

No to imperialist war and genocide! Reject the capitalist political establishment! Build the Socialist Equality Party in Turkey!

Sosyalist E?itlik Grubu
25 March 2024

The March 31 local elections are being held against the backdrop of the threat of nuclear conflict, exacerbated by NATO's escalating imperialist war against Russia in Ukraine, Israel's genocide of the Palestinians in Gaza and preparations for war against Iran, and an emerging international movement of the working class.

The elections come almost a year after two devastating earthquakes on February 6 struck the southern Turkish city of Kahramanmara?, near the Syrian border. They officially killed more than 53,000 people in Turkey and over 10,000 in Syria, and left millions homeless. Hundreds of thousands of people in the region are still living in containers or tents.

The problems of the earthquake's survivors and the danger of an expected major earthquake in the Marmara region of Turkey are not on the agenda in the elections. On the contrary, some of those who ignored scientific reports warning of an imminent major earthquake and allowed residents to stay in buildings known to be unsafe have been renominated by the ruling and opposition parties in significant cities. This is a warning that they will commit the same murderous crimes against people's safety again.

The indifference to the reality of the earthquakes also applies to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, which is still killing thousands of people. All the capitalist establishment parties have long since removed the words pandemic and public health from their dictionaries. Fundamental global problems such as climate change and global warming are also absent from the electoral agenda.

All these critical issues facing the working class, the majority of the population, are deliberately not raised in the election campaigns by the middle class pseudo-left tendencies. They intervene in the elections with a nationalist programme and unprincipled alliances around seat bargaining. They try to deceive workers and youth that if they win positions in the local elections, then problems will improve, and seek to drive them into the arms of the capitalist political establishment.

There is an unbridgeable political and class gulf between the Sosyalist E?itlik Grubu (Socialist Equality Group, SEG)—the Turkish section of the International Committee of the Fourth International (ICFI), the world Trotskyist movement—and all the middle class pseudo-left tendencies. The SEG is against the imperialist-capitalist system, which offers nothing but disaster, and is oriented towards the international working class, not this or that faction of the bourgeoisie.

The SEG rejects the illusion propagated by the pseudo-left that the conditions of the masses can be improved by winning local governments, which are part of the bourgeois state apparatus. The fundamental problems of the working masses in Turkey and internationally cannot be solved without a frontal attack on the wealth and power of the ruling class and the transfer of power to the working class. This requires a revolutionary mass mobilisation of the workers, based on an internationalist and

socialist programme.

In the 2024 local elections there is no party putting forward such a revolutionary programme to secure the political independence of the working class.

No to World War III and drive to a nuclear conflagration!

Mankind is on the brink of nuclear conflict. In the aftermath of the Stalinist bureaucracy's dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991—its final betrayal of the October Revolution—NATO, of which Turkey is a member, has now provoked the Kremlin's reactionary invasion of Ukraine by expanding eastwards and arming Kiev against Russia. Instead of backing down after the failed Ukrainian counter-offensive last year, the US-led NATO powers have escalated the war to defeat Russia militarily, even risking nuclear war with Russia.

French President Emmanuel Macron recently stated that the deployment of European troops to Ukraine was "not excluded." Other NATO countries, such as Canada, Lithuania, the Netherlands and Poland, have also expressed their readiness to send NATO troops to fight against Russia. These statements were accompanied by the release of a recording in which German military officers discuss the possibility of delivering Taurus cruise missiles to Ukraine to launch attacks on Russian territory.

The Pentagon has announced that it would send an additional \$300 million in weapons to Ukraine, amid a heightened risk of direct military conflict between NATO and Russia. In an interview, Russian President Vladimir Putin declared that Russia's nuclear forces were "ready" for an all-out war between Russia and NATO.

