Turkish bourgeois opposition names K?l?çdaro?lu presidential candidate amid earthquake disaster

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As Turkey goes to the elections amid the earthquake disaster, the bourgeois opposition coalition named "Nation Alliance" (Table of Six) has chosen Republican People's Party (CHP) leader Kemal K?l?çdaro?lu as President Recep Tayyip Erdo?an's opponent in the presidential elections.

After the cabinet meeting on Monday, Erdo?an announced they would take "an election decision on Friday, March 10, based on the authority granted by the Constitution" to hold presidential and parliamentary elections. The proposed date is May 14. Although Erdo?an had already announced his candidacy, he is in fact constitutionally barred from seeking a third term in office.

While the bourgeois and pseudo-left parties are starting to focus on the election agenda, millions are still grappling with the disastrous consequences of the earthquake, and the devastation caused by the government's failure to enforce safety regulations despite scientists' warnings.

After the devastating February 6 earthquakes in Turkey and Syria centered in Kahramanmaras, the total death toll in the two countries has reached 55,000. The real toll is thought to be over 150,000. This historic disaster, which directly affected tens of millions of people, came on top of a deepening cost of living crisis and growing class struggles in Turkey and internationally.

In Turkey, where real annual inflation has long been above 100 percent, and nearly 90 percent of the population lives below the poverty line, class tensions have intensified in the wake of the recent earthquake disaster. All factions of the ruling class agree that a social explosion must be prevented or suppressed at all costs.

K?l?çdaro?lu's candidacy comes in this context, after a political crisis brought his "Nation Alliance" to the brink of disintegration. At a meeting last week, members of the six-party alliance, with the exception of the far-right Good Party, agreed that the leader of the CHP, the largest party in the alliance, should be its presidential candidate.

Good Party leader Meral Ak?ener left the table demanding the Nation Alliance run Ekrem ?mamo?lu or Mansur Yava?, the candidates who won the 2019 local elections in Istanbul and Ankara, defeating candidates of Erdo?an's Justice and Development Party (AKP). CHP Istanbul Mayor ?mamo?lu and Ankara Mayor Yava? rejected Ak?ener's call, however, supporting K?l?çdaro?lu's candidacy. In 2019, both ?mamo?lu and Yava? had been backed by the main pseudo-left parties.

After closed-door negotiations, an "interim solution" was agreed upon: ?mamo?lu and Yava? became vice presidents, and the six parties met again on Monday, with the Good Party present. On Monday evening, in front of the headquarters of the Islamist Felicity Party in Ankara, the party leaders announced K?l?çdaro?lu's candidacy and the 12-point "Roadmap for the Transition to a Strengthened Parliamentary System."

Leaked reports imply that the candidacy crisis may have been caused by factions of the ruling elite, such as the construction oligarchs, who were massively enriched under Erdo?an's government, seeking assurances from Ak?ener as part of a possible new government.

Ultimately, the promotion of the Nation Alliance reflects the desire of the US and European imperialist powers and powerful sections of the Turkish bourgeoisie to replace Erdo?an with a more loyal and controllable government amid NATO's war against Russia and growing class struggles. The Good Party broke away from Erdo?an's ally, the fascistic Nationalist Movement Party (MHP), after the NATO-backed coup against Erdo?an on July 15, 2016. This was the basis of its alliance with the CHP.

There is a long history of significant conflicts between the Erdo?an government and its US-led NATO allies. Tensions stemming from critical geopolitical disagreements, notably Ankara's improving ties with Moscow amid US preparations for war against Russia last decade, erupted during the failed coup attempt in 2016.

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These tensions have only increased since then. The Erdo?an government represents a faction of the Turkish bourgeoisie, which is deeply tied to imperialism, but it has not fully supported NATO's war escalation against Russia. It is embroiled in an ongoing dispute to oppose the admission into NATO of Sweden and Finland, who have given limited indications of support for Kurdish nationalists even as Ankara prepares another major military offensive against US-backed Kurdish nationalist militias (YPG) in Syria.

Significantly, in an interview with the *New York Times* before the 2020 elections, US President Joseph Biden openly declared his support for the bourgeois opposition alliance against Erdo?an. It is no coincidence that K?l?çdaro?lu, now the official candidate of the "Nation Alliance," has traveled to major NATO countries such as the US, the UK and Germany in recent months, meeting with top members of the political and financial elite.

The "road map" announced by the Nation Alliance does not pretend to present any solution to the fundamental democratic and social problems facing millions of working people. It focuses on how to share the positions of the bourgeois ruling apparatus, such as the vice presidency and the distribution of ministries. Moreover, this alliance, though it claims to "defend democracy," does not even object to Erdo?an's unconstitutional candidacy.

The Nation Alliance speaks, first and foremost, for a faction of the ruling class oriented towards NATO and the European Union. Moreover, it is an alliance including openly right-wing parties, just like the rival AKP-MHP "People's Alliance" led by Erdo?an.

In addition to the CHP, the Nation Alliance includes the far-right Good Party, which broke away from the MHP; the Islamist Felicity Party, from which the AKP emerged; and the Future Party of former prime minister Ahmet Davuto?lu and the DEVA party of former economy and foreign minister Ali Babacan, which broke away from the AKP. The sixth member of the alliance is the Democrat Party, also a right-wing party.

The record of the parties in this alliance sharply demonstrates that it is no alternative to Erdo?an's People's Alliance, but a rival that is at least as hostile to the working class and basic democratic rights.

The Turkish pseudo-left tendencies play a destructive role, by presenting this right-wing, pro-imperialist alliance as a progressive alternative to Erdo?an's reactionary government.

The Kurdish-nationalist Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP), whose 6 million voters could well swing in the election results, has welcomed K?l?çdaro?lu's candidacy and invited him for a private meeting.

Erkan Ba?, the leader of the Workers' Party of Turkey (T?P), a party of the HDP-led Labour and Freedom Alliance, with four deputies in parliament, posted on his social media account, "I congratulate the Presidential candidate of the Nation's Alliance, CHP President Kemal K?l?çdaro?lu and wish him success." The Left Party, part of a pseudo-left alliance called the Socialist Power Union, reacted the same way.

The Socialist Equality Group, the Turkish section of the International Committee of the Fourth International, rejects the hypocritical and reactionary fraud in which the pseudo-left parties enthusiastically participate. This bourgeois alliance, which includes the CHP, the traditional party of the Turkish bourgeoisie, as well as openly right-wing extremists and Islamists, is as hostile to the basic democratic and social aspirations of the working class and youth as the Erdo?an government.

The electoral policy of the pseudo-left, based solely on Erdo?an's defeat, serves to drive the masses behind another right-wing faction of the bourgeoisie and distract them from the revolutionary struggle, in conditions where the rising cost of living and unbearable living conditions in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic and NATO's war against Russia are pushing the working class into growing struggles all over the world.

Indeed, as the earthquake disaster, a global and historic event, has once again demonstrated, the fundamental problems facing the working class require an urgent social response coordinated at the international level. This means developing a frontal attack by the working class on the wealth and power of the ruling class.

As all the pseudo-left tendencies are adapting themselves to the bourgeoisie in one way or another, the Socialist Equality Group is oriented towards the working class on the basis of an international socialist program. The way forward lies not in supporting this or that right-wing faction of the bourgeoisie, but in ensuring the political independence of the working class from all parties of the capitalist order on the basis of an anti-imperialist, anti-war, socialist program.

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