

Turkish parliamentary delegation meets with imprisoned Kurdistan Workers Party leader Öcalan

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Members of parliament’s “National Solidarity, Brotherhood, and Democracy Commission” visited Abdullah Öcalan, the leader of the Kurdistan Workers’ Party imprisoned on Imrali Island, on Monday as part of negotiations between the Turkish state and the PKK.

The delegation included Hüseyin Yayman, deputy chair of the ruling Islamist Justice and Development Party (AKP); Feti Yıldız, deputy chair of the fascist Nationalist Movement Party; and Gülistan Kılıç Koçyiğit, deputy chair of the Kurdish nationalist Peoples’ Equality and Democracy Party (DEM Party). According to a report on *BBC Turkish*, while support for negotiations with the PKK stood at 85 percent in a poll, support for a visit to Öcalan was only 25 percent.

The Turkish state had previously held talks with the PKK and Öcalan through its intelligence agency or the DEM Party. This was the first time officials from the AKP and MHP, as a parliamentary commission, officially met with Öcalan. Following a call by Öcalan, the PKK convened its congress in early May and decided to dissolve itself and end armed struggle. By the end of October, it announced its decision to withdraw its armed forces from Turkey.

President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan supported the visit to Öcalan, saying on Monday: “We consider the latest decision taken by the commission to be a decision that paves the way for the process, contributes to the process, and accelerates the elimination of terrorism.”

As with previous meetings with Öcalan, the minutes of this meeting were not made public. As the *World Socialist Web Site* has stated from the outset, this process, conducted through secret diplomacy that serves to conceal the truth from the people, is an attempt by the Turkish and Kurdish bourgeois nationalist leaderships to reach an agreement in line with US imperialism’s efforts to reorganize the Middle East.

In the 51-member commission, 32 votes were cast in favor of the visit to Öcalan. In addition to the AKP, MHP, and DEM Party, commission members from Stalinist parties such as the Labor Party (EMEP) and the Workers’ Party of Turkey (TİP) also voted in favor. The Kemalist Republican People’s Party (CHP), which has the most members in the commission behind the AKP, did not participate in the vote and did not send a representative to the delegation. Instead, the CHP proposed a video conference with Öcalan. The CHP, which received the most votes nationwide in the

2024 local elections, is facing increasing judicial pressure by the government.

DEM Party co-chair Tuncer Bakırhan commented on the CHP’s decision not to send members to visit Öcalan, stating, “We are in a process where we are discussing Turkey’s democracy. Unfortunately, some political parties are trying to turn opposition to the government into opposition to solving the issue. The CHP must correctly understand the Kurdish issue.”

The DEM Party supported the CHP’s candidate Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu against Erdoğan in the 2023 presidential elections and formed local alliances with the CHP described as “urban consensus” in the 2024 local elections.

The claim by the DEM Party and its allies, the TIP and EMEP, that negotiations and pressure on the Erdoğan government can bring peace and democracy amid the war in the Middle East—a critical front in the developing global imperialist war—is an anti-Marxist deception. As Vladimir Lenin stated in his “Peace Program” written in March 1916 during the First World war:

... our “peace programme” must explain that the imperialist Powers and the imperialist bourgeoisie *cannot* grant a democratic peace. Such a peace *must* be sought and fought for, not in the *past*, *not* in a reactionary utopia of a non-imperialist capitalism, nor in a league of equal nations *under* capitalism, but *in the future*, in the socialist revolution of the proletariat. ...

Whoever promises the nations a “democratic” peace without at the same time preaching the socialist revolution, or while repudiating the struggle for it—the struggle which must be carried on now, during the war—is deceiving the proletariat.

As explained in the theory of permanent revolution by Leon Trotsky, who led the October Revolution of 1917 alongside Lenin and founded the Fourth International in 1938, in the era of imperialism, the bourgeoisie in countries with late capitalist development, such as Turkey, is inherently incapable of establishing a democratic regime. This task belongs to the working class, which must rally all oppressed masses behind an

international socialist program. The authoritarian regimes spreading from the US to Turkey and the rest of the world today bear witness to the fact that there is no faction within the ruling class that defends democracy.

The Ankara-PKK negotiations did not emerge in opposition to the nearly 35 years of imperialist aggression that the US has pursued to achieve complete domination of the Middle East; rather, they were part of that aggression. The Turkish and Kurdish bourgeois nationalist leaderships, which supported the 2003 invasion of Iraq and the war for regime change in Syria launched in 2011, are trying to unite their reactionary interests, in the process of reorganizing the Middle East, which gained momentum with Israel's 2023 genocide in Gaza.