A NATO war against Russia requires a war economy and rearmament like that prior to the Second World War. As a specialist in international relations once wrote: "Once war is assumed to be unavoidable, the calculations of leaders and militaries change. The question is no longer whether there will or should be a war, but when the war can be fought most advantageously." It is against this background that the European Commission adopted a far-reaching plan on March 5 to prepare the European Union economy for war and pour huge resources into the arms industry.

All this is to be done on the backs of the population. The planned military expenditure means savage attacks on social spending, living standards and democratic rights. Workers cannot be persuaded to support the march towards nuclear war.

Under these conditions, President Recep Tayyip Erdo?an's government, which tries to manoeuvre between the US and Russia, has confirmed its commitment to the imperialist alliance by paving the way for Finland and Sweden to join NATO with the support of the bourgeois opposition.

Amid NATO's expansion and escalation of war against Russia and preparations for war against Iran and China, the only way forward is to unite and mobilise workers around the world on an international socialist

programme against imperialist war and capitalism.

Stop the Israeli genocide in Gaza!

Israel is carrying out genocide in Gaza with the full backing of the US and European imperialist powers. With 2.3 million people living in an area less than half the size of Yalova, the smallest city of Turkey, the Israeli army has been carrying out a systematic bombardment for more than five months.

Hospitals and schools, overcrowded refugee camps and UN-run shelters and facilities, have been destroyed. More than 31,000 people, mostly women and children, have been killed. Seventy percent of the population suffers from catastrophic hunger.

The genocide in Gaza is not an isolated incident but an expression of the historical crisis of imperialism and the nation-state system. It is supported in every way by the imperialist powers, especially the US, as the Middle East front of an emerging world war. Washington has made a massive build up in the region, using the Israeli genocide as a launching pad for a war against Iran and its allied forces.

Millions of people all over the world have demanded an immediate ceasefire and an end to the hostilities. Workers and youth, including many Jews, have joined mass protests against Israel and its NATO allies, especially in the imperialist countries.

But events have confirmed that appeals to capitalist governments and the political establishment, and even to international institutions such as the United Nations, are futile. UN resolutions and appeals have no sanctioning power unless they serve the imperialist powers.

The struggle against genocide and war must be waged by the international working class and directed against their cause, capitalism and imperialism.

The complicity of the Turkish and Kurdish bourgeoisie with imperialism and Zionism

The bourgeois political establishment in Turkey demonstrated its pro-imperialist and reactionary character last year by unanimously accepting Finland's NATO membership as part of a significant escalation in the war against Russia. The main opposition party, the Kemalist Republican People's Party (CHP), enthusiastically supported Finland's NATO membership during the parliamentary session, while the Kurdish bourgeois nationalist Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP) and the pseudo-left Workers' Party of Turkey (T?P) did not vote against and showed their pro-imperialist orientation.

Last January, amid of the genocide in Gaza, President Erdoğan and his government brought Sweden's bid for NATO to parliament and approved the enlargement of the alliance with the overwhelming support of the other parties. This once again showed the falsity of Ankara's denunciations of the Netanyahu regime and criticism of Washington and European capitals.

However, Ankara fears that US imperialism's drive to dominate the Middle East could draw Turkey into a war against Iran that would damage the interests of the bourgeoisie.

The bourgeoisie's support for the expansion of NATO amid the genocide in Gaza reveals its dilemma, reflected in Turkey's refusal to impose any sanctions on Tel Aviv. Erdoğan has repeatedly condemned the Netanyahu government, but Turkey continues to maintain critical exports to Israel, including steel and fuel, materials being used in the war against Palestinians.

It is also evident in Syria, which the Turkish state has been destroying in complicity with the imperialist powers since 2011. Ankara, disturbed by the alliance of its own ally US imperialism with the Kurdish nationalist forces, is again preparing illegal military operations in Syria and Iraq targeting Kurdish militias seeking a "final solution" to the Kurdish question. Previous ground operations have resulted in the displacement of hundreds of thousands of Kurdish civilians and thousands of deaths.

