

Joint statement by 11 parties in Türkiye: The “peace and democracy” deception amid the imperialist war of aggression in the Middle East

Sosyalist E?itlik Partisi – Dördüncü Enternasyonal
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Eleven Kurdish nationalist, Stalinist and pseudo-left parties — including the Peoples’ Equality and Democracy Party (DEM), the Workers’ Party of Turkey (T?P) and the Labour Party (EMEP) — issued a joint statement Monday, “Call for Urgent Concrete Steps for Peace and Democracy.” [1]

Despite the word “peace” appearing in the title of the statement issued by parties that describe themselves as “democratic,” “left” or “socialist,” it says nothing concrete about the US-Israeli war of aggression against Iran, Israel’s invasion of Lebanon or the genocide in Gaza.

What the 11 parties mean by “peace” amounts to nothing more than advancing the ongoing negotiations between President Recep Tayyip Erdo?an’s government and the Kurdistan Workers’ Party (PKK), led by imprisoned Abdullah Öcalan. By severing workers’ aspirations for peace and democracy from the international revolutionary struggle against imperialism and confining them to negotiations with the Erdo?an government, the statement prevents Turkish and Kurdish workers and youth from confronting the real danger—the capitalist system and the imperialist wars it generates—and politically disarms them.

The statement puts forward a series of concrete demands directed at the Erdo?an government: the withdrawal of trustees appointed in place of elected mayors; the release of political prisoners in accordance with rulings by the Turkish Constitutional Court and the European Court of Human Rights; and an end to politically motivated judicial operations targeting opposition parties.

These are legitimate democratic demands that every worker and young person should defend. However, a class and political gulf separates the signatories of this statement from the perspective of the Sosyalist E?itlik Partisi – Dördüncü Enternasyonal (Socialist Equality Party – Fourth International). Rather than calling for these demands to be won through the independent political mobilisation of the working class, the signatories advance the bankrupt perspective that they can be achieved by pressuring and appealing to pro-imperialist bourgeois parties in government.

The statement was published amid a rapidly escalating US-led imperialist war across the Middle East. On this subject, the statement says only the following:

“We are in a period in which attacks against our region, NATO interventions, and wars and imperialist aggression are rising on a global scale. These developments have once again proven the importance of achieving peace [between Ankara and the PKK].”

These are abstract and vague formulations that fail to address the concrete and vital questions of who the aggressor and the victim are, the imperialist objectives at stake, and the Turkish government’s own position.

The US-Israeli war against Iran is an imperialist war of aggression.

Israel resumes its military offensive against Lebanon even as the genocide in Gaza has continued since 2023. These are components of the US strategy to reorganise the entire Middle East, bring it under full imperialist domination, seize its resources and drive out rivals—above all China and Russia. These are real and urgent matters that threaten the lives and living conditions of all people in the region.

The objective position of the Erdo?an government—the very government being entreated to bring “peace and democracy” to the country—in the reactionary predatory war unfolding across the Middle East is one of alignment with imperialism, in the interests of the Turkish bourgeoisie. With Ankara’s calls for negotiation and diplomacy over Iran—driven by concerns including the growing Israeli influence in the region and the strengthening of Kurdish nationalist movements in Iran and Türkiye—have been rendered meaningless by the logic of imperialist war. The Turkish ruling elite has responded to the escalation of the war with ever more open and deep collaboration with the United States and NATO.

The Riyadh statement signed on March 19 demonstrated that the Turkish state is siding with the US in order to protect the interests of the bourgeoisie. While polls show that more than 90 percent of the population in Türkiye believes the US war against Iran is unjust, the Erdo?an government signed the Riyadh statement which condemned Iran for defending itself without once naming the US.

The reinforcement of NATO’s presence in Türkiye with additional air defence systems and a new corps, and the establishment in Istanbul of a naval headquarters for the “Coalition of the Willing”—involving the UK and France against Russia—are indicators of Ankara’s involvement in the imperialist wars of the US and NATO.

