Mass protests erupt across Turkey against Israel’s massacre in Gaza

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Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu’s bombing of the Al-Ahli Arab Hospital in Gaza on Tuesday, which killed nearly 500 people, provoked protests by tens of thousands of people across Turkey. Yesterday, a presidential decree declared three days of national mourning.

In Turkey, as in Palestine and in many countries of the Middle East, spontaneous mass protests erupted in over twenty cities—including Istanbul, Ankara, Bursa, Adana, Malatya and Diyarbakir, immediately after the Israeli massacre was reported.

The demonstrators chanted slogans against Israel and the US and expressed support for the Palestinians. While a US flag was burned in Ankara, people gathered in Adana stoned the US consulate and tried to enter the building.

During a mass protest in front of the Israeli Consulate General in Istanbul, demonstrators threw fireworks at the building and tried to enter. Police responded with tear gas and water cannons. As a result of the police onslaught, 65-year-old Eshabil Tüfekçi died of a heart attack.

In a statement, the Istanbul Governorship said: “A group of our citizens, who gathered to protest the Israeli bombardments against the civilians in Gaza, took action to enter the consulate building and attacked our security forces, buildings and the consulate with stones, sticks, torches and fireworks. … In order to prevent irreparable damage, our security forces intervened and prevented the group from entering the consulate building.”

The Islamist Felicity Party released a statement on the death of Tüfekçi, stating: “The honorable father of Nuri Tüfekçi, our deputy Istanbul provincial chairman of the Felicity Party, passed away as a result of a heart attack he suffered after being affected by tear gas in front of the Istanbul Consulate [of Israel].”

Several protests also took place in front of the Israeli Consulate in Istanbul last night, with over 2,000 demonstrators taking part. The protest, during which members of the Socialist Equality Group distributed the statement of the WSWS Editorial Board, was called by the Turkish Medical Association (TTB), Confederation of Progressive Trade Unions (D?SK), Confederation of Public Workers Unions (KESK) and Union of Chambers of Turkish Engineers and Architects (TMMOB).

Moreover, health care workers protested against the Israeli massacre at Al-Ahli Arab Baptist Hospital in many cities yesterday. According to the daily *Evrensel*, health care workers from the SES union demonstrated at the Istanbul Cerrahpa?a Medical Faculty with a banner reading “Palestinian people are not alone.”

Ayd?n Erol, the workplace representative of the union, said in a statement: “Imperialism somehow approves these massacres committed by Israel by keeping silent. Turkey has not taken a step back from its bilateral agreements with Israel so far. Workers and working people have to stand together with the Palestinian people. We want to express that Israel must put an end to these massacres.”

The mass protest that erupted in the eastern city of Malatya on Tuesday night was particularly significant. Thousands of people gathered in the city centre and then drove in convoys to the US Kürecik Radar Station outside the city.

The daily *Cumhuriyet* reported that the police and gendarmerie took extensive security measures around the base and set up barricades to prevent protesters from approaching. The security forces then attacked the demonstrators with tear gas and water cannon.

The Kürecik radar base, built in 2012 for NATO use,

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is operated by the US Army. The early warning radar system is reportedly designed to protect not only NATO powers but also Israel.

In 2011, then-Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad condemned the government of then-Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdo?an for establishing the base, stating: “The missile defense shield is aimed at defending the Zionist regime. They don’t want our missiles to land in the occupied territories (Israel) if they attack us one day. That’s why they put it there.”

On Tuesday night, the six main bourgeois parties in the Turkish parliament issued a joint statement condemning the hospital massacre. They called on “world parliaments, the international community and organizations to take action and initiative to stop this atrocity,” but there was no attempt from the parliament to take concrete steps to limit trade or military relations with Israel.

After the bombing of Gaza hospital, President Erdo?an said on X/Twitter: “Attacking a hospital with women, children and innocent civilians inside is the latest example of Israel’s attacks, which are devoid of the most basic human values. I call on all humanity to take action to stop this unprecedented atrocity in Gaza.”

In his statement yesterday, Erdo?an said that with the hospital massacre, Israel’s attacks had reached “the level of genocide.” He added that Israel was responsible for the massacre, as well as those who “blow the coals,” i.e., the US and other imperialist powers. Erdo?an once again criticised Washington for sending aircraft carriers to the eastern Mediterranean in preparation for war against Iran.

However, Erdogan’s criticism of Israel and the US only underlines the hypocrisy of his own government. Despite these tensions, Erdo?an and previous Turkish governments have always maintained trade and military ties with Tel Aviv as part of a comprehensive military-strategic alliance with US imperialism, despite Israel’s decades-long, imperialist-backed persecution of the Palestinians.

More recently, the Turkish bourgeoisie re-normalized relations with the Netanyahu government, in line with its interests in exploiting oil and gas reserves in the eastern Mediterranean.

The Erdo?an government, aware of the very powerful pro-Palestinian sentiments within the population, is worried that Israel’s genocide in Gaza, and now the massacre at Al-Ahli Hospital, could trigger both mass protests at home and a regional war.

In a statement shortly before the massacre at Al-Ahli Arab Hospital, Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan expressed his government’s concern, stating: “Out of this war, bigger wars could arise, but it could also lead to a historic peace. Our president [Erdo?an] believes a historic peace is possible and is working for it.”

The claim that Turkey—a NATO member and ally of Israel, and a state which has violently oppressed its own Kurdish people for decades—is working for peace is a fraud.

The decades-long persecution of the Palestinians and the wider war unfolding in the region and throughout the world have proved that “historic peace” is only possible through the mass mobilization of the working class in Palestine, Israel and throughout the world to overthrow imperialism and the reactionary capitalist regimes and establish workers’ power. This means fighting for a united socialist Palestine as part of a Socialist Federation of the Middle East.

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