Erdo?an criticizes NATO allies as Turkey continues to feed Israel’s war machine

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President Recep Tayyip Erdo?an criticized the UN Security Council and his NATO allies after Israeli forces invading Lebanon attacked the UN Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL).

“The image of the UN, which cannot even protect its own personnel, is a source of shame and concern for the international system,” Erdo?an said on X on Monday, adding, “Can you believe it? The Israeli tanks penetrate the UNIFIL zone, attack peacekeeping soldiers, even wounding some of them, but the UN Security Council decides to just watch all this criminality from its stands. This is called impotence, surrendering to Israeli aggression.”

Despite Erdo?an’s rhetorical criticism of Israel and the imperialist powers behind it, new data emerging in recent weeks show that Turkey’s trade with Israel, which it officially declared to have been cut off, continues indirectly. This situation reveals not only the hypocrisy of the Erdo?an government, but also the dependence and complicity of the Turkish bourgeoisie with imperialism.

Despite widespread social opposition, the Erdo?an government had stubbornly continued to trade with Israel until last May. However, after its defeat in the local elections on 31 March, the government, realizing that it had lost its social legitimacy, declared that it had officially cut trade with Israel and increased its criticism of Israel and its imperialist allies.

According to the foreign trade data for August 2024, published by the Turkish Statistical Institute (TurkStat) at the end of last month, trade with Israel appears to have stopped in May, as announced by the government. However, the dramatic increase in trade with Palestine over the same period strengthens claims that trade with Israel continues indirectly.

According to TurkStat data, trade with Palestine, in the midst of genocide and destruction, increased more than tenfold in July and August. Among the items with the highest increase are steel exports, vital to Israel’s arms and defence industries. In August, steel exports to Palestine increased by 119,695 per cent, from $17,000 to $20.5 million.

According to the Israeli news website *ynet*, Palestinian companies are being used as fronts to conduct trade. According to the report: “So far, however, despite the Turkish embargo on the export of goods to Israel, exports to the Palestinian Authority have continued, much of which has reached the Israeli economy indirectly. The method worked as follows: The goods left Turkey by ship, so to speak, with a bill of lading addressed to the PA. On board the ships, all bills of lading addressed to merchants in PA territory were replaced by bills of lading addressed to a commercial organisation in Israel... As a result, the imports from Turkey did not reach the territory of the PA but went directly to the Israeli ports of Ashdod and Haifa”.

Journalist Metin Cihan, who has been reporting and exposing the Erdo?an government’s continued trade with Israel since the beginning of the genocide in Gaza, confirmed this with his statement on October 6. Citing data from the Marine Traffic website, he stated that 88 ships entered Israeli ports in the last month.

Cihan revealed that the shipping company of Erdo?an’s son Burak Erdo?an had shipped cargo from Israel during the bombing of Gaza. This was unconvincingly denied by the Erdo?an government. On Monday, Cihan posted on X a new document he had received on the subject, writing:

“Manta Denizcilik’s trade with Israel was accepted, but it was claimed that there was no connection between Manta Denizcilik and MB Denizcilik, Burak

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Erdo?an's company. Not many people bought it, but I think the document I have just received will end the debate once and for all."

According to Cihan, ships belonging to ZIM, one of the largest Israeli shipping companies, have been able to continue their operations in Turkey without interruption while they face protests around the world. In his video, Cihan said that ports in Istanbul, Izmir, Kocaeli, Bursa and Mersin are providing services to ZIM ships.

It is not only through indirect trade that Ankara is fueling Israel's war machine, which has razed Gaza to the ground, spilled over into Lebanon and is moving with the United States towards a full-scale attack on Iran. US-NATO bases in Turkey continue to support Israel, and Turkey continues to mediate Azerbaijan's vital oil supplies to Israel.

On the other hand, Erdo?an has also expressed his concern about the expansion of the war in the Middle East, which he fears will undermine the interests of the Turkish bourgeoisie. Earlier this month, Erdo?an warned of a war between Israel and Turkey, saying that the Zionist Israeli regime "will set its sights on our homeland after Palestine and Lebanon". Last July, he said that Turkey could intervene militarily against Israel.

The hypocritical Palestine and Middle East policies and the complicity of the Erdo?an government are essentially an expression of the Turkish bourgeoisie's dependence on imperialism. The Turkish bourgeoisie has a long history of supporting the US-NATO wars in the Middle East. Now, the war that the USA is escalating with Israel to completely dominate the Middle East has a risk of dragging Turkey into it.

As one of the main supporters of the US proxy war in Syria aimed at overthrowing the Assad regime, Turkey had contributed to the dynamic that led to the creation of a Kurdish state on its southern border.

The Erdo?an government today considers that a full-scale US-Israeli war against Iran might create greater problems and criticizes its imperialist allies for the risk of spreading the war.

However, the Turkish bourgeoisie structurally lacks the capacity to oppose imperialism and the war. As Leon Trotsky explained in his theory of Permanent Revolution, in the age of imperialism, in countries with late capitalist development, the bourgeoisie is incapable of fulfilling tasks such as independence from imperialism and the establishment of a democratic regime. More than imperialism, it fears that a revolutionary movement of the working class against imperialism would threaten its own power.

As the *World Socialist Web Site* explained in a statement on the first anniversary of the Gaza genocide, the approach of pressuring the imperialist powers to adopt more humane policies is bankrupt and a new strategy for the anti-war movement is required: "The struggle against the Gaza genocide and war with Iran can only be developed as a fight against imperialism, which Lenin called 'the highest stage of capitalism'."

For the workers of Turkey and the Middle East, this means fighting both US-NATO imperialism and Zionism and their own reactionary bourgeois regimes based on an international socialist program.

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