

Ankara calls for “de-escalation” in Gaza amid pro-Palestinian demonstrations across Turkey

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As workers and youth around the world protested against the genocidal war of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu’s Israeli regime against the Palestinians of Gaza, tens of thousands of people in Turkey have joined demonstrations in support of the Palestinian people.

After the Friday prayers, marches and press statements were organised in different provinces. A march from Beyaz?t Square in Istanbul to Hagia Sophia was organised by pro-government Islamist associations of President Recep Tayyip Erdo?an. On Sunday, the Islamist Saadet Party, Gelecek Party and H?da Par organised a protest in Maltepe, Istanbul. H?da Par also organised a demonstration in Diyarbak?r.

Saturday saw a protest in front of the Israeli consulate in Istanbul, while last night, several independent trade unions held a press conference in the same location.

However, as Israel’s war against the Palestinian people in Gaza takes on the dimensions of genocide, the US use of the crisis to prepare for war against Iran and the possibility of a region-wide war are making the Turkish ruling elites nervous.

Washington is evidently preparing for a much wider conflict in the Middle East, including a war with Iran. After the Palestinian uprising, Washington has declared its unlimited support for Israel’s war in Gaza, sending two aircraft carriers and their associated battle groups to the region.

The Anadolu Agency reported that the US military delivered a new Sentinel radar system to the oil field in Deir ez-Zor province in eastern Syria, which is controlled by the US and its Kurdish proxy forces. Anadolu reported: “On 17 July, the US military transferred 4 HIMARS air defence systems, approximately 15 artillery batteries, 5 armoured vehicles, 5 tanks and 45 ammunition vehicles from the

Shaddadi base and deployed them to their bases in Deir ez-Zor.”

This has led the Erdo?an government to call for “de-escalation” and “restraint” in Gaza and the region. At home, the government faces growing working class anger and support for the Palestinian people.

Erdo?an said on Thursday, “Where is the West? Is there any measure they have taken against this issue? No. The second aircraft carrier will be brought as well. I am calling on the US: Where on earth is the US? Where is the Mediterranean? Where is Israel? Where is Palestine? What on earth are you doing there? Now, is it establishment of peace or adding of fuel to the fire that befits such a country as the US?”

On Friday, he criticized the United States and its European allies, saying: “The provocative behavior of some actors, which instead of restoring calm is adding fuel to the fire and deepening the crisis, is both hampering our efforts and deepening the crisis.”

After the US sent warships to the region, the Turkish Navy announced a military exercise in the eastern Mediterranean off the coast of Cyprus on October 16–20, including fire training.

Turkey hosts many US and NATO bases and is complicit in the aggression of Israel against the Palestinian people. But Ankara also sees the US buildup in the region as a threat to itself, notably due to the growing number of US bases in neighboring Greece.

The dispute between Ankara and Washington follows an escalation of tensions between the two NATO allies in Syria. On October 5, the US responded to Turkey’s air strikes against Kurdish nationalist militias in Syria by shooting down a Turkish UCAV. Erdo?an has not ruled out a ground operation against US-backed Kurdish forces.

However, on October 14, US President Joe Biden extended the State of National Emergency on Syria for another year, declaring: “the actions by the Government of Turkey to conduct a military offensive into northeast Syria” threaten to “undermine the peace, security, and stability in the region, and continues to pose an unusual and extraordinary threat to the national security and foreign policy of the United States.”

Meanwhile, Turkey’s main bourgeois parties have echoed Erdoğan’s line of “restraint” in the face of Israel’s genocidal aggression against the Palestinians. The six political parties with groups in the Turkish Grand National Assembly issued a joint statement on this issue on Thursday.

The signatories were the ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP), its fascist ally the Nationalist Movement Party (MHP), the main opposition Kemalist Republican People’s Party (CHP), the far-right IYI Party, the Islamist Felicity Party and the Kurdish nationalist Green Left Party, which is backed by the pseudo-left.

While ostensibly criticising Israel, the statement did not explicitly condemn its brutal attacks on the Palestinians. It cynically advanced a reactionary, ethnic-based two-state “solution” to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, to which Israel has never adhered.

The declaration was dominated by the concerns of the Turkish ruling class about the risks of a widening conflict in the face of a deep economic, social and political crisis and the growing strike movement of the working class.

The declaration’s first paragraph warns: “The potential for the crisis to spread to other regions seriously threatens regional security and stability.” In the next paragraph, it “invites all parties to exercise moderation and common sense within the framework of our vision of peace-security-stability.”

Turkey has recently taken steps to normalise relations with Israel, which Erdoğan has repeatedly described as a “terrorist state,” and with Egypt, with which it broke off diplomatic relations after the bloody coup led by General Abdel Fattah el-Sisi in 2013. The aim of improving relations with Washington and advancing the interests of the Turkish bourgeoisie in the oil and gas reserves in the eastern Mediterranean was an important factor in this process.

Moreover, the approval of Finland’s membership in

NATO and the green light for Sweden’s membership were steps to calm Turkey’s tensions with its imperialist allies led by the USA.

Within the Erdoğan government and the pro-NATO bourgeois opposition parties, there is concern that the Palestinian uprising, Israel’s genocidal war and the US preparations for war against Iran will undo all these efforts.

The final paragraph of the declaration, after a perfunctory criticism of Israel’s decades of occupation and violence, condemns “all attacks that directly target civilians through methods of collective punishment.”

Using language all but equates the defenceless Palestinian people with the state of Israel, which is supported by world imperialism, the declaration concludes by inviting “Palestine and Israel to begin negotiations for a permanent peace without further delay in order to reach a just and lasting solution on the basis of two states.”

In recent statements, Erdoğan has been forced to step up his criticism somewhat in the face of Israel’s increasingly brutal assault on Gaza. However, he has continued to refrain from explicitly condemning Israel, saying that he would play the role of “mediator and fair arbiter.”

Both Erdoğan’s words and the similar call in the declaration are no different from the call for negotiations between the German state and the Jews who were confined by the Nazis to a ghetto in Warsaw during the Second World War.

The Turkish ruling class, which has close military-strategic ties with US-NATO imperialism and Zionist Israel, is structurally incapable of solving its own Kurdish problem, let alone offering a way forward for the Palestinian people. The only way forward against Israel’s war against the Palestinian people and the US preparations for war against Iran is to mobilise the mass movement that is developing worldwide against the war on the basis of a socialist programme to overthrow the imperialist system.



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