

Turkey: 200 detained and 49 arrested at May Day rally in Istanbul protesting genocide in Gaza

Bar?? Demir
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More than 200 people were detained across Turkey after the May Day demonstrations, while 49 people were arrested and sent to prison in Istanbul.

Five demonstrators were arrested for previously protesting against President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's government's collaboration with Israel in the NATO-backed genocide in Gaza.

The Socialist Equality Group of Turkey and the *World Socialist Web Site* condemns this police state repression and calls for the release of those arrested. They are part of efforts to crush the growing social opposition around the world to the genocide in Gaza, imperialist war and attacks on working class conditions.

In Istanbul, flouting a ruling by the Constitutional Court, the government and the governor's administration had illegally banned celebrations in Taksim Square and declared a *de facto* state of emergency. Despite this, tens of thousands of people gathered around Taksim, demanding that the historic May Day square be opened for celebrations. The demonstrators were blocked by riot police and dispersed by violent police action.

The governor of Istanbul, Davut Gül, said in a vengeful statement: “No crime goes unpunished. 210 people have been arrested. The state may leave its reaction for tomorrow, but it will not let them get away with it.”

Youth Committees group stated that “5 of our comrades who were detained on the morning of 1 May when they said ‘Taksim cannot be closed to the people!’ were arrested for exposing collaboration with the Zionists”.

The group One Thousand Youth for Palestine issued

a statement on X/Twitter:

5 of our friends have been arrested for saying that relations with the Zionists should be cut. Our friends who tirelessly raise the voice of the Intifada are our honour. We call on all friends of Palestine for solidarity. Our struggle will continue until Palestine is free from the river to the sea. #ThecrimeiscollaborationwithIsrael.

Erdo?an, who rejected widespread calls to cut ties with Israel and continues to keep open US-NATO bases, has been exposed as a pro-imperialist and pro-Zionist politician in the midst of the genocide in Gaza.

On April 9, Erdogan's government was forced to impose restrictions on Turkish-Israeli trade, and last week it announced the suspension of exports and imports with Israel “until the Israeli government allows the uninterrupted and sufficient flow of humanitarian aid to Gaza.

The Socialist Equality Group issued a statement on X/Twitter on Sunday “strongly condemning the arrest of 38 people for exercising their democratic right to celebrate #MayDay in Taksim Square” and called on “all workers and youth to demand the release of those arrested and detained”.

Regarding the Erdogan government's cooperation with Israel, the statement said: “Allowing trade with Israel, which has been subjecting the Palestinians to genocide since October, until a few days ago, maintaining all relations with this country, keeping open the bases in Turkey of Israel's main supporters,

the United States and NATO, are undeniable proof of complicity with genocide.”

The statement continued:

Erdo?an is preparing to meet with US President Biden, who fully supports Israel and the genocide, in Washington. Germany's President Steinmeier, another major imperialist supporter of Israel, was received in Istanbul at the end of April by both Istanbul Governor Davut Gül and CHP Mayor Ekrem ?mamo?lu. In the meantime, pro-Palestinian demonstrators protesting against Steinmeier were attacked by police.

This shows that the alliance with US-NATO imperialism and Israel is the common strategic orientation of the ruling class and its main parties.

It is noteworthy that the arrests took place after the meeting on May 2 between the leader of the Republican People's Party (CHP), Özgür Özel, and the leader of the ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP) and President Erdo?an, in which Erdo?an signalled a “softening” of political tensions.

After the meeting Erdo?an said, “I also told Mr. Özel that I would pay a return visit at the first opportunity. Turkey needs this. Turkish politics needs this. I want to start the process of softening politics in Turkey by realizing this visit at the first opportunity. We will take this step.”

This “softening” should be seen as a warning to the working class, as it means that the ruling class is closing ranks. It exposes the pseudo-left tendencies that supported the CHP as a progressive alternative to the Erdo?an government in last year's presidential elections and this year's local elections.

The pseudo-left parties have persistently supported the CHP, which has proved to be openly pro-imperialist with its support for NATO expansion, has fuelled anti-refugee sentiment and signed a protocol with the fascist Victory Party against refugees and Kurds.

This anti-working class role of the CHP was manifested in the recent May Day celebrations. The CHP and its trade union allies DISK and KESK tried to

pose as democrats and rally opposition behind themselves by calling for the opening of Taksim for the May Day celebrations. But the CHP and the trade union bureaucracy soon called for dispersal and left the meeting area, leaving the remaining demonstrators to face the riot police.

All the parties of the ruling class, despite their tactical differences, agree on the policy of war and genocide, attacks on the working class and the destruction of democratic rights, including freedom of expression.

This is an international phenomenon. Mass protests by US college students against the genocide in Gaza are facing a police crackdown supported by both Democrats and Republicans. Thousands of students marched at graduation ceremonies across the US over the weekend, bravely defying police state repression.

More than 2,300 people have been arrested and criminally charged over the past two weeks for holding non-violent protests at US campuses to demand an end to the deliberate slaughter and starvation of civilians in Gaza, mainly women and children.

In Ukraine, the Zelensky regime, acting as a proxy in the US-NATO war against Russia, is carrying out a violent crackdown on left-wing movements whose opposition to the war is finding growing resonance among the Ukrainian working class. This repression includes the arrest of Bogdan Syrotyuk, a socialist opponent of the reactionary war between the Ukrainian and Russian oligarchic regimes and supporter of the International Committee of the Fourth International, by the Security Service of Ukraine (SBU) in his hometown of Pervomaisk in southern Ukraine on Thursday 25 April.

As the Socialist Equality Group said in its statement, workers and youth must reject all parties allied to imperialism and Zionism. The only social force that can stop imperialist war and genocide and defend democratic rights is the working class, which must be mobilised on the basis of an international socialist programme.



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