The Turkish and Kurdish bourgeois nationalist parties, which are allied

with NATO and Zionism and hostile to the working class, have proved incapable of opposing imperialism and defending the democratic rights of the masses. The pseudo-left parties, which focus on an overt or covert alliance with these pro-NATO and pro-Zionist bourgeois parties, have long since removed the genocide in Gaza and NATO's war against Russia in Ukraine from their agenda.

Oppose authoritarianism! Defend democratic rights!

Under conditions of the deepening crisis of world capitalism, democratic forms of rule are collapsing in Turkey as everywhere else. The escalating drive of the ruling class towards dictatorship, the suppression of democratic rights, promotion of anti-refugee hysteria and far-right movements, are rooted in the international crisis of the capitalist system and are essentially aimed at the potential threat from the working class.

Pro-war and pro-genocide policies, the policy of "profit before life" in the response to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, the increase in social inequality and the cost of living, cannot be implemented by democratic means.

Thousands of Kurdish politicians, including many party leaders and former deputies, Can Atalay—the elected deputy of T?P—and countless journalists have been imprisoned in blatant violation of their basic democratic rights.

The orientation of the pseudo-left towards the CHP-led bourgeois opposition, which is complicit in the abolition of democratic rights, underlines their bankruptcy. The violent repression by the government after 2015 was realised with the active support of the CHP. It has backed military invasions of Syria and Iraq and given critical votes to the government to pass the constitutional amendment to lift the immunity of Kurdish deputies. It has consistently promoted an anti-refugee campaign, culminating in the presidential elections in 2023.

The Kurdish nationalist movement, which had previously negotiated and cooperated with Erdoğan, saw no harm in forming an alliance with the CHP in both the 2019 local elections and last year's presidential elections.

As the great Russian revolutionary and founder of the Fourth International, Leon Trotsky, explained in his Theory of Permanent Revolution, in countries with belated capitalist development such as Turkey, no faction of the bourgeoisie can carry out the tasks of establishing a democratic regime or independence from imperialism. They fall to the working class, which the bourgeoisie sees as the main threat.

The pseudo-left adapts to the politics of the bourgeois establishment

Local governments in Turkey serve mainly as a means for politicians and businesses to collectively plunder social resources. Unlike in general elections, the absence of a threshold promotes competition and unprincipled bargaining for positions in cities and districts between establishment parties rather than nationwide alliances.

The Justice and Development Party (AKP) and its partner, the fascistic Nationalist Movement Party (MHP), which took part in last year's parliamentary elections as part of the People's Alliance led by Erdoğan, are in alliance in some regions, while in others they are fielding rival candidates. A successor of late Necmettin Erbakan's "National Outlook" tradition, the New Welfare Party, which appeals to the impoverished middle class and working people based on Islamist social demagoguery, is running its own candidates in almost all regions. It was also a part of Erdoğan's Peoples' Alliance in the 2023 elections.

The right-wing Nation Alliance led by the CHP has collapsed in this election. In contrast to the local elections in 2019, the CHP could not get the support of the DEM party (former HDP) in major cities like Istanbul, Ankara and Izmir, due to tactical differences, while the pseudo-left tendencies came to the rescue of this right-wing bourgeois party in many places.

As the wildcat strike movement against the cost of living has spread across the country and social anger against the pro-imperialist and pro-Zionist bourgeois parties has grown, the middle class pseudo-left parties

are doing their best to keep this opposition within the confines of the capitalist system and to use it to advance their horse-trade over seats.

These parties, which function as extensions of the right-wing bourgeois parties, do not represent an opposition to imperialism and capitalism but they seek to advance the interests of the upper sections of the middle class by gaining positions within the bourgeois state apparatus.

The T?P plays the leading role in its open alliance with the CHP and the DEM party. But the many other tendencies such as the Stalinist Communist Party of Turkey (TKP), the Labour Party (EMEP) and the Left Party share the same opportunist politics and lined up behind Kemal K?l?çdarolu, the pro-NATO and anti-refugee candidate of the CHP in the 2023 presidential elections.

