

Workers' Party of Turkey's Erkan Ba?'s call for a "Peace Accord": A middle class delusion

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On Monday night, pseudo-left Workers' Party of Turkey (T?P) Chairman and Istanbul MP Erkan Ba? called for a "Peace Accord" on Twitter. This call, in fact, is designed to direct the growing social opposition against the cost of living and war behind pro-imperialist establishment parties.

A call for "peace" against Ankara's war policies in Syria and Iraq has real meaning only insofar as it addresses the international working class on the basis of a socialist program and opposes President Recep Tayyip Erdo?an's government as well as the bourgeois opposition and the imperialist war as a whole. However, both the Nation Alliance led by the Kemalist Republican People's Party (CHP), which the T?P has supported, and the Labour and Freedom Alliance led by the Kurdish nationalist Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP), of which the T?P is a part, are both essentially pro-imperialist and pro-war.

Ba?'s statement, which ignores the objective class foundations of war in the era of imperialism and spreads the illusion of a lasting "peace" under capitalism, is a middle-class delusion that misleads the masses of workers and youth. Ba?'s call came after President Erdo?an reiterated his willingness to soon launch a ground invasion in Syria in a chauvinist and militarist speech.

The Erdo?an government blamed the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) and the People's Protection Units (YPG) for the November 13 bomb attack in Istanbul, which killed six civilians, and launched air strikes starting November 20 against Kurdish militias in northern Syria and Iraq. Kurdish nationalist forces, however, rejected Ankara's claim, arguing that the Istanbul attack was a provocation aimed at creating a pretext for military action against them.

"We understand very well the messages sent by such attacks and we are responding to them on the ground," Erdo?an said on Monday. He was referring to the US and other NATO allies who support the YPG. Previously, Interior Minister Süleyman Soyly had also suggested that the US was responsible for the terrorist attack in Istanbul.

"Let no one be disturbed by Turkey's military operations aimed at expanding the circle of security and peace," Erdo?an

declared in the same speech. By "circle of security and peace" he meant the illegal Turkish military presence that the Syrian and Iraqi governments have denounced as an "occupation," demanding that Turkey withdraw. Ankara, together with its Islamist jihadist proxies, has seized several areas and established its own administrative structure in parts of northern Syria to block the emergence of a Kurdish enclave led by the YPG.

Whatever Erdogan's empty and demagogic "anti-imperialist" rhetoric, Ankara's military actions in Syria and Iraq are neither about "fighting terrorism" nor about creating a so-called "circle of security and peace." In fact, it has been a critical ally of the US-led NATO alliance in the Middle East, complicit in the imperialist-backed proxy war aiming to topple Russian-backed Syrian President Bashar al-Assad.

These military operations are a by-product of the thirty-year imperialist war of plunder in the Middle East and, in essence, serve the interests of the Turkish bourgeoisie. They threaten to unleash a wider war and turn hundreds of thousands of civilians into refugees. Socialists must oppose the reactionary war policies of Turkey or other regional powers, just as they oppose imperialist war, from the point of view of the international working class.

However, Erkan Ba?'s call for "peace" does not appeal to anti-war sentiment in the Turkish, Middle Eastern and international working class, but mainly to right-wing bourgeois opposition parties.

"Those who say 'Erdo?an can wage war if necessary in order not to lose power' are lining up behind Erdo?an and his war policy. We will not fall into this trap. We must not fall into this trap," Ba? declared, referring here to the Nation Alliance led by the CHP. The T?P and other pseudo-left forces have already called to support its presidential candidate as an "alternative" to the People's Alliance of Erdo?an's Islamist Justice and Development Party (AKP) and the fascistic Nationalist Movement Party (MHP) in the 2023 presidential elections.

While they have promoted this alliance as a "lesser evil," the CHP, and its far-right ally, Good Party, have declared their support for Erdo?an's recent war efforts in Syria and Iraq,

which began on November 20. For the CHP and its allies, this is not an error or a case of “falling into a trap” laid by the government. Rather, these parties are acting in continuity with their political traditions.

