

Turkey backs Sweden's NATO membership amid escalating war against Russia

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A bill on Sweden's accession to NATO was passed by the Turkish parliament Tuesday. President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, who paved the way for Sweden's membership, is expected to approve it soon.

Only Hungary's approval is now needed for Sweden to join NATO after Finland already did so. Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban has reportedly sent a letter of invitation to Swedish Prime Minister Ulf Kristersson to discuss the country's NATO bid.

Turkey's support for NATO expansion comes amid the imperialist military alliance's preparations to escalate the war against Russia with its Exercise Steadfast Defender 2024. It exposes the complicity of the Turkish ruling class and political establishment in the ongoing genocide in Gaza by Israel with the support of the US-led NATO powers and war preparations against Iran that could involve the entire Middle East.

Sweden's membership is the final step in NATO's eastward expansion to encircle Russia after the Stalinist bureaucracy dissolved the Soviet Union in 1991. Last year's NATO summit in Vilnius was critical in advancing this imperialist aggression.

In a Perspective on the summit, the *World Socialist Web Site* explained:

Since NATO's last summit in Madrid a year ago, it has laid a veritable siege ring around Russia. ... Finland is a NATO member, and in Vilnius the last obstacles to Sweden's accession were removed. As a result, the land border of NATO member states with Russia has more than doubled in size and has moved to within 150 kilometers of St. Petersburg. The Baltic Sea has become a NATO sea to which Russia has access only via a small corner in St. Petersburg and the besieged enclave of Kaliningrad.

Washington welcomed the Turkish political establishment

once again declaring its loyalty to imperialism by supporting Sweden's NATO membership. US State Secretary Anthony Blinken wrote on X/Twitter, "The United States applauds the Turkish parliament's decision to approve the accession protocols for Sweden's membership into NATO. Sweden's membership in the Alliance will make it stronger and more united than ever."

Turkey will reportedly receive F-16 fighter jets and modernization kits from the United States in exchange for Sweden's ratification. US Ambassador to Ankara Jeff Flake told Reuters, "I see no reason why, with the parliament having acted here, that Turkey would wait... So I would expect as soon as that is conveyed to Washington, then congressional notification [of the F-16 sales] will happen."

According to the Reuters, earlier on Wednesday President Joe Biden sent a letter to members of Congress urging approval of the \$20 billion sale of F-16 aircraft and modernization kits to Turkey.

In the Turkish parliament, which last March unanimously approved Finland's accession to NATO, this time 287 of 346 deputies voted in favour of Sweden's membership and 55 against. 4 abstained. The ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP) and its ally, the fascist Nationalist Movement Party (MHP), and the main opposition Kemalist Republican People's Party (CHP), the Future Party and the Democracy and Progress Party (DEVA) all voted in favour.

Erdoğan and his AKP's support for the expansion of NATO once again exposes the falsity of Ankara's condemnation of the Netanyahu regime or criticisms against Washington and European capitals. The genocide in Gaza has given impetus to the US preparations for war to establish its dominance in the Middle East, especially against Iran and its allies. This escalation is the Middle Eastern front of the current war against Russia and preparations for war against China.

Despite its critical support for and close ties with US-led NATO imperialism, Ankara fears that it could be drawn into a war against Iran, which would undermine the interests of the Turkish bourgeoisie. It fears that a victory for

Washington and Tel Aviv in a war in the Middle East could lead to the creation of a Kurdish state allied to them. Nevertheless, the Turkish bourgeoisie's support for NATO expansion reveals its dilemma, as explained by the WSWS:

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.

Speaking before the vote, CHP deputy O?uz Kaan Sal?c? revealed the pro-imperialist character of his party by describing NATO, which has turned the Middle East and many parts of the globe into a bloodbath, as a "peace alliance." He said, "We attach importance to NATO's deterrent power against all kinds of threats that disturb the environment of peace and stability. We support NATO's policy of enlargement with the accession of new members."

Deputies from three Islamist parties, the HÜDA-PAR, the New Welfare Party and the Felicity Party, voted "no." The first two of these parties had formed an alliance with Erdoğan in last year's elections. The Felicity Party comes from the political Islamic tradition of Necmettin Erbakan, from which Erdoğan's AKP emerged, but was allied with the pro-NATO, CHP in last year's elections.

Felicity Party deputy ?erafettin K?l?ç linked his party's "no" vote to the ongoing Israeli genocide. "The Swedish government and other Western countries show no reaction to Israel's genocide in Gaza. On the contrary, the governments of these countries do not hesitate to be Israel's accomplices," he said.

He continued: "The government is working overtime to make Sweden, a supporter of Israel, a member of NATO. They will approve this membership as part of a mission. But if you look at the rhetoric, the ruling party is cutting Sweden down with its words. Just as it sends ships and sponsors its [Israeli] companies, while cutting Israel down."

The far-right Good Party, which previously supported Finland's membership, announced that it was not opposed to NATO enlargement but would vote "no" because of Sweden's support for Kurdish nationalist movements led by the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK).

The majority of deputies from the Kurdish nationalist People's Equality and Democracy Party (DEM Party, formerly HDP) did not take part in the vote. The few who did, identified as members of various pseudo-left parties,

voted "no." This was a pragmatic reaction to the fact that its refusal to vote "no" in the vote on Finnish bid, making it clear that it does not oppose NATO's expansion, has exposed the pro-imperialist character of the party.

Speaking to the *soL* web site, Cengiz Çandar, a DEM deputy and pro-imperialist journalist, expressed the party's real line as follows: "Let me say it very clearly, if there was a critical situation where even one vote would be very important, then I would vote yes. I have written articles and made speeches many times since Turkey's position on Finland and Sweden joining NATO became known, and I have expressed that I am in favour of Sweden joining NATO and that it is the right thing to do."

The "no" vote of the deputies of the pseudo-left Workers' Party of Turkey (T?P) and the Labour Party (EMEP), which entered the parliament in alliance with the DEM Party, does not stem from a principled opposition to imperialism.

Their alliance with the pro-imperialist Kurdish nationalist movement and their support for CHP leader Kemal K?l?çdarolu, who ran based on a pro-NATO campaign in last year's presidential elections, exposes the falsity of their anti-imperialism. K?l?çdarolu, the candidate of the CHP's election alliance with Islamist and far-right parties, visited various imperialist capitals to reassure them before the elections and accused Russia of interfering in the elections, without any evidence.

The T?P deputies made clear party's pro-imperialist orientation by not participating in the vote on Finland's NATO membership last year. The unprincipled and tactical nature of the "no" vote on the Swedish bid was rapidly exposed when, immediately after the vote, the T?P reached an agreement with the pro-NATO CHP to cooperate with it in several areas in the coming local elections in March.

Amid NATO's expansion and escalation targeting Russia, Israel's imperialist-backed genocide in Gaza and war preparations against Iran and China, the only way forward is to unite and mobilize workers all over the world on the basis of an international socialist programme against imperialist war and capitalism.



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