

Speech to the December 10 IYSSE anti-war rally

## The impact of 30 years of imperialist war on the Middle East and Central Asia

Harun Akin

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*The following are the remarks by Harun Akin to the December 10 rally, “For a Mass Movement of Students and Youth to Stop the War in Ukraine!” organized by the International Youth and Students for Social Equality.*

*Akin is a member of the IYSSE in Turkey. For more information on joining the IYSSE, visit [iysse.com](http://iysse.com).*

I address you today from Istanbul, just a few hundred kilometers southwest of Ukraine.

In Turkey, the majority of the population is against the war in Ukraine. Having witnessed decades of uninterrupted war and massacres in the surrounding region, from the Balkans to the Middle East and the Caucasus, workers here oppose any further needless suffering and death.

As in other NATO states, the masses of workers and youth in Turkey are suffering from the mounting cost of living, increased exploitation and poverty, and a lack of a future.

One out of every three young people aged 15-24 is unemployed. According to a survey, two thirds of young people in the same age group “do not see a good future” for the country. Young people do not want war, but decent jobs and a secure and hopeful future. But this requires a conscious struggle against war and its source, the capitalist system.

The NATO powers, using the Ukrainian people as cannon fodder to advance their imperialist interests in Eurasia, especially against Russia and China, claim that this war is about “the right of the Ukrainians to self-determination.”

In reality, the Ukrainian working masses, who have deep-rooted fraternal ties with the Russian working class, did not want this catastrophe for the sake of

joining NATO and becoming a vassal state of the US. It was the US-led imperialist powers and the Ukrainian oligarchy that wanted this.

Moreover, there is not a single government in the region, including Ukraine itself and, it must be added, Turkey, which does not oppress its national minorities and deny them basic democratic rights.

One of the clearest examples of the imperialist and capitalist powers’ hypocrisy and dishonesty on the issue of the democratic rights of national minorities is the plight of the Palestinian people, who have been subjected to uninterrupted oppression by the Zionist Israeli regime for decades.

We stand in solidarity with the Ukrainian masses who are not responsible for the crimes of their own government. But we do not close our eyes to the situation of the Palestinians or other oppressed peoples.

Who are the allies and friends of tens of millions of workers and youth from the Balkans to the Black Sea, the Caucasus and the Mediterranean? Is it US and European imperialism, which have ravaged this entire region for over 100 years in pursuit of their geopolitical goals, and which today threaten the whole world with a nuclear conflict?

Or is it the reactionary capitalist regimes in Turkey, Russia, Egypt or Saudi Arabia that are subordinate to this imperialist system and advance the interests of their own ruling classes?

Of course not! All of these regimes are the implacable enemies of the international working class and youth.

These powers, with the exception of Russia, have been complicit in the destruction of this region by US imperialism since the first Gulf War. Thirty years of imperialist interventions and wars for regime change,

from Yugoslavia to Iraq, Syria, Libya and Yemen, have left millions dead and tens of millions displaced.

Workers and young people, victims of the largest refugee crisis since the end of World War II, are being scapegoated by the same ruling elites who drove them to disaster. When they set out for Europe in the hope of a better future, they are either sent to their deaths in the Mediterranean and the Aegean Sea or locked up in detention camps in North Africa and Greece.

The IYSSE fights to unite all workers, including migrants, in a common revolutionary struggle. In this fight, we defend the equal rights of all, including the right to citizenship.

The war in Ukraine is creating an unprecedented crisis, drawing many countries into the maelstrom of conflict. The rivalries and border disputes between many states in the Black Sea, the Mediterranean and the Caucasus, have created the real risk of regional wars that threaten to take on a global dimension.

In the Caucasus, the Armenia-Azerbaijan conflict, one of the bitter consequences of the dissolution of the USSR, is flaring up once again.

In the eastern Mediterranean, deep-rooted historical conflicts, exacerbated by the war in Ukraine and the struggle to control hydrocarbon resources, are moving NATO allies Turkey and Greece towards a direct armed conflict.

Greece has become an important supply base in NATO's proxy war with Russia and has expanded its military in recent years. Turkey, which is playing the role of a mediator between Russia and Ukraine due to its strong economic and political ties with both, sees the strengthening of Athens as a threat to itself.

The Turkish and Greek governments, both facing a deepening economic, social and political crisis, might resort to war to defend the reactionary geopolitical interests of their own ruling classes and to suppress the working class at home. This serious danger can only be stopped by a unified revolutionary intervention of the workers in Turkey and Greece.

It must be emphasized that Turkish President Erdoğan's attempt to mediate in Ukraine has nothing to do with "pacifism," nor with a genuine opposition to NATO and war. He is merely aware that the disastrous consequences of NATO's war against Russia will bring more harm than good to the Turkish bourgeoisie.

Both the Erdoğan government and the Turkish

bourgeois opposition, backed by various pseudo-left forces, are not only threatening to provoke a war by invading Greek islands in the Aegean Sea. They are also preparing for a new ground invasion in Syria and Iraq with disastrous consequences for the masses, especially the Kurds.

The fact that there are Kurdish nationalist forces, Turkish military forces, Syrian troops, as well as American, Russian and Iranian troops in Syria, points to the danger that a regional conflict could quickly ignite a global conflagration.

The Kurdish question, a fundamental democratic problem that the Turkish bourgeoisie has proved incapable of solving for a century, has taken on an international and explosive character after 30 years of imperialist war in the Middle East.

While opposing in principle the reactionary war policies of the Turkish ruling elite and any form of national oppression, we underline that no political support can be given to the Kurdish nationalist movements that have become proxy forces of imperialism. Both the Turkish and Kurdish bourgeoisie are accomplices of the imperialist powers and enemies of the democratic aspirations of the masses.

A peaceful and democratic society based on social equality, which is the aspiration of all the peoples of the region, requires an international revolutionary unification of workers, youth and the oppressed masses against imperialist war and all capitalist powers.

The only progressive solution to the conflicts in the Balkans, the Middle East and the former Soviet republics is through the mass mobilization of the working class, with the goal of a socialist federation that will abolish all borders.

The IYSSE calls on all young people and workers throughout this region who agree with this perspective to join us in the struggle against war and for a socialist future.



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