Turkey threatens to deport Palestinians protesting Gaza genocide

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1 September 2024

A Palestinian university student was detained on Tuesday after protesting Turkey's mediation of oil supplies from Azerbaijan to Israel during a panel discussion on Palestine organised by the state-owned English language broadcaster TRT World. On Thursday, three other people, including a Palestinian, were reportedly detained in connection with the incident.

Stating that two Palestinian protesters have been sent to the Repatriation Centre under the threat of deportation, the group Thousand Youth for Palestine continues its protest in front of President Recep Tayyip Erdo?an's Justice and Development Party (AKP)'s Istanbul Provincial Administration to demand the release of their friends. The group's members have been detained many times before for protesting the genocide in Gaza and the complicity of the Erdo?an government.

This persecution and the recent unlawful threat of deportation of Palestinian youth exposes Turkey's complicity in Israel's genocide in Gaza. The Socialist Equality Group condemns this persecution and calls on workers and youth to mobilise for the release of those detained. The deportation of Palestinian youth to a country where a genocidal war is now spreading to the West Bank could have fatal consequences.

A study by Oil Change International reveals that many countries, including signatories to the Geneva Conventions on genocide, have supplied oil for the tanks and planes used by Israel in the Gaza genocide and are complicit in crimes against the Palestinian people.

The study analysed shipping records, satellite imagery and other open-source industry data to track 65 oil and fuel shipments to Israel between October 21, 2023 and July 12. According to the report, a total of 4.1 million tonnes of crude oil have been shipped to Israel since the start of the war on Gaza, and these shipments have continued uninterrupted since the International Court of Justice rulings.

Israel imports almost 99 per cent of the oil it uses. According to the report, Azerbaijan is the main supplier, providing 28 per cent of the crude oil going to Israel. Azerbaijan is followed by Kazakhstan and the African country Gabon with 22 per cent. These three countries meet three-quarters of Israel's oil needs.

Turkey, Italy, Cyprus and Greece play a key role in providing transshipment services to Israel. As the terminus of the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan pipeline, Turkey ranks first in terms of volume, accounting for 26 per cent of shipments to Israel. Cyprus follows Turkey with 21 per cent.

Turkey's continued intermediation of Azerbaijan's critical oil shipments to Israel and the persecution of protesters exposes the hypocrisy of the Erdo?an government's response to the Gaza genocide.

President Recep Tayyip Erdo?an and his government's first reaction after October 7 was one of caution and restraint. It called for a ceasefire and invited the Israeli state and Hamas to the table.

The events of October 7 have undermined the process of normalisation with Israel that Turkey has been pursuing in recent years, based on interests in the natural gas resources of the eastern Mediterranean. Ankara also fears that it could be drawn into a war against Iran, which would damage the interests of the Turkish bourgeoisie, through US imperialism's drive to dominate the Middle East.

The public demand to stop trade with Israel was persistently rejected and ignored by the government until May. Amid the genocide in Gaza, the government maintained diplomatic and economic relations with

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Israel for a long time and approved the expansion of NATO, which supports the genocide, by accepting Sweden as a member. In Turkey, where the majority of the population has anti-imperialist and anti-Zionist sentiments, this was a factor in the massive defeat of Erdo?an's Justice and Development Party (AKP) in the elections on March 31.

In the face of the public backlash, Erdo?an was forced to take decisions to cut direct trade with Israel and even hardened his rhetoric to the point of threatening military intervention against it. Despite this, US-NATO bases in Turkey continue to support Israel's operations, and Azerbaijan's oil shipments through Turkey, which feed Israel's war machine, are increasing.

There are suspicions that Turkey is continuing to trade with Israel via Palestine after the official end of trade with Tel Aviv. According to the Turkish Statistical Institute (TurkStat), exports to Palestine in July increased 12-fold after the ban on trade with Israel in July—to almost as much as in the whole of 2023. Last July, $128 million worth of exports were made to Palestine during the destruction and massacres. Exports to Palestine in July last year were only $10 million.

Turkey, which used to be Israel's largest steel exporter, exported only $27,000 worth of steel to Palestine in July last year, the *Evrensel* newspaper reported. In July 2024, however, this export rose to $14.3 million, an increase of around 51,000 percent. There was a similar increase in exports of cement and glass products.

The main reason for the Erdo?an government's continued feeding of the Israeli war machine is the ruling class's close military-strategic ties with US-NATO imperialism.

The traditional policy, which Erdogan has largely maintained since 2002, is one of maneuvering between the pro-Palestinian sentiments of the people and the pro-imperialist and pro-Zionist character of the ruling class. In Turkey, which was the first Muslim-majority country to recognize the creation of Israel in 1948, the ruling elite in the following decades rhetorically condemned Israel's crimes, but essentially acted in line with the destructive policies of the United States and Israel in the Middle East.

The repeated exposure of the complicity of the Erdo?an government, supposedly the most vocal critic of Israel's crimes in Gaza, underlines once again that the genocide cannot be stopped by appeals to governments or international organisations. The only way to stop the genocide in Gaza and the escalation of the war in the Middle East and worldwide is to unite the working class internationally in an anti-war socialist movement against imperialism and its proxies.

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