

10th anniversary of Ankara bombings by ISIS which killed over 100 people

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Today marks the tenth anniversary of the bloodiest terrorist attack in modern Turkish history, the Ankara Train Station massacre on October 10, 2015.

A “Peace Rally” was to take place in Ankara on that day. Trade union confederations and professional organizations organized the event, and the Kurdish nationalist Peoples’ Democratic Party (HDP) and numerous left-wing organizations were set to participate.

At least 104 people were killed and nearly 400 injured when two Islamic State (ISIS)-affiliated suicide bombers blew themselves up among the crowd gathered at the Ankara Train Station intersection before the rally. Following the massacre, angry protests erupted across the country, with demonstrators holding the government responsible.

Hande Arpat, an executive of the Turkish Medical Association (TTB), and numerous other witnesses, stated that immediately following the bombings riot police attacked those in the area with tear gas and water cannons. Then, Arpat wrote, “They [the police] not only entered the area but also attacked healthcare workers treating critically injured people in life-threatening conditions, as well as the injured and the deceased, with pepper spray, endangering people’s lives.”

Last year, ten ISIS members were sentenced to life in prison for the bombings. However, no official whose negligence allowed the attack to occur was prosecuted or resigned.

The massacre was part of the spread to Turkey of the war for regime change in Syria launched in 2011 by Washington and its regional allies, including Ankara. In the proxy war against the regime of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad, the United States, the Gulf regimes and Turkey armed, financed, and directed Islamist jihadist forces.

The spread of ISIS, which emerged from these proxy forces, to Iraq and the Kurdish regions of Syria in 2014 risked a deviation from US aims. The imperialist powers then militarily intervened directly in Iraq and Syria in the name of an “anti-ISIS coalition,” while the People’s Defense Units (YPG)-led Kurdish nationalist militias developed into the main proxy force in the regime-change war in Syria.

In the same period, the Kurdistan Workers’ Party (PKK) was negotiating with the government of President Recep Tayyip Erdo?an. The Turkish ruling elite saw the arming and support

of the YPG, Syrian affiliate of the PKK, by Turkey’s NATO allies as an existential threat. They feared that any step towards Kurdish autonomy or independence in Syria would encourage similar sentiments among the millions of Kurds in Turkey.

As Ankara turned sharply toward supporting Islamist militias seeking to crush the YPG in Syria, negotiations with the PKK collapsed in the summer of 2015. Turkey began suppressing Kurdish forces within the country and in Syria. On August 12, the Kurdistan Communities Union (KCK), the umbrella organization to which the PKK and YPG are affiliated, responded with a statement that read, “There is no other option left for the people of Kurdistan but self-administration.”

“Self-administrations” were subsequently declared in many Kurdish districts.

Meanwhile, the HDP, co-chaired by Selahattin Demirta? and Figen Y?ksekda?, achieved a historic 13 percent share of the vote (6 million votes) in the June 7, 2015 general election. For the first time since 2002, Erdo?an’s Justice and Development Party (AKP) lost the majority needed to form a government in the parliament.

Weeks of coalition talks between Erdo?an and Kemal K?l?çdaro?lu, the then-leader of the Republican People’s Party (CHP), failed. The HDP’s offer to support a CHP-MHP (fascistic Nationalist Movement Party) coalition or form a coalition with the AKP also came to nothing. The HDP joined the “election government” formed afterwards, while the AKP turned to a policy of suppression and intimidation against the Kurdish movement to consolidate its vote ahead of the November 1st early elections.

On July 20, 33 young members of the Federation of Socialist Youth Associations (SDGF) were killed in an ISIS attack in the Suru? district of ?anl?urfa on the border with Syria. The victims had been preparing to travel to Kobani to support its reconstruction after it was attacked by ISIS.

Turkey had become a hub where jihadists could easily cross the border and organize throughout Syria as part of the war to overthrow the Assad regime, which was supported by Russia and Iran, to secure the full dominance of US imperialism in the Middle East. It was confirmed by their own families that ISIS members who carried out these massacres had been operating freely in Turkey for years, under the watch of intelligence

agencies, crossing into Syria and returning.

