5 employees of the Turkish-backed aid organisation IHH killed by Israel in Gaza

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The Foundation for Human Rights and Freedoms and Humanitarian Relief (IHH) has announced that five of its employees were killed in an Israeli airstrike in Gaza on Wednesday evening.

"5 of our colleagues working in our project in Gaza with the World Food Program (WFP) were martyred and 2 of our colleagues were seriously injured as a result of the attacks carried out by the occupying Israel in the last two days," IHH said on its X/Twitter account.

The IHH employees have been added to the hundreds of aid workers killed in Israel's genocidal war against the Palestinian enclave. A statement published on the United Nations website on April 1 said that "According to UNRWA, 408 aid workers including more than 280 UNRWA staff have been killed in Gaza since the war began on 7 October 2023."

The killing of employees of the IHH, a group backed by Ankara, was met with condemnation from the Turkish political establishment. "We condemn this cruelty that condemns innocent people to hunger and thirst in the strongest terms, and we invite humanity to raise a louder voice and take more concrete steps against this atrocity," said Fahrettin Altun, the Presidential Communications Director, on X/Twitter.

"We condemn murderous Israel, a Zionist state that spews death even when one tries to help the oppressed Palestinians. We also condemn the international authorities who turn a blind eye to these heinous incidents," said Numan Kurtulmu?, Speaker of the Turkish Grand National Assembly. The parliamentary parties also condemned the attack.

All of these statements reek of hypocrisy. The attack on the aid workers is part of Israel's "concluding moves" in its genocidal war against Palestinians in Gaza. It is being carried out with the full support of Washington and is part of the plan of the administration of US President Donald Trump to seize the territory. The entire Turkish bourgeois political establishment favours strong ties and close relations with the US and NATO—which Turkey has been a member of since 1952—who are behind the genocide in Israel.

In response to journalists' questions on May 22, President Recep Tayyip Erdo?an said: "We have established good relations not only with Mr. Trump, but also with many other leaders. I may even take a trip to the US. Turkish-American relations are not as insignificant as some people think. Mr. Trump has a very positive view of Turkey. Our view of them is the same. We have a strong relationship based on mutual respect and sincerity."

Trump does not hide his closeness to Erdo?an either. In a meeting with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu at the White House in April, he said: "I happen to like him [Erdo?an], and he likes me and I know the press will get very angry … and we've never had a problem … He's a tough guy. He's very smart …"

Moreover, Turkey itself maintains diplomatic, economic and military ties with Israel and aids the genocidal war.

Last week, police dragged protesters staging a sit-in against the genocide in front of the Israeli embassy in Ankara to the ground.

Contrary to government claims, Turkey continues to trade with Israel while the genocide in Gaza continues, according to UN Comtrade, the United Nations' global trade database.

According to data published by *Al Jazeera*, Turkey is the fifth largest exporter to Israel as of 2024. Following China, the US, Germany and Italy, Turkey's exports to Israel reached $2.86 billion.

The figures contradict the Turkish government's

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assertion that trade with Israel has ceased. Despite widespread public opposition, the Erdogan government insisted on maintaining trade ties with Israel until May 2024. It was only after its defeat in the local elections on March 31 that it officially announced it was cutting trade with Israel.

However, data from the Turkish Statistical Institute (TurkStat) revealed a sharp increase in trade with Palestine during the period when trade with Israel was supposedly "terminated." Turkish exports to Palestine reached $757.7 million last year, marking a 521 percent increase. Last year, the Israeli news website *ynet* revealed in a detailed report that trade with ?srael had continued via Palestinian companies which are being used as fronts.

According to *Al Jazeera*, the products most commonly sold from Turkey to Israel include iron and steel, plastics, textiles, food and various industrial raw materials. Many of these products are reportedly used for infrastructure construction and military logistics support.

The Turkish Ministry of Trade called the news about the continuation of trade with Israel "lies and distortions" and stated that "exports, imports and transit trade in all product groups from Turkey to Israel have been completely stopped... In the first four months of 2024, exports totalled 1.522 billion dollars, including exports to Palestine." However, the government has so far failed to provide a reasonable explanation for the increase in exports to Palestine amid genocide and destruction.

On the other hand, Turkey remains complicit in fuelling Israel's war machine by mediating the shipment of Azerbaijani oil to Israel via the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan pipeline. According to a report by Oil Change International from August 2024, Israel imports almost 99 percent of the oil it uses, with Azerbaijan being the main supplier, providing 28 percent of the crude oil going to Israel.

On Wednesday, Erdogan visited Azerbaijan, a country that has increased its military and strategic cooperation with Israel in recent years. "From here, we call on the whole world to increase pressure on the Israeli leadership to establish a permanent ceasefire in Gaza and ensure the urgent delivery of humanitarian aid," Erdogan said.

Since October 2023, the imperialist powers, especially the US, allies of the Turkish bourgeoisie, have supported the genocide in Gaza on the grounds that "Israel has the right to defend itself" and attacked democratic rights by branding anti-genocide opposition as antisemitic.

The return of Erdo?an's "friend" Trump to the White House has accelerated the genocide that began under Democratic President Joe Biden. On February 4, Trump held a joint meeting with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in Washington and called for the complete ethnic cleansing of the Gaza Strip, the destruction of all buildings and the annexation of the territory by the United States.

Then came Netanyahu's declaration of "concluding moves" and this month the Israeli government began an operation to finish the job of ethnically cleansing Gaza. This includes the military occupation of the entire Gaza Strip, the forced displacement of its population and their movement to concentration camps to await deportation.

While the Israeli government and the Trump administration are jointly carrying out ethnic cleansing and waging a genocidal war involving the deliberate targeting of aid workers in Gaza, Erdogan is trying to strengthen his ties with the Trump administration for the benefit of the Turkish bourgeoisie.

The real tensions between the Erdogan and Netanyahu regimes stem mainly from the deepening US-led imperialist operations in the Middle East, which have intensified the regional rivalry between the two countries. Notably, the ascent of al-Qaeda-rooted Islamists in Syria in December 2024, backed by NATO, has exacerbated the competition for influence between Turkey and Israel.

Trump is trying to resolve these tensions under US leadership. Turkey is seen as a critical ally in the Trump administration's plans to recolonize the Middle East under the full domination of US imperialism.

These dirty ties and complicity show that it is not possible to oppose Israel's genocidal war without opposing imperialism and the capitalist ruling class.

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