

Amid xenophobic campaign, far-right mob attacks Syrian refugees in Turkey

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A far-right mob of hundreds of people took to the streets of Alt?nda? district in Ankara on Wednesday night, chanting anti-Syrian slogans. They threw stones at the homes of Syrian refugees while some shops were also ransacked, and some cars burnt. This fascistic onslaught is a serious warning to workers in Turkey and all over the world.

The violence came after 18-year-old Emirhan Yalç?n was reportedly stabbed to death in a knife fight with a group of refugees earlier that day. Two foreign nationals accused of “intentional homicide” had been arrested.

Ankara police said a total of 148 suspects were taken into custody on Thursday and Friday, suspected either of being involved in the attacks or of sharing provocative social media postings. However, many videos were shared on social media showing that the police did not interfere with the attackers during the violence.

The eruption of far-right attacks targeting immigrants and refugees is a result of the xenophobic sentiment incited by all the representatives of the Turkish ruling class, especially by the bourgeois opposition led by the Kemalist Republican People’s Party (CHP) and its far-right ally, the Good Party.

The attack came shortly after Bolu Mayor Tanju Özcan escalated his appeals to xenophobia, launching a far-right social media campaign targeting Syrians and Afghans. He announced that the water bill of foreign nationals, i.e., Syrians and Afghans in the city, will be increased tenfold.

After the attack, CHP leader Kemal K?l?çdarolu hypocritically warned against provocative actions: “I can see where this is going. I won’t allow the palace government to set the country on fire. We will solve this refugee problem; and of course, we will do it with

common sense.”

However, K?l?çdarolu himself was recently blaming Syrian refugees for economic difficulties, saying: “There are serious complaints. People who can’t make ends meet and are unemployed complain about Syrians, and we may face much more serious dilemmas in the coming period as a society. We have to solve this problem.” In fact, their proposed solution is mass deportation.

Ankara Metropolitan Municipality Mayor Mansur Yava? made a statement after the events, stating that “I hope that the authorities will create an emergency action plan and ensure the return of the guests before this problem becomes uncontrollable.” Having origins from fascistic Nationalist Movement Party (MHP), he was elected from the CHP with the support of pseudo-left parties as a “progressive” alternative to President Recep Tayyip Erdo?an’s Justice and Development Party (AKP) in the last local elections.

Only a few weeks ago, the *World Socialist Web Site* drew attention to this danger and warned of potential attacks: “This xenophobic lynch-mob atmosphere, especially incited by pro-bourgeois opposition parties and media, paves the way for fascistic attacks not only against refugees but against the entire working class.”

A recent study conducted by Aksoy Research exposed the criminal role played by the bourgeois opposition parties in inciting xenophobic and chauvinist sentiments. When asked, “If you were the president, what would you rather do about the Syrians?,” 50 percent of CHP voters and 42 percent of Good Party voters replied: “I will send them back to their country, even if it is forcibly.”

These rates are well above the answers given by voters of the ruling AKP (27 percent), the fascistic MHP voters (29 percent) and the average in Turkey (35

percent).

The bourgeois opposition parties are attacking the government from the right and creating a xenophobic atmosphere especially after Taliban seized large parts of Afghanistan following the US military withdrawal.

The so-called “Artists’ Initiative,” formed by people associated with the CHP and pseudo-left parties such as Left Party (former Freedom and Solidarity Party, ÖDP) and the Stalinist Turkish Communist Party (TKP), recently issued a statement ostensibly criticizing government policies, but in fact targeting Afghan refugees fleeing decades of imperialist aggression and social destruction.

Reflecting fears and interests of affluent upper middle class layers completely indifferent and hostile towards the plight of migrant workers, the statement declared: “Another disaster we are now seeing is the groups of young men that are coming in waves, especially through Afghanistan.” It continued: “It is openly expressed by those who are concerned about the future of our country that this illegal immigration phenomenon is a preparation to form a possible militia against the secular, democratic, patriotic citizens of our country and the vast majority of our population.”

These developments vindicate the warnings made by the *World Socialist Web Site* over the reactionary character of the bourgeois opposition parties and their pseudo-left allies in Turkey.

The Erdoğan government, which is equally hostile to immigrants and workers, faces growing economic, social and political crises deepened by the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as disasters such as floods and wildfires. In the face of increasing social anger among workers, it calls for restraint with a phony religious and humanitarian rhetoric. On the other hand, it continues its anti-immigrant policies to divide the working class and divert the social opposition.

In an operation carried out by the police in Istanbul on August 7, 196 Afghan, Pakistani and Syrian migrant workers working in recycling and waste collection were caught and transferred to the Removal Center for deportation.

The Turkish government is also building a wall on its Iranian border, in line with the policies of Fortress Europe and the US construction of a border wall with Mexico.

Moreover, Ankara aims to use refugees as a

bargaining chip in its negotiations with the NATO powers. A rotten deal between the EU, Turkey and Greece in March 2016 established Greece as the EU’s jailer of refugees and obliged the Erdoğan regime to ensure that refugees from the war zones in Syria, Iraq and Afghanistan do not make their way to Europe.

The agreement mandates that all refugees entering Greece via “irregular” routes—that is, those making the dangerous journey via boat from Turkey to Greece—will be deported back to Turkey. On these “irregular” routes, many lose their lives trying to reach the shores of Greece by crossing the Aegean Sea in makeshift boats, or while entering Turkey from Iran from Lake Van.

The nearly 5 million refugees and immigrants in Turkey, including at least 3.5 million Syrian refugees and hundreds of thousands of Afghans, represent a significant fraction of the 80 million refugees fleeing war and poverty worldwide.

The fight against imperialist occupation and for the defense of refugees and democratic rights is inseparable from the unification of the oppressed masses of the Middle East and Central Asia, led by the working class in a common struggle for socialism. Borders must be opened, and immigrants allowed to study, live and work as they please with full democratic rights, including citizenship. It requires the building of a revolutionary leadership in the working class, i.e., the Socialist Equality Party as the Turkish section of the International Committee of the Fourth International (ICFI).



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