

Turkish elections: Kılıçdaroğlu's xenophobic campaign exposes the pseudo-left

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Ahead of the second round of Turkish presidential elections on May 28, as Nation Alliance candidate Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu escalates his anti-refugee campaign, the Kurdish-nationalist Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP) and pseudo-left parties continue to support him.

On May 14, in the first round of voting, incumbent President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan (Justice and Development Party, AKP) won 49.52 percent. Kılıçdaroğlu (Republican People's Party, CHP) came second with 44.88 percent, according to final results announced by the Supreme Electoral Council. Sinan Oğan, the candidate of the far-right Ata Alliance, received a surprising 5.17 percent.

Oğan and the Ata Alliance have demanded a ministerial or vice-presidential post in exchange for their support. They also put forward some conditions. Oğan demands an "uninterrupted fight against all kinds of terrorist organizations," and the "deportation of refugees on a timetable."

Erdoğan, the People Alliance candidate, has met with Oğan, and Kılıçdaroğlu with Ümit Özdağ, the leader of the far-right Victory Party, the main party supporting Oğan. Both Oğan and Özdağ came from Erdoğan's fascist ally, the Nationalist Movement Party (MHP). Oğan has said he will announce his decision today.

Both Erdoğan and Kılıçdaroğlu want Oğan's support in the second round. However, Erdoğan told CNN that he would not give in to Oğan's demands. Kılıçdaroğlu, who seems more eager to get Oğan's support, has escalated his dirty xenophobic campaign since May 14.

Kılıçdaroğlu has embraced Özdağ's lying anti-refugee xenophobia. In his May 18 speech, Kılıçdaroğlu said, "Erdoğan, I tell you clearly, you did not protect the borders and the honor of the country. You knowingly brought more than 10 million refugees into this country. You have auctioned off the citizenship of the Republic of Turkey in order to get imported votes [of refugees]. As soon as I come to power, I will send all the refugees back home."

He continued: "Do you realize that if [Erdoğan's Alliance] stay, more than 10 million refugees will come to Turkey. If

they stay, the dollar will reach 30 liras, misery will deepen when a loaf of bread costs 10 liras. These refugees will become potential crime machines, looting will start."

Kılıçdaroğlu is blatantly exaggerating the number of refugees in Turkey, which is officially around 4 million, and blaming the most vulnerable section of the population for the economic crisis and the growing cost of living. This rhetoric is in the far-right political tradition. It has targeted above all the working class and the socialist movement since the 19th century, and today is promoted by the bourgeoisie all over the world.

Commenting on Kılıçdaroğlu's remarks, Özdağ said, "I closed my eyes and thought it was me speaking."

CHP deputy chairman Özgür Özel said, "The May 28 [election] is a referendum on whether Syrians should stay or go. ... Those who say, 'Syrians should stay' will vote for Mr. Tayyip, and those who say 'Syrians should go' will vote for Mr. Kemal."

This reactionary campaign to scapegoat refugees, victims of the US and NATO's imperialist wars in Syria and Afghanistan, for social problems caused by capitalism is a warning to all workers.

It vindicates the warnings and perspective of the Sosyalist E?itlik Grubu (SEG), the Turkish section of the International Committee of the Fourth International (ICFI). Kılıçdaroğlu has pledged to serve NATO better than Erdoğan, adopted the economic program of Turkey's TÜSİAD business confederation, and waged an anti-refugee campaign to divide the working class. He is not a "progressive" alternative to Erdoğan. Both candidates are loyal to imperialism and hostile to the working class.

"We will not leave our homeland to those who see women as objects, who say they will adopt them, who slaughter women with hogtie, who covet our children," Kılıçdaroğlu said, trying to exploit concerns about the entry of the Kurdish Islamist Hüda Par group into parliament with four deputies from AKP lists.

Neither Kılıçdaroğlu nor the Nation Alliance can be trusted to defend secularism or other democratic principles.

The Nation Alliance itself includes the Islamist Felicity Party, Erdogan's former Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoglu and former Economy Minister Ali Babacan. The fight against xenophobia or religious obscurantism falls to the working class mobilizing independently on the basis of a socialist program.

