

Educators in Turkey protest draft anti-labor law

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10 July 2024

Hundreds of educators gathered in front of the Education Ministry in Ankara Tuesday to protest the Teachers' Professional Law, now being discussed in the parliament.

When they tried to march to the parliament, they were attacked by the police. Eleven educators were arrested after police used tear gas. Ahead of the parliamentary vote, the protest continues in the Parliament Park.

Gülhan Şimşek, head of Ankara Branch No. 4 of Eğitim Sen union, one of the educators detained on Tuesday night, told the daily *Evrensel*: “We saw two young people being attacked on the ground. Then we were arrested along with 11 of our friends. They used reverse handcuffs in the [police] van. I was hit on both sides of my jaw, so I can't chew. We were arrested with curses.”

Şimşek added: “Some of our friends had their noses broken; some were beaten on their feet. Some of our friends' clothes were torn. In the police van, we said that we were educators, but the police continued to beat us with insults. We said that we would file a complaint against the police.”

The Eğitim Sen Union organized a separate protest Tuesday and wanted to march to the parliament. After being blocked by the police for a long time, a small number of representatives were allowed to march to the parliament and make a statement there.

Educators oppose the bill on the grounds that it would destroy teachers' job security, put pressure on teachers through a disciplinary code, continue contractual assignments instead of tenure, and impose a series of new training and testing requirements for new teachers or those deemed incompetent by inspectors.

There are about 1.1 million teachers in public schools in Turkey. Of these, 50,000 are contract teachers who work under precarious conditions, while 90,000 are

“paid teachers” who earn less than the minimum wage and have almost no security. Private schools employ about 180,000 teachers. The new law is part of a decades-long policy of privatizing education and worsening employment conditions.

Teachers working in the private schools have been struggling for some time for a basic salary and job security. These demands are ignored in the bill. Ozan Fındık of the Private Sector Teachers' Union, an independent rank-and-file organization, told the *Evrensel*: “Our main demand is a basic salary. Teachers in private educational institutions should not be paid less than their colleagues in the public sector. We want temporary contracts to be replaced by permanent ones.”

The protest of educators in the capital took place amid the bourgeoisie's intensified attack on living and working conditions.

With annual inflation officially over 70 percent as of July, the government of President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan only intensifies its austerity measures. The government has refused to raise the minimum wage, the salary of nearly half of all workers, while prices have continued to rise because of a massive increase in taxes on basic goods. In recent months, social anger has been growing, fueled by the decline in real wages in the face of the cost-of-living crisis and the government's complicity in the genocide in Gaza.

This played an important role in Erdoğan's Justice and Development Party (AKP) coming second to the Republican People's Party (CHP) in the March 31 local elections for the first time since 2002.

However, Erdoğan is not the only one concerned about the growing opposition within the working class and the possibility of an explosion in the class struggle. After the elections, Erdoğan's talks with CHP leader Özgür Özel on so-called “political détente” reflect the

need for the two main parties of the ruling class to close ranks in order to suppress the opposition from the below.

The social attack on the working class is accompanied by police state repression and the devastating consequences of the years-long reactionary campaign against asylum seekers.

A Syrian child worker was killed during the pogroms against migrants that began in late June. Despite the scale and severity of these attacks, which injured many people and burned homes, workplaces and vehicles of Syrians, almost all the more than 1,000 attackers who were initially detained were released after giving statements. Only 28 people were arrested and charged.

In contrast, Mehmet S?dd?k Ak??, the elected mayor of the Hakkâri municipality from the Kurdish nationalist People's Equality and Democracy Party (DEM Party, formerly HDP), was arrested last month and replaced by a trustee. In May, over 70 people were arrested in Istanbul for protesting the closure of Taksim Square for May Day demonstrations.

The attack on educators is part of the government's comprehensive assault on social and democratic rights. But this attack cannot be opposed by relying on the trade union bureaucracies, which have proved for years that they are an obstacle to organizing a united struggle against the privatization of education and the regression of working conditions.

The way forward in the struggle against the capitalist offensive against educators and public education is to build an independent, rank-and-file movement that overcomes sectoral and union divisions.

The government's refusal to raise the minimum wage has already led to wildcat strikes in several areas. Around 600 workers at the Eti chromium mine in Elaz?? have been on strike since early July, demanding bonuses and an increase in the basic wage. Civil servants at the CHP-run Izmir Metropolitan Municipality walked off the job for a day last week to demand their collective bargaining demands be accepted, while subcontracted workers at the Post Office Cargo Processing Center in Adana stopped working on Tuesday to protest overwork and low wages.

The growing discontent in the working class led the hated leaders of Türk-??. D?SK and Hak-?? to meet in concern on Tuesday and to issue a joint statement. In a

statement on "Inflation, Fiscal Justice and Wage Increase", the leaders of the three main trade union confederations demanded an increase of the minimum wage but did not call for any action.

What unites the union bureaucracies is their aim of preventing a wildcat strike movement outside of their control. The development of such a movement based on the common social and democratic demands of the working class requires the building of rank-and-file committees in all major workplaces, independent of the trade union apparatus. The International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees provides workers around the world with the tools they need for this fight.



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