Just like the Riyadh statement, the statement of the 11 parties in Türkiye demands “peace and democracy” from a government that is allied with US imperialism and is, to a significant degree, a participant in the war against Iran—all without naming the US and without taking a principled stand against the imperialist aggression unfolding in the Middle East as part of a drive for global domination.

Yet the negotiations between Ankara and the PKK did not emerge from any commitment to peace; they arose as part of the ongoing imperialist war in the Middle East. As the *World Socialist Web Site* has explained from the outset, what is at stake is an effort to align the interests of the Turkish and Kurdish bourgeoisies with the US imperialist “new Middle East” offensive. Türkiye’s competition and possible conflict with Israel does not alter the reactionary character of these negotiations, which are being held in complete subordination to US imperialism.

For the Erdo?an government, the negotiations with the PKK have been framed from the very beginning in this context and have been described as

the consolidation of the “home front.” The frontline in question is stretching from Palestine to Lebanon, Syria, Iraq and Iran, where Washington, Ankara’s ally, has been waging an escalating decades-long war. It is for this reason that these negotiations—in which the legitimate democratic demands of the Kurdish working masses play no decisive role—have advanced through secret diplomacy between Washington, Ankara, Tel Aviv, the Damascus regime and the Kurdish movement.

The attempt by the DEM Party and its allies to package these negotiations in the language of “peace and democracy,” the participation of T?P and EMEP in the parliamentary commission established for this purpose, and this most recent statement—expresses a bid to garner public support for the negotiations. Its aim is the subordination of the working class to the class interests and reactionary ambitions of the Turkish and Kurdish bourgeoisie in the Middle East. This is what is meant by consolidating the home front: the reconciliation reached between the Turkish and Kurdish elites must be complemented by “social peace”—that is, by the chloroforming of Turkish and Kurdish workers and, when necessary, their forcible suppression.

In an environment where the ruling class and its government have declared war on the living and working conditions of the working class, where the cost of living continues to rise and workers are turning to resistance, the Turkish bourgeois state does not require “democratisation,” but rather ever-greater authoritarianism.

On the very day the 11-party statement was released, 78 young people from Revolutionary Youth Associations (DGD) seeking to commemorate the young Turkish leftist leaders killed by the state on March 30, 1972, were detained and subjected to torture by gendarmerie forces. Esra I?k, a leader of the villagers’ resistance against a presidential “urgent expropriation” decree covering the Akbelen Forest in the Milas district of Mu?la—a case currently before the courts—was arrested on Tuesday, March 31, for protesting a reconnaissance delegation.

On the same day, Mustafa Bozbey, the Republican People’s Party (CHP) Mayor of Bursa, and 54 others were detained in a new operation. This indicates the continuation of efforts to suppress the CHP—which came first in the most recent local elections in 2024 and leads in current polling—through the judiciary. The appointment of the prosecutor at the centre of the cases against the CHP as Minister of Justice was a sign of this.

The construction of a dictatorship is directed at suppressing all social opposition, and above all opposition from the working class. In March, Mehmet Türkmen, chairman of the independent B?RTEK-SEN union, was arrested on the fabricated charge of “inciting the people to hatred and enmity;” the daily *BirGün* reporter ?smail Ar? was arrested on the similarly baseless charge of “publicly spreading misleading information.” In February, operations targeting the Socialist Party of the Oppressed (ESP) — one of the parties that signed the statement—resulted in more than a hundred detentions and at least 77 arrests.

What this situation demands is not waiting for “concrete steps” from the Erdo?an government but fighting to develop an international socialist perspective within the working class against imperialist war. It would be a grave error to expect this from parties so thoroughly intertwined with the capitalist system and the bourgeois state. They are determined to reach accommodation with a government whose anti-democratic repression continues unabated. This policy is not the product of a misunderstanding—it is the product of class interests. These parties, which represent the interests of the Turkish and Kurdish affluent middle class, are neither opposed to imperialism nor in favour of socialist revolution. They do not seek to end the existing class rule; they seek to come to power within the existing state. The openly pro-European Union and pro-NATO character of the DEM Party sets the political direction for all the parties lining up behind it.

