

Turkish security forces fire on migrants, killing a child and wounding 12

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Turkish Gendarmerie forces opened fire on a vehicle carrying migrants in the eastern city of Van on the Iranian border, killing a child and wounding 12 other immigrants. The entire political and media establishment has been relentlessly waging an anti-refugee campaign and bears political responsibility for this incident. It occurred shortly after the massacre of at least 37 migrants by security forces on the Spanish-Moroccan border.

On July 3, gendarmerie teams carrying out a road check in Van's Saray district on the Iranian border opened fire at a van that allegedly disobeyed a "stop" warning. The driver of the van fled the scene, but *Gazete Duvar* reported that four of the 12 wounded are in serious condition and one of the deceased was a child, aged four. According to the Van Governorate's statement, all of the wounded were lightly wounded.

In its statement, the Van Governorate said: "In order to stop the vehicle whose driver did not obey the 'stop' warning and drove towards the Gendarmerie personnel, shots were fired at the tires of the vehicle." However, photographs taken after the incident show numerous bullet marks on the rear of the vehicle.

The governorate also claimed that the death and injuries were caused by "ricocheting" bullets, alleging: "It was determined that the vehicle was used in migrant smuggling and there were 40 irregular migrants inside. Unfortunately, one migrant unfortunately lost his/her life and 12 irregular migrants were slightly injured due to ricocheting bullets."

Before that, on July 1, 35 refugees escaped from a refugee camp in the Cevdetiye district of Osmaniye, a southern city. A fascistic mob rapidly formed alongside the deployment of large numbers of gendarmerie personnel to catch them. This underscores that the anti-refugee propaganda which has long been carried out by

bourgeois politicians and the media establishment has reached an extremely dangerous level.

Many recent similar incidents make clear that refugee camps in Turkey are no different from prisons. Recently, in a camp for 30,000 refugees in the southern city of Adana's Sar?çam district, a group of refugees marched to protest poor food. On June 15, hundreds of refugees protested in a refugee camp in the Kapuçam district of Kahramanmara?. The demonstrators were dispersed by police.

These events were almost completely ignored by the bourgeois political establishment and media. For decades, the Turkish ruling class and its media have supported US-led imperialist wars and regime-change operations in Iraq, Afghanistan, Syria, and beyond. Entire societies have been devastated by these criminal wars, with tens of millions of people displaced.

While millions of people from Central Asia, the Middle East and North Africa try to reach Europe in the hope of finding refuge, the European Union's (EU) "Fortress Europe" policy has turned the Mediterranean into a refugee graveyard. President Recep Tayyip Erdo?an's government, together with Greece, has taken on the task of protecting Europe's borders from refugees.

Ankara's dirty deal with the EU to keep refugees out of Europe has turned Turkey into a massive refugee prison. According to President Erdo?an's statement in December 2021, there were around 5 million refugees in Turkey. According to a report by the Refugees Association, as of June 23, the number of Syrians in Turkey is 3,684,488.

The Erdo?an government and the entire ruling class face a deepening economic, social and political crisis amid the COVID-19 pandemic and NATO's war against Russia in Ukraine. While official annual

inflation in Turkey has reached 78 percent, according to the independent Inflation Research Group (ENAG), real annual inflation has reached 175 percent. With 90 percent of the population estimated to be living below the poverty line, social inequality is wider than ever as the government pursues policies in favour of the bourgeoisie in the pandemic.

This year, as a wave of wildcat strikes by workers spreads across many industries, the political and media establishment are responding to growing social anger and working class militancy with a chauvinist anti-refugee campaign. This campaign, which aims to divide and confuse workers, turns defenceless refugees into scapegoats, while all the establishment parties commit to preventing asylum seekers from coming to Turkey and to returning refugees to their countries of origin.

Boasting that they had repatriated half a million Syrians since 2016, Erdoğan announced in May that they would send 1 million more Syrian refugees back. He said, “We are preparing a new project that will ensure the voluntary return of 1 million Syrian brothers and sisters we host in our country. We will implement this project with the support of our country and international non-governmental organizations.”

The bourgeois opposition Republican People’s Party (CHP) and its allies, including the far-right Good Party, backed by the pseudo-left parties, have criticized the government’s actions from the right. They attack the government’s efforts to block the refugees as “insufficient.” CHP leader Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu said of Erdoğan’s plan to send back one million Syrian refugees: “Come off it! There are still flows of fugitives coming from the border. We will send the rest back in two years, and we are all fed up with your fake projects.”

The most prominent party in the anti-refugee campaign, however, has been the Victory Party (Zafer Partisi). Founded by Ümit Özdağ, a former Good Party member, this middle class party brands refugees as Turkey’s main problem and hysterically campaigns for their deportation.

On June 27, Özdağ announced that he would visit Reyhanlı, a town in Hatay bordering Syria, to plant a land mine on the border, and pledged to plant more mines after coming to power. While Özdağ was prevented from entering the city by the Hatay Governorate, no one thought to ask where and how this

fascistic politician had found a land mine.

As a result of this reactionary campaign by the entire political and media establishment, fascistic attacks against refugees in Turkey are on the rise. Three Syrian refugees were burned to death in Izmir last November, and a far-right mob raided a Syrian neighbourhood in Ankara in August. After a quarrel between Syrian refugees and Turkish citizens broke out in Adana last May, attacks were reportedly carried out on Syrians’ homes; four people were injured.

These and many other attacks are a serious warning to the working class as a whole. The fascistic mobs that today, with the encouragement of the ruling class, target defenceless refugees will in the coming period target workers who go on strike or organize protests for decent wages, better social conditions, and democratic rights.

The way forward against the growing far-right and anti-refugee campaign is through the struggle for the international socialist unity of the working class, rejecting all forms of chauvinism and nationalism, and fighting against imperialist war.



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