

Turkish pseudo-left line up behind CHP as Erdoğan's crackdown intensifies

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President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's government has stepped up its crackdown on political parties including those in parliament, the media and more broadly, while the Republican People's Party (CHP) has responded by calling for early elections.

Amid an ongoing cost of living crisis, the CHP hopes to exploit growing public anger at the government's attacks on working-class wages and social rights to advance its campaign for power.

Istanbul Mayor Ekrem İmamoğlu, a possible CHP candidate in the presidential election, testified on Friday at the Istanbul Chief Public Prosecutor's Office as part of two separate investigations by the Terrorism Crimes Investigation Bureau into allegations of "threatening" the Istanbul's Chief Public Prosecutor and of "attempting to influence the execution of judicial duties by targeting" experts in some investigations.

İmamoğlu, who already faces the prospect of suspension from politics due to an anti-democratic lawsuit whose outcome is pending, claimed that mounting investigations and lawsuits against CHP municipalities are part of a conspiracy against him, and that the same unqualified expert has been appointed in these cases, naming him.

İmamoğlu testified that he did not accept the accusations against him. He denied threatening Istanbul's Chief Prosecutor or targeting experts: "What I did is freedom of expression. And freedom of expression is a constitutional right. Freedom of expression includes criticism of judicial authorities and their functioning."

Later, İmamoğlu organised a well-attended rally near the courthouse, telling supporters: "We have been experiencing the highest level of judicial harassment in Istanbul for four months." Examples included "arresting [Mayor] Ahmet Özer in Esenyurt [District] in the early hours of the morning and throwing him into prison, and the dismissal of [Mayor] Rıza Akpolat in Beşiktaş [District]."

The CHP came first in year, relegating Erdoğan's Justice and Development Party (AKP) to second place for the first time since 2002. While the CHP did not campaign on workers' social grievances, including the rising cost of living, or against Israel's NATO-backed genocide in Gaza, it was an undeserving beneficiary of the growing anger against the government on these issues.

In the 2023 presidential elections, Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu, the candidate of the rival bourgeois electoral alliance led by the CHP, who advocated anti-immigrant and pro-NATO policies, received the support of pseudo-left and Stalinist parties such as the Workers' Party of Turkey (TİP), the Left Party, the Labour Party (EMEP) and the Communist Party of Turkey (TKP). In addition to the Pabloites within the TİP, the Morenoite Workers' Democracy Party (İDP) also lined up behind the CHP.

Now, as the CHP prepares to replace Erdoğan and the AKP in early elections, the pseudo-left parties are helping feed the illusion that this right-wing bourgeois party, as pro-imperialist and anti-working class as the AKP, is a "progressive" alternative.

In his statement on X after the rally, İmamoğlu thanked those parties that came to support him. These included the extreme right-wing and fascistic GOOD Party and the Victory Party, the Islamist Felicity Party, the Future Party, the New Welfare Party as well as TİP, the Left Party and EMEP.

The Socialist Equality Group, the Turkish section of the International Committee of the Fourth International, opposes the escalating state repression of the Erdoğan government and defends democratic rights on principle. But this can only be achieved from a socialist perspective based on the working class, independent of the CHP and the entire bourgeois political establishment.

Parties attending İmamoğlu's rally, including the Socialist Labourers Party, which claims to be Trotskyist,

prostrate themselves before the CHP and ?mamo?lu, accepting the leadership of this right-wing bourgeois party and promoting the illusion that the CHP is an alternative to be supported against the Erdo?an regime.

But the CHP, the founding party of the Turkish Republic, is a traditional defender of the same ruling class interests that have guided Erdo?an's authoritarian regime. A pro-NATO party, the CHP favours maintaining the Turkish bourgeoisie's military-strategic alliance with US imperialism in the Middle East. As a party of the big banks and corporations, it supports the Erdo?an government's program of social attacks on the working class and above all fears the development of an independent working-class movement.

Throughout the world, the ruling classes are moving towards authoritarian regimes to protect their interests under conditions of escalating imperialist war and social inequality. The most striking example is the re-election of Donald Trump as US president and the dictatorial executive orders he has immediately issued.

The Erdo?an government's recent crackdown has targeted the CHP and other parties across the political spectrum. Amid negotiations with Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) leader Abdullah Öcalan, the Kurdish nationalist Peoples' Equality and Democracy Party (DEM Party) has faced increased repression and arrests. Since the March 2024 elections, the number of DEM Party municipalities with unconstitutionally appointed trustees has risen to eight.

In December, several members of the Socialist Labourers Party, including its chairman, were detained in a frame-up operation, while dozens of people were arrested in January as a result of operations against the Socialist Party of the Oppressed (ESP). As the attack on the press escalated, it was reported that at least 14 journalists were arrested in January alone.

The repression of political opposition and journalists is increasing under conditions of intensifying class struggle. The decisive continuation of a strike by metal workers, who refused to recognise Erdo?an's decree banning their strike in December, was an important sign of the growing radicalisation of the working class.

Against this backdrop, the government is preparing to launch new investigations into the anti-government Gezi Park protests that drew millions of people across the country in 2013, in a bid to criminalise and violently suppress all forms of democratic dissent and mass protest.

According to Habertürk news, the Istanbul Chief Public Prosecutor's office has sent a letter to the Supreme

Council of Radio and Television (RTÜK) demanding that media broadcasts that legitimised the Gezi Park protests be identified and that a copy of the recordings be sent to the Public Prosecutor's Office for investigation.

In 2013, Turkey's opposition and pseudo-left parties helped Erdo?an to contain mass protests provoked by brutal police repression. Today, while democratic rights are being abolished, the DEM party is negotiating a so-called "peace process" with Erdo?an, claiming it can play a progressive role in solving the Kurdish question. Meanwhile, CHP leader Özel demonstrated bipartisan support for the repressive agenda of the Turkish ruling class by initiating a "détente" process with Erdo?an after the elections in March last year.

The record of the CHP and the DEM party shows they have served to obstruct, not to advance, the struggle of the working class and youth against growing government repression. In Turkey and throughout the world, there is no faction within the bourgeoisie that defends democratic rights or opposes war.

The defence of democracy and the struggle against war cannot be separated from the struggle against capitalism and the establishment parties that defend it, and for workers' power. As Leon Trotsky explained in his Theory of Permanent Revolution, this task falls to the working class, united and based on an international socialist program. The Socialist Equality Group is fighting for this perspective.



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