Vladimir Lenin explained that opportunism has an objective social basis

in the age of imperialism and stressed that the struggle against imperialism cannot be waged without fighting against opportunism. These parties, far from raising workers’ consciousness against imperialism and the ruling class, serve to subordinate them to pro-imperialist illusions and to the ruling class. In 1915, amid World War I, Lenin was blunt in his denunciation of those spreading such illusions. He wrote:

Pacifism, the preaching of peace in the abstract, is one of the means of duping the working class. Under capitalism, particularly in its imperialist stage, wars are inevitable. ...

At the present time, the propaganda of peace unaccompanied by a call for revolutionary mass action can only sow illusions and demoralise the proletariat, for it makes the proletariat believe that the bourgeoisie is humane, and turns it into a plaything in the hands of the secret diplomacy of the belligerent countries. In particular, the idea of a so-called democratic peace being possible without a series of revolutions is profoundly erroneous. [2]

Turkish and Kurdish workers and youth seeking a way forward in the struggle against imperialist war and for democratic rights must break with these parties and take the road of revolutionary struggle. This is the road of the Trotskyist movement — the International Committee of the Fourth International (ICFI)—which upholds the tradition of the October Revolution of 1917 and stood firm against the betrayals of Stalinism. The Socialist Equality Parties affiliated with the ICFI fight to unite and mobilise the working class across the imperialist centres, including the United States, and throughout the rest of the world, based on the program of world socialist revolution. This struggle is guided by Leon Trotsky’s Theory of Permanent Revolution.

As Trotsky explained, in belated capitalist countries democratic tasks—national rights, political freedoms, basic democratic guarantees—cannot be completed by the bourgeoisie. The national bourgeoisies, partners of the imperialist powers that drive Kurdish, Turkish, Arab and Iranian workers into war, plunder their natural resources and impose poverty and repression upon them, are organically incapable of providing any solution to the masses’ aspirations for peace and democracy. These tasks require the working class to unite all the oppressed behind it, take power and advance the struggle for international socialist revolution.

To this end, workers must organise independently of the parties of the capitalist establishment and the trade union bureaucracies that serve as their appendages. Rank-and-file committees must be built in every workplace, factory, neighbourhood and school. These committees must serve to connect workers’ struggles internationally, linking them to the fight against imperialist war and for democratic rights. The International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees (IWA-RFC) is the centre of this global organisation.

Proceeding from this perspective, and as May Day and the NATO summit in Ankara in July approach, the Sosyalist E?itlik Partisi calls on Turkish and Kurdish workers and youth to mobilise around the following concrete demands:

- The US and Israeli war against Iran, the invasion of Lebanon, and the genocide in Gaza must be halted immediately and unconditionally.
- All US armed forces in the Middle East must be withdrawn, and the military bases—including those in Türkiye—that form the infrastructure of imperialist domination must be closed.
- The NATO summit scheduled for July in Ankara must be cancelled; Türkiye must withdraw from NATO; NATO must be dissolved; and all resources devoted to militarism and war must be redirected to meet the needs of society.

- All sanctions and economic warfare against Iran and all other countries must be ended.
- All war criminals must be held accountable.
- All political prisoners must be released.
- The fundamental democratic rights of the Kurdish people must be recognised immediately, beginning with mother-tongue education and constitutional recognition of the Kurdish language.

Footnotes

[1] The full list of signatories to the statement: Democratic Regions Party (DBP), Peoples' Equality and Democracy Party (DEM Party), Revolutionary Party, Laborer Movement Party (EHP), Labour Party (EMEP), Socialist Party of the Oppressed (ESP), Socialist Solidarity Platform (SODAP), Socialist Refoundation Party (SYKP), Workers' Party Türkiye (T?P), Social Freedom Party (TÖP) and the Green Left Party (YSP). The text of the statement: <https://www.demparti.org.tr/tr/baris-ve-demokrasi-icin-acil-somut-adim-cagrisi/22633/>

[2] V. I. Lenin, "The Conference of the R.S.D.L.P. Groups Abroad," in *Collected Works*, Progress Publishers, [197[4]], Moscow, Volume 21, pages 158-164. See: <https://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1915/feb/19.htm>



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