

Provocation against refugees in Kocaeli, Turkey highlights growing dangers

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On Sunday, false allegations that a group of Syrians raided a Turkish house in the Dilovas? district of Kocaeli, a major industrial city near Istanbul, led to an attempted mob attack on Syrians in the area.

What started as friction between neighbors was transformed into late night attacks and marches targeting refugees. The responsibility for this poisonous atmosphere lies with the entire political establishment. In particular, bourgeois opposition parties led by the Kemalist Republican People's Party (CHP), which attacks President Recep Tayyip Erdo?an's reactionary government from the right, play a noxious role.

According to Ömer Faruk Gergero?lu, Kocaeli deputy of the Kurdish nationalist-led Green Left Party: "Syrian children aged seven or eight stoned someone's dog. The dog's owner used violence against the children. Then the dog was poisoned, and the family whose dog was killed went and attacked the Syrian family's house."

Both on social media and in the capitalist press, especially in reports from outlets that are close to the bourgeois opposition, it was claimed that a Syrian group raided a Turkish house in the neighborhood with weapons and sticks in hand. Following calls on social media to mobilize, hundreds of people in the neighborhood took to the streets and chanted, "We don't want refugees in Dilovas?."

Kocaeli deputy Lütfü Türkkan of the far-right Good Party, known for his anti-refugee rhetoric, shared a video on social media stating: "The incidents that started in my town, Kocaeli, Dilovas?, when Syrians raided a house, continued tonight with people taking to the streets. The citizens are now dispersing. Tomorrow evening they will gather in front of the district governor's office and demand that the Syrians leave Dilovas?."

The media joined the campaign. ODA TV reported that a "Syrian group raided a citizen's house in Kocaeli: The city was in chaos." The daily *Sözcü*, close to the CHP, wrote: "Tension due to Syrians! People took to the streets, the city was in chaos." And *Kocaeli Gazetesi* claimed that a "Syrian group with guns and sticks raided a Turkish citizen's house in Kocaeli."

However, the governor of Kocaeli, Serdar Yavuz, said, "The dispute over the suspected killing of a pet quickly turned into a fight, but the security officers quickly intervened in the incident and solved the problem that evening."

He continued: "There was no direct attacks on any citizen's house. In particular, there was a very brief incident between the person whose dog died, his close friends and people in the neighborhood and Syrians under temporary protection living in the neighborhood. That sums up the incident."

The governor added that Turkish citizens were provoked with false allegations on social media. He stated: "Some provocative posts were posted on social media. Unfortunately, there was a provocation. They claimed that foreign Syrians were stoning the houses of our citizens. In other words, there was a false allegation. It was provoked with a video."

It was reported that refugees living and working in the Dilovas? district of Kocaeli could not go to work yesterday because of the dangerous environment and fear of possible attacks.

This provocation must be taken as a warning to the working class. Rival factions of the ruling class have been feeding anti-refugee sentiments for years. They want to channel growing social anger into the dead end of nationalism and divide the working class.

Turkey is among the countries hosting the largest numbers of refugees as a result of 30 years of war

waged by the US-led imperialist powers in the broader region since the Stalinist dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991. According to a report published by the Refugees Association in Turkey, there were 3.3 million Syrians living in Turkey as of June 15, of which 72.29 percent were women and children. Including those from other countries and unregistered migrants, it is estimated that there are around 5 million refugees and immigrants living in Turkey.

The ground for attacks on Syrians and all refugees in Turkey has been laid by the poisonous propaganda of the bourgeois opposition, which generally attacks the government from the right on the issue.

Kemal K?l?çdarolu, the leader of the CHP and the candidate of the Nation Alliance against Erdoğan in the recent the presidential elections, made his long-standing reactionary anti-refugee propaganda a main campaign theme after the first round on 14 May, along with rhetoric about “fighting terrorism.” He allied with the far-right Victory Party to demand the deportation of millions of refugees.

“As soon as I come to power, I will send all the refugees back home,” K?l?çdarolu said in a statement, adding, “Do you realise that if they [the Erdoğan government] stay in power, more than 10 million more refugees will come to Turkey? These refugees will become potential crime machines. Looting will start.”

Although his defeat in the elections showed that the anti-refugee campaign did not get popular support, K?l?çdarolu made clear that he will continue the campaign by appointing Gök?en An?l Uluku? as a personal adviser. Uluku? was the founding president of the youth movement of the Victory Party.

K?l?çdarolu’s statements blaming the economic crisis and the soaring cost of living—both of which stem from the crisis of capitalism—on refugees, the most vulnerable section of the population, and his alliances with fascistic forces did not cause the Kurdish nationalists and pseudo-left parties to hesitate in backing him in the elections. The dangerous provocation in Dilovas? stands as an indictment of them no less than the CHP.

The People’s Democracy Party (HDP), the Green Left Party (YSP) and the Workers’ Party of Turkey (T?P) have maintained a shameful silence on K?l?çdarolu’s campaign to deport millions of refugees. They repeatedly reiterated their support for

him ahead of the second round of the presidential vote on May 28.

The Left Party (former ÖDP), the Stalinist Communist Party of Turkey (TKP) and the Morenoite Workers’ Democracy Party (?DP) have also aided and abetted this political crime by declaring their support for K?l?çdarolu.

In opposition to this reactionary campaign, the Sosyalist E?itlik Grubu (Socialist Equality Group, SEG), the Turkish section of the International Committee of the Fourth International (ICFI), rejected both reactionary candidates of the ruling class, advancing a program to establish the political independence of the working class from bourgeois and middle class parties. It categorically rejected “the xenophobic policy of the Nation Alliance and the pseudo-left forces behind it” and called on workers to defend refugees.

The dangerous provocation in Dilovas? demonstrates the critical importance of the struggle for the unity of all workers on the basis of a socialist program against the chauvinism and xenophobia spread by the ruling elite and its pseudo-left accomplices.



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