K?l?çdarolu is also trying to distance himself from his pro-NATO, anti-Russian campaign that cost him votes in the first round. Aping both the anti-refugee rhetoric of the Ata Alliance and Erdoan's anti-imperialist posturing on the other, K?l?çdarolu said, "We will not leave our homeland to a fake world leader [Erdoan] who until recently was the co-chair of the GME [the US's Greater Middle East Project] and who is now under the guidance of Russia."

Before the first round, K?l?çdarolu accused Russian President Vladimir Putin of interfering in the elections. He provided no evidence. Erdoan campaigned against K?l?çdarolu's meetings in the United States and Europe, and his pro-NATO statements, exploiting the anti-imperialist sentiments of the overwhelming majority of the population in Turkey.

Now, K?l?çdarolu and his Nation Alliance hope to cover up their own pro-imperialist orientation by attacking Erdoan's pro-US record.

In response to Erdoan's accusation that the Nation Alliance working with the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) because of the HDP's support for K?l?çdarolu, they are accusing Erdoan of being the "real collaborator of terrorism" and pledging a war on terror. They are denouncing the Erdoan's "peace process" with the PKK, which collapsed in 2015.

In a tweet, Temel Karamollao?lu, the leader of K?l?çdarolu's Islamist ally, the Felicity Party, published excerpts from Erdoan's speech at Harvard's Kennedy School in 2004, shortly after he became prime minister.

"Turkey sincerely wants the United States to succeed in Iraq. It is also providing multifaceted support," Erdoan said in the video. But this video, which highlights Erdoan's support for the US invasion of Iraq, is also an indictment against the Nation Alliance, which is oriented towards the same powers.

The fact that the HDP and pseudo-left parties like the Stalinist Workers' Party of Turkey (T?P) continue to support the right-wing Nation Alliance candidate as an "alternative" to Erdoan, despite its pro-imperialist and xenophobic positions, reveals their political bankruptcy.

The HDP and the T?P aligned with K?l?çdarolu's pro-NATO campaign by not opposing Finland's NATO membership in a parliamentary vote. Now they are shamefully silent on K?l?çdarolu's targeting of Kurds in the name of a "fight against terrorism" and his campaign to

deport millions of refugees.

These unprincipled middle class groups would accept anything to elect K?l?çdarolu. T?P leader Erkan Ba? said in November, "We want to make it clear that T?P finds the idea that a right-wing candidate is necessary to defeat Tayyip Erdoan wrong. We reject the imposition of right against right."

Apparently, according to Ba?, K?l?çdarolu is not a right-wing candidate.

After the first round, the T?P declared: "We do not have a single minute to lose. The T?P and its 1 million voters are starting to work decisively for Mr. K?l?çdarolu's victory."

Other pseudo-left parties are similarly lining up behind K?l?çdarolu without the slightest criticism.

The Left Party, which is part of the Socialist Union of Forces (SGB) alliance, announced that it will "continue to support Kemal K?l?çdarolu to put an end to the regime in this referendum where we will vote on the most reactionary bloc in history."

The Stalinist Communist Party of Turkey (TKP), which is also part of the SGB, said, "Every vote against Erdoan on May 28 will increase the AKP's blood loss, regardless of the result. We will go to the polls, we will send Erdoan packing, and we will settle accounts with everyone who had a share in these dark days."

The Morenoite Workers' Democracy Party (?DP), the Turkish section of the Morenoite International Workers' Unity (UIT-CI), also declared its support for K?l?çdarolu. It said, "In order to roll back the one-man regime built by Erdoan and in solidarity with the millions of workers who mobilized by going to the polls in the first round to show that they do not want Erdoan, we call for a critical vote for the candidate of the Nation Alliance without offering any political support."

All these pseudo-left parties work to prevent a struggle for the political independence of the working class from the capitalist establishment and suppress social opposition to the NATO war in Ukraine, inflation, and the ruling elite's response to pandemics and earthquakes by directing it behind K?l?çdarolu. The Sosyalist E?itlik Grubu opposes this political trap. It calls on workers and youth to reject both pro-imperialist right-wing candidates and join the building of the Sosyalist E?itlik Partisi as the revolutionary socialist vanguard of the working class.



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