

Erdo?an denounces Israel as onslaught on Gaza sets stage for war across Middle East

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The support of Washington and the European powers for Israel's genocidal war on the Palestinians in Gaza and the looming prospect of a US war with Iran have provoked a desperate crisis in Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdo?an's government.

After the Israel-Gaza war broke out on October 7, Erdo?an initially tried to block a mass movement against Israeli bombings in Gaza. Turkish riot police assaulted solidarity protests with Gaza, as Erdo?an called for "de-escalation" and a "ceasefire," equating the violence of the Palestinians with the imperialist-backed Israeli state. On Wednesday, however, as the Israeli regime ignored his calls for "restraint" and outrage mounted in the overwhelming majority of the Turkish people, he was forced to suddenly shift his policy.

In a speech at a meeting of his party, Erdo?an said: "We have made every effort in order for this crisis to not further escalate, and will continue to do so ... We have clearly stated that we never approve of any acts against civilians, including Israeli civilians, no matter who carries these acts out." He added: "We do not have any problem with the State of Israel, but we never have and never will approve of Israeli oppression and their course of action, which resembles that of an organization rather than a state."

Having stated that he has no problem with the Zionist regime, whose existence is based on the dispossession and now the ethnic cleansing of Palestinians, Erdo?an continued: "Israel has since October 7 been conducting one of the bloodiest, the most hideous and the most violent attacks in history against the innocent people in Gaza... Merely this fact is enough to show that the intention is not to protect themselves but a brutality aimed at committing a deliberate crime against humanity."

Erdo?an had recently re-developed diplomatic ties with the Israeli government to share Eastern Mediterranean energy reserves and exclude the Palestinians from them.

Now, however, he accused Tel Aviv of abusing his good intentions and cancelled a previously-scheduled visit. He announced that the first mass rally protesting the Gaza war by his Justice and Development Party (AKP) will be held on October 28, in Istanbul.

In his speech, Erdo?an rejected one of the imperialist powers' main justifications for the Israeli massacre in Gaza. He said, "This Israel is killing children, we have seen the condition of these children, and we will never allow them to be torn to pieces because we have a share in humanity... Hamas is not a terrorist organization; it is a group of liberation and mujahedeen fighting to defend its lands and citizens."

On his X/Twitter account, Israeli Foreign Ministry spokesman Lior Haiat condemned Erdo?an's remarks. Haiat wrote: "The Turkish president's attempt to defend the terrorist organization [Hamas] and his provocative words will not change the brutality and the absolute truth that the whole world has seen: Hamas is equal to ISIS," the Al Qaeda-linked Islamic State in Iraq and Syria.

The Israeli state and the imperialist capitals clearly sense that Erdo?an's speech threatens their policy in the region. Indeed, having already criticized the US deployment of aircraft carriers to the region, Erdo?an pointedly attacked Washington, saying: "All actors should act responsibly to prevent the spread of war, and extra-regional powers should stop adding fuel to the fire in the name of solidarity with Israel."

Indeed, the Turkish government is dismayed by the imminent prospect of the imperialist powers plunging the entire Middle East into war. As Erdo?an spoke, Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan went to Doha, Qatar, where he said: "Our region is literally at a tipping point. The current conjuncture will either lead to a greater war or a greater peace. All those I speak to share this assessment, even if they do not say so publicly."

The NATO imperialist powers' support for genocide in

Gaza and their threat to attack Iran present the Turkish bourgeoisie with an impossible dilemma. On the one hand, it has the closest ties with imperialism and for decades has asserted its foreign policy interests through NATO. On the other, it is virtually impossible for the Turkish government to join the other NATO powers in supporting a genocide in Gaza and waging a US-led war on Iran.

Firstly, such an utterly criminal policy must be rejected by the overwhelming majority of the Turkish people—above all, by the working class. Moreover, it would also threaten fundamental interests of the Turkish ruling class.

Turkey, which shares a long land border with Iran, is home to the US-NATO Incirlik air base in Adana and the Kürecik radar base in Malatya. These bases could easily become the targets of Iranian strikes, should war break out between the United States and Iran.

The Turkish bourgeoisie fears that a victory in a Middle East war of Washington and Tel Aviv, both of whom back Kurdish-nationalist militias on Turkey's borders in Iraq and Syria, could lead to the formation of a Kurdish state. However, the Turkish bourgeoisie has historically been willing to take the most far-reaching measures to block the emergence of a Kurdish state and maintain the oppression of the Kurds inside Turkey.

Leading Turkish officials are therefore discussing military intervention against Israel or other NATO allies in the region.

In his speech, Erdoğan warned that Turkish military intervention is on the table, stating: “We, as a country and a nation, will continue to shout the truth and to use all political, diplomatic and, if necessary, military means to this end.”

On Sunday, Devlet Bahçeli, the leader of the far-right Nationalist Movement Party (MHP) that is the de facto coalition partner of Erdoğan's AKP, called for military intervention in Gaza. He stated: “If a ceasefire cannot be achieved within 24 hours, if the attacks do not stop, if bombs continue to be dropped on the oppressed, Turkey must quickly step in and do whatever is required by its historical, humanitarian and religious responsibilities. Undertaking the mission of protecting and protecting Gaza is the legacy of our ancestors.”

Erdoğan tied his criticisms of the imperialist support for Israeli crimes against humanity in Gaza to planned attacks on Kurdish militias in Syria or Iraq that he denounces as terrorist.

He said, “With the operations we carry out by saying

‘We might come one night all of a sudden,’ we will foil the projects sought to be realized through terrorist organizations and crush their heads. ... Although they do not abide by what statecraft and international law require, we will never give up on fulfilling what our dignity requires us to do. We will continue to destroy the terror corridor sought to be established along our borders, and to stand up against the dirty campaigns conducted against our country and faith.”

The imperialist powers' green light to the Israeli regime for genocide in Gaza is tearing apart the institutions through which imperialism has dominated the region for decades. More perceptive imperialist commentators are warning of a possible collapse of the NATO alliance.

Commenting on Erdoğan's speech, retired US Army Colonel Douglas MacGregor said: “He's warning the Israelis and he's warning us that you're playing with fire, and you're going to get a full-scale war. That's the message. I hope we get it. We, by putting an aircraft carrier ... in the Eastern Mediterranean and another one either in the Persian Gulf or the Red Sea, are attempting to provoke people like President Erdoğan and the mullahs that run the government of Iran.”

MacGregor added that the war escalation poses serious dangers for Israel: “It's really setting the stage for a larger regional war that's the issue right now. And we always tend to forget the Turks have the largest army in NATO, a very large air force. They don't have as many missiles and rockets in their arsenal as Iran does. But if you put Iran together with Turkey and they end up in a coalition that includes the Peninsula Arabs ... then, you know, the stage is set for something that I think could end up destroying the Israeli State.”

Humanity is confronted with a breakdown of the imperialist-dominated capitalist nation-state system in the Middle East. Neither Erdoğan nor any other capitalist government has any perspective to peacefully unify the many peoples of the region—Arab, Jewish, Turkish, Kurdish and Iranian. That task falls to the working class, mobilizing in an international movement against imperialism, war and capitalism, fighting to build the United Socialist States of the Middle East.



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