

Erdogan regime jails Kurdish nationalists

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President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's government has launched a police operation arresting at least 126 people, including Kurdish politicians, journalists, lawyers and artists. Arrest warrants were issued for a total of 216 people in operations yesterday in 21 provinces, centred on Diyarbakır. The police operation provoked protests in Diyarbakır, Istanbul, Bursa, Izmir, Mardin, Mersin, Van and many other cities.

At least 25 lawyers were arrested and the Aram Publishing House in Diyarbakır was raided. In addition, the City Theatre and the Dicle Culture and Art Association in Diyarbakır, the Mesopotamia Culture and Art Association in Mardin and the Bahar Cultural Centre in Batman were raided and many artists were arrested.

According to Mezopotamya Agency, among those detained are "Mezopotamya Agency (MA) Editor Abdurrahman Gök, MA reporters Ahmet Kanbal and Mehmet ?ah Oruç, JINNEWS Beritan Canözer, Yeni Ya?am Editor-in-Chief Osman Ak?n, Xwebûn official Kadri Esen, journalists Mehmet Yalçın, Mikail Barut, Salih Keleş and Remzi Akkaya" and HDP executives Özlem Gündüz and Mahfuz Güleriyüz.

Arzu Kurt, a leading member of the Association of Lawyers for Freedom (ÖHD), said its members had been detained, and that "a confidentiality order on the file and a 24-hour restriction on lawyers" had been issued. According to the MA, they were arrested on charges of "membership" in the outlawed Kurdistan Communities Union (KCK), an umbrella group that includes the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK), the Democratic Union Party (PYD) in Syria. This is a pretext the Turkish state has used for decades to carry out arrests.

In a statement denouncing the police raids, the HDP called it a "new coup," adding: "The government, which has been trying to prolong its life with political coups, massacres, black propaganda, special warfare

methods, threats, blackmail and all kinds of attacks since 2015, has started a new coup process against the May 14 elections with mass arrests this morning."

It added, "This operation is an operation to steal the ballot boxes and the will of the people. This operation is an open intimidation and threat to society and its political preferences."

The *World Socialist Web Site* and the Socialist Equality Group oppose this undemocratic police operation and demand the release of those who have been detained. Our well-documented opposition to Kurdish nationalism in no way diminishes our irreconcilable opposition to police repression by the capitalist state.

This crackdown, coming less than three weeks before explosive national elections, is a flagrant attack on democratic rights. The Erdoğan government has repeatedly cracked down on the Kurdish nationalist Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP) and its affiliated groups. It is clear that this attack is bound up with the deep crisis of Erdoğan's ruling Islamist Justice and Development Party (AKP).

After more than 20 years in power, Erdoğan's AKP faces widespread social opposition, which has only grown since the February 6 earthquake disaster that led to tens of thousands of preventable deaths.

According to many polls, Erdoğan is likely to lose both the presidential and parliamentary elections. The HDP, which has around 6 million voters' support and supported Erdoğan's rival Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu in the presidential election, is expected to have a significant impact on the election results.

The defense of democratic rights can only be carried out in opposition to every faction of the capitalist political establishment. This includes opposing any action by Erdoğan to follow the example of his right-wing authoritarian counterparts like Donald Trump in the US or Jair Bolsonaro in Brazil, and refusing to

accept the election results; or to take military action against Kurdish militias in Syria or Iraq. It also involves opposing the reactionary role of Erdoğan's rivals, such as Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu's Republican People's Party (CHP).

Since 2015, the Erdoğan government has increasingly targeted the HDP. In this period, many HDP deputies were stripped of their parliamentary immunity and jailed, with the support of Kılıçdaroğlu's Republican People's Party (CHP). Thousands of HDP members were arrested, while elected mayors were dismissed by government orders.

Before this police-state repression, however, the HDP and its predecessor, the Peace and Democracy Party (BDP), were firmly allied with Erdoğan himself. The so-called "peace process" negotiations between Ankara and the PKK, continued until 2015 under the auspices of the US and European powers. It was essentially an attempt by the Turkish and Kurdish ruling elites to forge an alliance to obtain a share in the ongoing plunder of the Middle East led by the imperialist powers.

The Erdoğan government, starting in 2011, was one of the most ardent supporters of the US-led war for regime change against the Russian-backed Syrian President Bashar al-Assad. However, it ended the so-called "peace process" with the Kurdish nationalists when the People's Protection Units (YPG), the PKK's sister organization in Syria, emerged as the main US proxy force in that country. The Turkish government feared that the consolidation of a Kurdish entity in Syria could lead to the separation of majority-Kurdish regions of Turkey.

Renewed violent conflicts thereupon erupted inside Turkey itself between Erdoğan and the Kurdish nationalist organizations.

The HDP is a pro-NATO party like Erdoğan's AKP or Kılıçdaroğlu's CHP, although it seeks to adopt a "democratic" and even "anti-imperialist" pose. The HDP has glorified the YPG's dirty alliance with US imperialism in Syria as the "Rojava revolution." It recently declared that Finland's accession to NATO, in a move aimed to escalate the US-NATO war against Russia in Ukraine, was "legitimate."

According to a recent report by the *Washington Post*, citing leaked Pentagon documents, Ukrainian military intelligence planned in December to attack Russian

forces in Syria through the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), of which the YPG is the backbone. The *Post* wrote, "Ukrainian officers considered training operatives of the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), the military force of Syria's Kurdish-controlled autonomous northeast, to strike Russian targets..."

It continued: "As planning occurred last fall, the SDF sought training, air defense systems and a guarantee that its role would be kept secret in exchange for supporting Ukrainian operations. The leadership of the SDF also forbade strikes on Russian positions in Kurdish areas, the document says."

Moreover, according to the document, Ankara was also aware of the plan. The Turkish officials "'sought to avoid potential blowback' and suggested that Ukraine stage its attacks from Kurdish areas instead of those in the north and northwest held by other rebel groups, some of them backed by Turkey." An SDF official denied the document, while the Turkish Foreign Ministry and the Turkish embassy in the US did not respond to the *Post*'s questions.

The Erdoğan government's reactionary crackdown on the Kurdish nationalists underscores that the defense of basic democratic rights is incompatible with the escalating war across the region, in which all the bourgeois parties in the region are implicated. The struggle for the defense of democratic rights and against war requires an independent revolutionary struggle of workers internationally against imperialism and all its bourgeois proxies.



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