

Turkish President Erdoğan's links to ongoing trade with Israel exposed

Barış Demir

8 December 2023

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan has condemned Israel's genocide in Gaza but refused to cut off the flow of critical materials from Turkey such as steel and oil that feed Tel Aviv's war machine. It has been revealed that individuals and companies close to his Justice and Development Party (AKP) continued to trade with Israel after 7 October.

Since the beginning of Israel's massacres in Gaza, journalist Metin Cihan has been exposing the Erdoğan government and companies that continue to trade with Israel through his X/Twitter account (@metcihan) with the hashtag "Stop the shipment to Israel."

In a study based on data from the Marine Traffic website, Cihan listed the ships that have sailed from Turkey to Israel since October 7 and documented that behind the government's so-called "boycott" campaigns, the trade continues, helping Israel to subject the Palestinians to genocide.

In a remarkable effort of investigative journalism, Cihan's subsequent social media posts focused on the companies involved in the ongoing trade. He documented that the owner of Manta Denizcilik, which operated the *Halit Yıldırım* ship that sailed from Israel during the Israeli bombardment of Gaza, was in partnership with Erdoğan's son Burak Erdoğan.

Cihan later revealed that Erkam Yıldırım, the son of former AKP Prime Minister Binali Yıldırım, is a partner of the owner of Oras Denizcilik, a shipping company to Israel. The owner of Oras Denizcilik is also in partnership with AKP deputy Vehbi Koç.

Among Cihan's other revelations regarding individuals and companies that continue to trade with Israel are the following:

- Shipments to Israel are made daily from the Iskenderun port of Limak Holding, which is known to be close to the Erdoğan government;

- Sefine Shipyard owned by Kolin Holding, close to the government, maintains the tanker that transports fuel to Israel;

- Çda, one of Turkey's largest companies, regularly sends steel and raw materials to Israel;

- Akçansa/Sabancı Holding regularly sends cement to Israel;

- Arkas Holding makes regular shipments to Israel;

- MNG Holding makes daily shipments to Israel by air.

Erdoğan and his family have filed a criminal complaint against the journalist and the Istanbul Anatolian 2nd Peace Court has issued an order to delete Cihan's tweets about the Yıldırım family.

Cihan replied in a tweet, "I'm not deleting them. It's not an allegation. They are official sources that are open to everyone. That's why you couldn't even refute it... I am not deleting them. For the Palestinian children, I will not delete them."

Cihan's research, as noted, can be easily confirmed by publicly available official sources.

The bourgeois opposition parties, which themselves have a pro-NATO and pro-Israeli record and orientation like the Erdoğan government, were forced to intervene when the revelations spread on social media, sharpening social opposition and anger.

Ahmet Davutoğlu, former prime minister and foreign minister of the AKP and now leader of the Islamist Future Party, criticised the government in a speech on December 6, stating, "So far, the number of Turkish ships sailing to Israel has exceeded 350 [since October 7]. When the identities of these ships are removed, it becomes clear that many of them are members of the AKP, businessmen with direct ties to the government."

He added, "At the moment, a third of Israel's iron and steel needs come from Turkey. Aviation fuel and

food come from Turkey. Such a hypocritical policy has never been seen before... There is no silence of friends here, there is betrayal of friends.”

Mahmut Tanal of the Kemalist Republican People’s Party (CHP) asked the Turkish Foreign Ministry to answer the following questions: “Will diplomatic relations with the State of Israel be suspended? Has your ministry imposed or is it planning to impose sanctions in response to Israel’s inhuman treatment of Palestine? If no decision has been taken to impose sanctions, what is the reason for this?”

“Our relations with Israel, which go back 74 years, have never been at the expense of the just cause of Palestine,” replied Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan. In other words, Fidan claims that trade with Israel, including steel and fuel oil for the military and arms industries, has not helped the Palestinians to be subjected to genocide.

As top officials in Ankara, led by Erdoğan, accuse Israel of being a “terrorist state” and of “genocide” over the attacks in Gaza, Turkey’s trade with Israel has continued uninterrupted.

The government’s continued trade with Israel does not mean that the disagreement between the Erdoğan and Netanyahu governments is completely artificial and unimportant. As much as Erdoğan wants to strengthen all ties with Israel and share with the Zionist state the natural gas resources in the Eastern Mediterranean that belong to the Palestinians, the logic of Israel’s genocide in Gaza creates the possibility of an escalating conflict between the two countries.

This is the Turkish bourgeoisie’s dilemma. As the *World Socialist Web Site* has explained, “It is virtually impossible for the Turkish government to join the other NATO powers in supporting a genocide in Gaza and waging the war Washington is planning with Iran. On the other hand, it has the closest ties with imperialism, and has for decades asserted its foreign policy interests through NATO.”

Erdoğan continues to use sharp rhetoric to quell growing public anger over the exposed trade with Israel. Speaking at his party’s parliamentary group meeting on December 6, he claimed, “It is certain that Israel will be crushed when it faces a real army and a real power. We hope that the Israeli leadership will come to its senses as soon as possible before such a bitter fate.”

He again criticized his NATO allies, stating, “Sooner or later, the Israeli rulers will be tried in the court of humanity, they will receive the punishment they deserve and they will take their place in the dustbin of history. More importantly, the Western countries that gave Netanyahu this audacity and covered up his crimes against humanity will share the same fate. If America and European countries had not provided Israel with unlimited political, military and economic support, the rulers of this terrorist state would not have been able to act in such a reckless and ruthless manner.”

Israel commits this historic crime with the full support and assistance of its imperialist allies. But to that list of those responsible must be added the pro-imperialist capitalist regimes in the Middle East, including Turkey.



To contact the WSWs and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact