

Provocations against Syrians in Turkey: Oppose mob attacks and defend refugees!

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Following the arrest of a Syrian adult in Kayseri on Sunday for allegedly molesting an underage girl, crowds gathered, attacked and set fire to shops and vehicles reportedly belonging to Syrian refugees. Yesterday violent demonstrations against refugees were organized in Istanbul, Bursa, Gaziantep, Hatay and Konya, while a climate of anti-Syrian hysteria was whipped up on social media.

The Socialist Equality Group in Turkey calls on workers and youth to oppose these provocations and defend their migrant class brothers and sisters. Once again, factions of the ruling class seek to divide and confuse the working class by scapegoating migrants in the face of the deepening social problems caused by capitalism.

The main culprits responsible for this explosive environment are the NATO imperialist powers, which have been destroying the Middle East for decades for their predatory interests, all sections of the Turkish ruling class involved in these operations, and the pseudo-left parties that have lined up behind the Turkish bourgeois opposition parties campaigning against the refugees for years.

In Kayseri, 14 police officers and one firefighter were injured in the violence and 67 people were arrested. Interior Minister Ali Yerlikaya said, “Following the events that took place in Kayseri on the evening of June 30, 2024, 343,000 posts were published from approximately 79,000 accounts on the social media platform X. It was determined that 37 percent of the accounts were bot accounts and 68 percent of the posts were provocative and negative. Investigations were launched into 63 accounts.”

“The reason for the situation created by a small group is the poisonous discourse of the opposition,” President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan said about the Kayseri

incidents, while the Republican People’s Party (CHP) targeted the Erdoğan government’s Syria policy.

In a statement, the CHP declared, “Turkey’s Middle East policy, Syrian policy and refugee policy have collapsed and become bankrupt. Erdoğan and the AKP government are primarily responsible for this grave situation.”

In reality, all pro-imperialist bourgeois parties in power and in opposition are politically responsible for the millions of Syrians becoming refugees and for the anti-refugee violence.

According to data released by the Interior Ministry’s Directorate of Migration Management, the number of Syrians under temporary protection registered in Turkey as of May 9 is 3.1 million, 73.4 percent of whom are women and children. The Interior Ministry puts the total number of migrants in Turkey at over 4.5 million. The CHP and its anti-immigrant, far-right ally, the Victory Party, claim that there are over 10 million migrants in Turkey, without citing any sources.

According to official data, Turkey is one of the countries hosting the largest number of refugees in the world. Millions of people, especially Syrians, becoming refugees in the Middle East is one of the destructive consequences of the wars waged by the US-led imperialist powers throughout the region since the Stalinists dissolved the Soviet Union in 1991.

The Turkish and Kurdish bourgeoisie have been complicit in supporting these wars. The Erdoğan government was directly involved in the war for regime change in Syria, which began in 2011, and subsequently carried out three illegal invasions into northern Syria targeting the US-backed Kurdish militias (YPG), occupying parts of it. The Erdoğan government has also, in cooperation with the European Union’s draconian “Fortress Europe” policy, made an

agreement with Greece and the EU to keep refugees in Turkey, practically abolishing the basic democratic right to asylum.

In addition to using vulnerable refugees as pawns in negotiations with the EU, Erdoğan has announced plans to relocate more than 1 million refugees to northern Syria as part of his government's aims to prevent the emergence of a Kurdish state in Syria.

The exploitation of Syrians for the foreign policy goals of the Turkish ruling class has been accompanied for years by their exploitation as cheap and precarious labor by the capitalist class inside the country.

The grounds for the physical attacks and pogromist attacks against Syrians and refugees as a whole were mainly formed by the poisonous propaganda of the bourgeois opposition led by the CHP and the media, which have attacked the Erdoğan government from the right on this issue.

CHP leader Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu, who ran as the People's Alliance candidate against Erdoğan in last year's presidential elections, made his years of reactionary anti-refugee propaganda a main campaign theme after the first round of voting on May 14, along with the rhetoric of "fighting terrorism." In the second round, Kılıçdaroğlu allied himself with the far-right Victory Party, which calls for the deportation of millions of refugees within a year.

The Kurdish nationalist Peoples' Democracy Party (HDP), Green Left Party (YSP) and the Stalinist Workers' Party of Turkey (TİP) have remained silent on Kılıçdaroğlu's campaign to deport millions of refugees and declare them "invaders" and "criminals" and reiterated their support for him before the second round. Syriza's sister party, the Left Party, the Stalinist Communist Party of Turkey (TKP) and the Morenoist Workers' Democracy Party (İDP) have joined in this political crime by supporting Kılıçdaroğlu.

Meanwhile, the provocative attacks, which began in Kayseri and spread to various cities, coincided with the attempts to resume diplomatic relations between President Erdoğan and Syrian President Bashar al-Assad.

Asked on Friday whether there would be a "normalization process" between Turkey and Syria, Erdoğan said, "There is no reason why not. In other words, we will act together with Syria in developing these relations in the same way as we did in the past."

Erdoğan added, "Just as we have kept our relations with Syria very, very alive in the past, you know we have had these talks with Mr. Assad, even up to family talks. ... So it may happen again."

Two days before Erdoğan's statement, Assad declared that he was "open to any initiative regarding Syrian-Turkish relations," according to the Syrian news agency SANA. On June 26, Assad met with Russia's special envoy to the Middle East, Alexander Lavrentiev, and the two discussed the Turkey-Syria issue. According to the report, Assad said that negotiations with Turkey should focus on ensuring the sovereignty of the Syrian state over all its territory and "the fight against terrorism."

Following these developments and the events in Kayseri, a series of demonstrations and attempted attacks were reported in areas of northern Syria occupied by the Turkish army and its Islamist proxies.

According to reports, Ankara-affiliated public buildings, post offices, official vehicles and Turkish trucks were attacked and Turkish flags were burned in the Turkish-controlled areas of al-Bab, Azaz, al-Rai, Jarabulus and Afrin. The London-based anti-Assad Syrian Observatory for Human Rights (SOHR) reported that four people were killed and at least 20 wounded in clashes between Turkish forces and armed groups.

These developments are taking place under conditions of war in the Middle East, which escalated with Israel's imperialist-backed genocide in Gaza and targeted Iran as well as Lebanon, Yemen and Syria.

The way to stop the genocide in Gaza and the escalation of war in Syria and across the Middle East is the unification of the working class in a socialist, anti-war movement to take power across the region and internationally against imperialism and its regional proxies.



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