When negotiations first came up last year, Erdoğan said, "While the maps are being redrawn in blood, while the war that Israel has waged from Gaza to Lebanon is approaching our borders, we are trying to strengthen our internal front. We want 85 million of us to come together under the common denominator of Turkey." In this context, Ankara, facing increasing competition from Israel, is trying to turn the PKK-led Kurdish movement from a 40-year enemy into an ally and strengthen its hand, with the critical help of Öcalan.

Bahçeli—who had previously demanded the execution of Öcalan, a political prisoner since 1999—encouraged the commission members to visit him. In a statement on November 11, he said that he would visit Öcalan himself if necessary.

Bahçeli's statement came the day after US President Donald Trump met with Ahmed al-Shara, leader of the Al Qaeda-rooted (Hayat Tahrir al-Sham) HTS regime in Syria, at the White House on November 10. This meeting was part of the US's efforts to turn the Syrian regime into its puppet on an anti-Iran axis. Syria is also close to a security agreement with Israel, with which it has a de facto alliance. Washington is trying to align both Turkey and Israel, as well as Ankara and the Kurdish movement, on an anti-Iran axis to eliminate the influence of Russia and China in the Middle East.

Ankara has a certain influence over the HTS regime and is trying to make the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), the PKK's sister organization in Syria, subordinate to Damascus through Öcalan. Speaking to the Mesopotamia Agency in Turkey, SDF Commander Mazlum Abdi said of the meeting between Trump and al-Shara: "The issue of Northern and Eastern Syria, the issue of the SDF, was discussed with Trump. More precisely, Trump asked and received an answer. It was positive... Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan was also present. It was discussed with him as well. As far as we know, President Trump wanted the issues to be resolved without war and through dialogue. They accepted that."

Both the Turkish and Kurdish bourgeois nationalist leaderships, which are pro-imperialist, expect people to believe that the fascist Trump, the main leader behind the Gaza genocide, is now the champion of a great peace in Kurdistan after Palestine. This process, which brings together Islamist Erdoğan, fascist Bahçeli, jihadist al-Shara, and Öcalan, who declares himself a "democratic socialist," with the fascist in the White House, can only lead to greater disasters for the workers and oppressed peoples of the Middle East.

Moreover, the negotiations are being conducted under conditions where democratic rights, already restricted in Turkey, are under severe attack, where mayors elected by millions of people have been imprisoned and replaced by trustees, and where European Court of Human Rights rulings are being violated.

While the unjust and arbitrary detention of Selahattin Demirtaş, former leader of the HDP (predecessor of the DEM Party), continues, thousands of Kurdish and leftist political prisoners remain in jails. Kurdish speeches made in parliament are not even recorded in the minutes. As one of the clearest proofs of the state's disregard for the democratic rights of the Kurdish people, in September, the supreme Court of Appeals Prosecutor's Office demanded that the Socialist Equality Party—Fourth International remove its demands for education in the mother tongue and official status for the Kurdish language from its party program.

The reactionary aims of these negotiations are now openly acknowledged even by the political tendencies complicit in them. Yusuf Karadağ, a columnist for the *Evrensel* newspaper, which is in line with the Labor Party (EMEP) that supports the negotiations, wrote in his column Monday: "The [Erdoğan's] palace regime, which is pursuing expansionist ambitions in collaboration with US imperialism in the region and is trying to consolidate the repressive regime within the country, has no plans for peace in the region or democracy in the country."

Karadağ defined the Erdoğan government as "politically reactionary" and called for an alliance with the CHP and DEM Party, which he referred to as "democratic forces," to put pressure on it. These "democratic forces" are, just like Erdoğan's AKP, pro-imperialist parties of the ruling class that stand behind the liquidation of democratic forms of government.

In this repetition of the Stalinist "popular front" policy, which serves to subjugate the masses to a "democratic" bourgeoisie that does not actually exist, there is no place for the interests and independent role of the working class or for revolutionary struggle against imperialist war and the capitalist system.

This bankrupt class-collaborationist policy must be rejected. Urgent tasks such as the recognition and guarantee of the democratic rights of the Kurdish people and the establishment of peace in the Middle East and worldwide can only be achieved through the revolutionary mass mobilization of the working class against imperialism and its capitalist proxies. Only rule by the working class, which creates social wealth, pays the price of imperialist war, and is targeted by the construction of dictatorship, can bring democracy, social equality, and an anti-imperialist policy to life.



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