The Workers' Democracy Party (?DP), a section of the Morenoite International Workers' Unity (UIT-CI), and the Socialist Laborers Party, the former Turkish section of the International Socialist League (ISL) and the new ally of the Partido Obrero in Argentina, are in an unprincipled collaboration with the T?P, which functions as an extension of the CHP. Their candidates are running from the T?P lists in several places.

A similar unprincipled political attitude can be seen in the Revolutionary Workers' Party (D?P), the Turkish sister party of the Workers Revolutionary Party (EEK) in Greece. In line with its alliance with the Russian neo-Stalinists, the D?P announced that it would support the candidate of the Stalinist TKP in the major industrial city of Gebze and the candidates of the Communist Movement of Turkey (TKH), which originates from the TKP, in the metropolitan municipalities of Istanbul and Kocaeli.

The SEG strongly opposes Pabloite opportunism, which seeks to subordinate the workers to bourgeois nationalism or Stalinism and ultimately to capitalism, and fights for the development of socialist consciousness within the working class and its political independence.

Form rank-and-file committees to unite the working class internationally!

The ruling class is pursuing a relentless attack on the living conditions of the working class to maintain its militarist policies and the flow of profits. Social inequality has deepened in recent years, with high inflation and the cost of living.

According to the latest official report, the income of the richest 10 percent is 15 times higher than the income of the bottom 10 percent. The Gini coefficient has risen from 0.391 to 0.433 in 10 years, placing Turkey first in Europe in terms of income inequality. While the official inflation rate for 2023 was 64 percent, according to the independent Inflation Research Group it was over 125 percent.

Rising living costs and social inequality have fuelled the growth of class struggles in recent years. In response, the government has pursued a policy of high interest rates and pressure on employment and wages. The central bank's policy rate rose from 8.5 percent in May last year to 45 percent in January after eight consecutive increases.

The major role in suppressing wages and the class struggle falls to the trade union confederations, which are controlled by the ruling parties or by the bourgeois opposition and the pseudo-left.

Workers are confronting not only the corporations but also the trade union and state apparatus. To go forward, they must build their own independent rank-and-file committees and unite nationally and internationally on a programme of class struggle. The International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees provides workers around the world with the means to wage this fight.

Build the Sosyalist E?itlik Partisi!

The critical issue in Turkey and worldwide is the question of historical perspective and political leadership. This means building the ICFI and its branches, the Socialist Equality Party, as the revolutionary vanguard of the working class.

Against the pseudo-left forces that seek to tie workers and youth to the

national bourgeoisie, the ICFI and SEG fight to prepare the working class for the objectively revolutionary crisis that is developing globally. The fundamental contradictions of capitalism, which are again plunging the world into the catastrophe of imperialist war and driving workers everywhere against the ruling class and its state, can only be resolved by transferring power to the working class through world socialist revolution.

In this struggle, the SEG is working in closest political cooperation with its sister parties in the ICFI in the US, Europe and around the world. We endorse and support the 2024 election campaigns of the Socialist Equality Party in the US and Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei in Germany. They are intervening with a principled socialist and internationalist programme in the US presidential elections and the European elections, which are critical for the international working class.

This principled basis was explained by David North, national chairman of the SEP in the US, in his announcement of the campaign:

The Socialist Equality Party is intervening in this election to raise the political consciousness of the working class, to develop its understanding that no solution can be found to any of the problems confronting working people except through the ending of the capitalist system and its replacement with socialism, and that this great historical task can only be achieved by adopting a global strategy aimed at the mobilization of the power of the American and international working class in a unified struggle against the world capitalist system.

The SEG calls on all those who agree with this perspective and seek a genuine revolutionary and socialist alternative in the struggle against imperialist war, genocide, social counter-revolution and authoritarian regimes to join the struggle to build the ICFI and the Sosyalist E?itlik Partisi.



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