The police published a list of 21 possible suicide bombers, including Yunus Emre Alagöz, an ISIS member who carried out the Ankara attack. Alagöz was the brother of Sheikh Abdurrahman Alagöz, who carried out the Suruç massacre.

According to intelligence reports, Tuncay Kaya—known as ISIS’s expert bomber—was released 11 days before the October 10 Ankara bombings. He was sought as a suspect in a “possible attack” just hours after the explosions.

Two days before the Ankara massacre, the Turkish Intelligence Department of the General Directorate of Security received information indicating that three individuals, including Yunus Emre Alagöz, might be preparing for an attack. Hours after the bombings, the department sent a letter marked “Confidential” to the Counter-Terrorism Department.

As reported by the daily *Evrensel* on April 12, 2016, “A.A., one of the Ankara Security Branch Directorate chiefs whose statement is included in the investigation file, accused the Turkish National Intelligence Organization (MİT), the Turkish Armed Forces (TSK), and the Intelligence and Counterterrorism Department of the General Directorate of Security of failing to take precautions.” Despite these and similar accusations, the allegations against law enforcement agencies were dismissed, and no public officials, let alone government officials, were prosecuted.

Then-Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu brazenly stated the following regarding ISIS suicide bombers: “We have a list, but since they haven’t taken action, there’s nothing we can do [against them].” Meanwhile, hundreds of Kurdish politicians and journalists were imprisoned under the pretext of “preventive detention.”

After negotiations with the PKK collapsed, the Turkish government imprisoned thousands of Kurdish politicians and journalists, including the co-chairs of the HDP and elected mayors. Thousands of people were killed in military operations in Turkey’s Kurdish provinces that began in August 2015 and continued until March 2016. On March 24, 2016, the Human Rights Foundation of Turkey announced that at least 310 civilians had been killed during the military operations. The civil war in cities and towns led to the displacement of hundreds of thousands of civilians.

Meanwhile, escalating tensions between Ankara and Washington over Syria and the Kurdish issue, as well as Erdoğan’s policy of maneuvering between the US-NATO and Russia and China, led to a failed coup attempt backed by NATO on July 15, 2016. After surviving the coup, Erdoğan expanded his offensive against the Kurdish movement into Syria.

Starting in August 2016, the Turkish Armed Forces (TSK) conducted numerous military operations against the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF)—whose backbone is the YPG—and occupied an area of northern Syria encompassing cities such as Jarablus, Afrin, Ras al-Ayn, and Tell Abyad to prevent the

formation of a unified region under the control of Kurdish militias.

Today, Ankara and the PKK are once again negotiating. As was the case ten years ago, these negotiations are consistent with and subordinate to the imperialist redivision of the Middle East led by US imperialism. Furthermore, the tensions that ended the negotiation process in 2015 and led to the resurgence of civil war have intensified. This is accompanied by escalating imperialist and Zionist aggression in the Middle East, including the genocide in Gaza, military attacks on Iran and its allies, and the change of regime in Syria.

The Ankara-PKK agreement, formed with the approval of the United States as part of the anti-Iran alliance, is also a move against Israel’s growing influence in Syria and the region.

The entire process, masked by claims of “peace and democracy”, is a preparation for more extensive wars and is just as likely to collapse from within.

The aggression of the Zionist state—the spearhead of the US’s “new Middle East” plans—and the takeover of power by the al-Qaeda-linked Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) in December 2024, which overthrew the Assad regime, have deepened the conflict and intensified the struggle for influence over Syria.

The recent resurgence of clashes between the SDF and HTS regime forces not only demonstrates the danger of a new civil war in Syria but also highlights the fragility of the negotiations between the PKK and Ankara.

The only way to prevent atrocities like the Ankara massacre, which occurred as part of the imperialist re-division of the Middle East, end the genocide in Gaza, and ensure lasting peace throughout the region is to build an anti-war, socialist movement within the working class in the Middle East and internationally for the establishment of a Middle East Socialist Federation, in place of reactionary nation states serving imperialist-capitalist interests.



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