA) "rebels" in Syria. He boasts of this in his videos, showing his handwritten notes recording "weapons sent to Syria." In October 2016, shortly after the failed NATO-backed coup against Erdo?an, Peker said, "In the early 2000s, I had a formal meeting with US embassy officers, CIA and DEA agents in the royal office of the Swiss Hotel" in Istanbul.

The precise relation between Peker's videos and the NATO powers' foreign policy operations remains unclear, however, particularly as his violent hostility to Kurdish nationalism somewhat cuts across US foreign policy, which has used Kurdish nationalist militias as proxies in Syria and Iraq. After the 2016 coup, he also helped the Turkish government send supplies to FSA forces while they were fighting US-backed Kurdish forces in northern Syria.

In 2016, Peker was acquitted in a trial for threatening the "Academics for Peace" coalition, who circulated statements opposing Turkish military operations against the PKK. Peker publicly told the group, which had over 1,000 members, "We will shed your blood and swim in it!"

Whatever uses the various imperialist or capitalist factions will seek to make of Peker's allegations, the decisive question is the independent and international mobilization of the working class. Only this force can impose a rational, scientifically guided policy against the COVID-19 pandemic and oppose the bloody legacy of imperialist wars and intrigue in the Middle East based on the unification of the working class in revolutionary struggle on a socialist program.

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