

Former leader of the Turkish Grey Wolves assassinated

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Sinan Ate?, former chairman of the Turkish Grey Wolves or Ülkü Ocaklar? paramilitary group of the fascistic Nationalist Movement Party (MHP) and a faculty member at Hacettepe University, was murdered in an armed attack in the heart of Ankara on December 30.

Ate?, who became the leader of Grey Wolves on the orders of MHP leader Devlet Bahçeli in 2019, was among those who remained loyal to Bahçeli during the establishment of the Good Party after the split in the MHP in 2017. Ate? resigned as chairman on April 2020, however, on the instruction of Bahçeli, and started working at Hacettepe University in Ankara.

Although it was claimed that Ate? had to leave the post due to differences of opinion, he had expressed his loyalty to the far-right leader in his resignation statement on Twitter, stating, “The General Presidency of the Grey Wolves will be the most sacred title I will carry for the rest of my life. As long as I live, I will be at the command of my leader Mr. Devlet Bahçeli and my cause.”

In the days following the murder, around a dozen people were detained, including the alleged instigator Do?ukan Çep, a fascist mafia leader nicknamed “Dodo,” an MHP Istanbul provincial executive and two special operations police officers. Çep had been wanted for years due to his conviction for the 2013 shooting death of leftist youth Hasan Ferit Gedik during an anti-drug demonstration in Istanbul.

Meanwhile, Gizem Memio?lu, a former head of the MHP's women's branch in Ta?köprü district of Kastamonu, was found dead in her home last week, although it is not yet known whether this is linked to Ate?'s murder. Memio?lu had resigned from her post in December 2021.

The reports raise the question of the role of the MHP

and elements within the state in the Ate? murder. Two assassins on motorcycles were reportedly transferred from Istanbul to Ankara in a vehicle accompanied by special operation officers. It is also reported that a suspect was detained from a house where an MHP deputy was present and was later released. The alleged shooter in the murder is still at large.

Last March, Ça?r? Ünel, the former leader of the Grey Wolves in Mersin, responded to an assault by a group by opening fire, killing two people, allegedly MHP members. Ünel is considered one of the names close to Ate?.

On his social media account, Yavuz Selim Demira? from the Good Party-affiliated daily *Yeniça?* wrote, “The Sinan Ate? assassination is a political murder. The instigators used this criminal gang as a subcontractor. They may try to pass it off as a [common] judicial case. We must take the allegations of intense pressure on the police seriously.”

According to Demira?, Ate? was popular in far-right circles and was seen as a possible successor of Bahçeli as leader of the MHP.

Before his murder, Ate? made political visits, which led to a backlash from the Grey Wolves. He visited governorships, police departments, municipalities, sheikhs, tribal leaders and prominent fascists across the country. Shortly before his death, he wrote on social media from I?d?r, on the eastern border of the country, “I had sent you greetings from the southernmost and northernmost parts of Turkey. Now I send you greetings from the easternmost part of Turkey, i.e. I?d?r.”

There are various speculations about events that led to Ate?'s murder. Some claim that Ate? was building a faction within the party against Bahçeli. Others claim he had recently become close to the Good Party, while

some elements, especially within the MHP, are spreading allegations that he was linked to Islamic preacher Fethullah Gulen in the US, who Ankara claims led the putschist officers in the NATO-backed 2016 attempted coup against Erdoğan. What is certain is that the suspects arrested after Ateş's murder are related with the MHP and related fascist mafia gangs.

This raises the possibility that Ateş may have been killed in a power struggle within the MHP. The funeral was attended by thousands of people and representatives from the Good Party as well as Erdoğan's Justice and Development Party (AKP), with which the MHP is allied. However, no one representing the MHP, of which Ateş was a member, attended the funeral. Remarkably, neither the MHP nor the Grey Wolves made a statement on the murder.

In addition to his possible goal of becoming leader of the MHP, his friendship with the prominent figures of the Good Party, which is reflected on social media, also points to his growing conflict with the MHP leadership.

The MHP, an ally of the Erdoğan government, and the Good Party, part of the bourgeois opposition bloc led by the Kemalist Republican People's Party (CHP), have a long and filthy record of political assassinations. Since the late 1960s, the ultra-nationalist fascists have functioned as a paramilitary force auxiliary to the state. They are responsible for countless assaults on striking workers and protesting students, the murder of journalists, and numerous attacks and massacres of leftists, Alevis and Kurds.

In 2017, the Good Party emerged as another mouthpiece of sections of the ruling class unhappy with the MHP's increasing integration into the AKP government and Ankara's growing conflicts with the US-led NATO allies. The faction led by Meral Akşener, who founded the Good Party, tried for a long time to convene an extraordinary congress within the MHP, but their attempts failed. It then severed ties with the MHP leadership after the NATO-backed 2016 coup attempt, when the MHP entered into an open alliance with the AKP, and especially during the April 16, 2017 presidential referendum.

In the run-up to the June 2023 presidential and parliamentary elections, the Erdoğan government, which has been in power for 20 years, has lost credibility due to rising social inequality and the cost of living, as well as its "profit against public health"

response to the pandemic. It is very close to losing power in the elections.

In this context, an internal power struggle by the MHP, a partner of the AKP-led People's Alliance, would be undesirable for the Erdoğan government. Polls show that the MHP's potential vote is around only 7 percent. However, its support is critical for Erdoğan to have a chance in the presidential election. A connection of the murder to the MHP leadership, if it were to be established, would pose serious problems for the People's Alliance.

Indeed, through its control over the police and the judiciary, the Erdoğan government is seeking to treat this as a simple case of murder and close it down. The operation on the Ateş assassination is being carried out not by the organized crime bureau, but by the homicide bureau of the Ankara Police Department, even though it is clearly a political murder. Interior Minister Süleyman Soylu and Justice Minister Bekir Bozdağ did not make a statement for days about this assassination in the heart of Ankara.

This official indifference to the murder of a fascist politician should be taken as a warning by working people. Amid growing political crisis and emerging class battles ahead of the elections, far right and fascist elements linked to the state, whatever their internal conflicts, are a deadly threat to the working class and the Kurdish people.



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