The CHP, the founding party of the Turkish Republic, has institutionalized and maintained for decades the oppression of the Kurdish people, denying their basic democratic rights. The Good Party, which broke away from the far-right MHP, is rooted in the worst traditions of Turkish chauvinism and dirty wars on the Kurds. Both support Turkish military operations in Syria and Iraq in the name of the “fight against terrorism” and make clear to their backers in the Turkish bourgeoisie that they intend to continue Erdoğan’s wars if they come to power.

“We will wonder why the wealth of this country is being spent on war and the AKP’s adventures in other countries. We will want to know why the governments prefer war instead of solutions,” Ba? wrote, before declaring: “Turkey’s foreign policy should be restructured without taking the example of expansionist powers like NATO or Russia and return to a peaceful foreign policy approach.”

In fact, these remarks, which present war as the arbitrary choice of a government or a political leader, in this case the AKP government and Erdoğan, aim to whitewash the ruling class and the entire bourgeois political establishment, including the Nation Alliance, and to conceal the objective source of war in the capitalist system. Moreover, only a petty-bourgeois nationalist, not a socialist internationalist, can argue that calling for a “peaceful foreign policy” for their “own” bourgeois government would create a “solution” when the world is on the brink of a nuclear war that threatens all humanity.

Ankara’s war against the Kurdish nationalist forces in Syria and Iraq has developed as part of the decades-long imperialist wars waged by the US-led NATO powers after the Stalinist dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991. These wars led to the deaths of millions of people and millions more becoming refugees.

In these thirty years, including the period before the AKP took power, both the Turkish and Kurdish bourgeoisie and their political representatives have been and still are complicit with the imperialist powers in the Middle East. Therefore, opposing Ankara’s war policies means not only exposing the reactionary character of the Kurdish nationalist movement, which has become a proxy force of imperialism. It also requires opposing NATO’s imperialist wars in the Middle East and, one must add, in Ukraine with a revolutionary socialist program.

“We can only change the fate of the Middle East and our country, which have turned into a bloodbath due to the division struggles in the region provoked by the imperialists and expansionist regional actors for more than a hundred years, by saying PEACE together and with a stronger voice,” Ba? claims. In reality, this is a deliberate middle-class deception.

In 1916, in the midst of the carnage of World War I, the great Russian revolutionary Vladimir Lenin wrote against such

deceptions:

... our “peace programme” must explain that the imperialist Powers and the imperialist bourgeoisie *cannot* grant a democratic peace. Such a peace *must* be sought and fought for, not in the *past*, *not* in a reactionary utopia of a non-imperialist capitalism, nor in a league of equal nations *under* capitalism, but *in the future*, in the socialist revolution of the proletariat. [“The Peace Programme “]

In the same place Lenin made it clear that the struggle against imperialist war cannot be separated from the struggle for socialist revolution: “Whoever promises the nations a ‘democratic’ peace without at the same time preaching the socialist revolution, or while repudiating the struggle for it—the struggle which must be carried on now, during the war—is deceiving the proletariat.”

It was the 1917 revolution of the Russian working class, armed and guided with this revolutionary program of the Bolsheviks under the leadership of Lenin and Leon Trotsky, which ended World War I and raised the possibility for a lasting peace through a struggle to overthrow the imperialist system worldwide.

Today, as then, the Russian Revolution and the revolutionary internationalist program that guided it point the way forward. As the International Youth and Students for Social Equality (IYSSE), the youth organization of the International Committee of the Fourth International (ICFI), explained in the statement calling for building a mass global youth movement against the US-NATO proxy war in Ukraine and the threat of a nuclear World War III,

Just as it was the Russian Revolution, the greatest intervention of the working class in world history, that brought an end to the first global carnage of World War I, it will be the intervention of the international working class that will today stop the escalation toward World War III.

We call on all workers and youth who want to wage a genuinely revolutionary struggle against the war to follow the IYSSE’s webinar on December 10 and join us in the struggle for a socialist future.



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