

# 110 miners detained in Türkiye amid Iran war

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The detention of 110 coal miners by police on Tuesday morning in Ankara, Türkiye's capital, as they staged a peaceful protest and hunger strike outside the Ministry of Energy demanding unpaid wages and other rights, is a warning to the international working class. The miners were released after 14 hours, but their demands were not met, and the threat of violent state repression has not been removed.

The *World Socialist Web Site* and the Sosyalist E?itlik Partisi–Dördüncü Enternasyonal (Socialist Equality Party–Fourth International) call on workers, youth and intellectuals in Türkiye and internationally to defend the miners.

The Erdoğan government's brutality toward the miners stands in stark contrast to the sentiments of broad sections of the population. While the miners were in custody, numerous prominent artists published solidarity videos on social media that drew widespread support. A protest was held in Istanbul against their detention.

Workers at Doruk Mining, owned by Yıldızlar SSS Holdings, were arrested in the midst of the US-Israeli imperialist war against Iran, Türkiye's neighbor. Governments preparing for war everywhere will respond in the same repressive fashion to growing workers' struggles.

According to a statement by the Independent Mining Workers' Union (Ba?ms?z Maden-?), requests for blankets for sick and elderly workers were denied throughout the night. Bags containing medication were not allowed into the area. Doctors were refused entry to the protest site. One worker who fell ill during detention was taken to hospital.

The miners set out from Eskişehir on April 13 and reached Ankara on Monday after a nine-day march of approximately 180 kilometers (112 miles). The problems and demands faced by miners are shared by countless other workers around the world. Their demands include payment of months of unpaid wages, severance and notice pay for dismissed workers, an end to the imposition of unpaid leave, safe working conditions, reinstatement of workers dismissed for union membership, and the nationalisation of the mine to guarantee job security.

One miner expressed the mood within broad layers of the working class: "If we have taken to the streets, it means that it is not bearable anymore."

Türkiye's ruling class is sitting atop a social powder keg. The 2026 net monthly minimum wage was set at 28,000 lira (US\$620), well below the minimum subsistence level. Even with three minimum-wage earners in a household, a family of four cannot reach the poverty line of 97,000 lira (US\$2,159). Approximately half of workers in Türkiye gets the minimum wage. Against this backdrop, the combined wealth of Türkiye's 30 billionaires has reached \$73.8 billion—more than the total assets of 44 percent of the population, approximately 38.5 million people.

Türkiye ranks among the top countries in Europe in terms of income and wealth inequality and comes first among European, OECD and G20 nations in inflation. While the official annual inflation rate stands at 31 percent, the independent research group ENAG calculates real inflation at over 57 percent.

Miners occupy a critical position in global production and supply chains while working in one of the deadliest sectors. Due to inadequate reporting, estimates of the global annual death toll in the mining industry range between 7,000 and 14,000. According to the Work Accident Investigation Commission (İS?G), 1,267 workers were killed in Turkish mines between 2013 and 2025. The conditions of brutal exploitation and precarity that claimed 301 lives in Soma in 2014 have grown worse today.

This is a direct consequence of policies that have driven down the social conditions of the working class in the interests of corporations, banks and military spending. Türkiye's 2026 budget sharply increases military and security expenditures while cutting social spending, extending tax amnesties to corporations while loading budget deficits onto the shoulders of workers.

This ruling class offensive, carried out with the direct assistance of the union apparatus, is meeting growing resistance. In March 2026, over 1,200 workers at the Polyak mine in İzmir broke through a gendarmerie barricade and seized the mine; during the struggle, workers debated "seizing the power across the country." Earlier, more than 5,000 Migros warehouse workers resisted police violence and mass dismissals with a wildcat strike.

The government's response to this developing independent movement within the working class has been an escalating

wave of arrests.

In mid-March, Mehmet Türkmen, leader of the independent textile union B?RTEK-SEN, was imprisoned for a speech he gave to workers. Esra I?k, who opposed the plundering of the Akbelen Forest and surrounding villages by mining companies, was arrested in late March, while Ba?aran Aksu, Organizing Specialist of Ba??ms?z Maden-??, who protested the arrest on social media, was held in custody for days. This was followed by the detention of the union's lawyer for almost one week. This wave of repression was tacitly endorsed by official union confederations—including the “opposition” Confederation of Progressive Trade Unions (D?SK)—by their ignoring it entirely.

The integration of the union apparatus with the state and corporations makes it imperative for workers to build independent rank-and-file committees to fight for their social and democratic rights. Workers face a global capitalist offensive that can only be countered with a global strategy. The construction of the International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees (IWA-RFC) is necessary to unite and coordinate these struggles across national borders.

In Türkiye, particularly since 2025, basic democratic rights are being dismantled and state repression is being directed at the political opposition, including the Republican People's Party (CHP). Ekrem ?mamo?lu, the Istanbul Metropolitan Mayor and CHP presidential candidate, has been imprisoned since March 2025. Numerous other CHP mayors, members of left parties, trade unionists and journalists have been detained.

State repression directly targeting the working class in recent months has intersected with two major global developments: Donald Trump's return to the US presidency in January 2025, and the launch of the US-Israeli war against Iran on February 28 this year.

Trump—whom Erdo?an still calls “my friend” and with whom he has been deepening his ties—is constructing a fascist regime in the United States that tramples the Constitution and basic democratic rights, while simultaneously mounting a vicious attack on the social conditions of the working class. In Germany, the CDU-SPD coalition government is financing military spending through social cuts. In Britain, the Labour government is breaking strikes. In France, President Emmanuel Macron continues his assault on pension rights.

The Erdo?an government functions as an instrument of the capitalist oligarchy against the working class, which is resisting attacks on its social conditions. However, the government is in profound conflict with the overwhelming majority of the population over the imperialist war against Iran and its alliance with the Trump administration. A MetroPOLL survey found that 98 percent of the population do not want the US-Israeli alliance to win this war and oppose US military bases in Türkiye.

Erdo?an attempts to deflect this overwhelming opposition by falsely placing the entire responsibility for the war on Israel alone. Meanwhile, bases in Türkiye continue to serve US

forces, and Azerbaijani oil flows through Türkiye to Israel. In mid-March Ankara co-signed the “Riyadh declaration” alongside Pakistan, Azerbaijan and Gulf regimes, legitimizing the US-Israeli aggression and condemning Iran's right to self-defense. Türkiye is preparing to host a NATO summit in Ankara in July, to be attended by a series of imperialist war criminals.

Although the CHP claims to oppose the war and denounces Trump, it is a pro-imperialist party that represents the interests of the same ruling class as the Erdo?an government. In September 2025, the CHP submitted a report to NATO which repeated US-Israeli propaganda designating Iran as the source of regional instability and recommended NATO's expansion into the Middle East.

In the midst of such enormous popular opposition to the war and collaboration with US imperialism, the Erdo?an government is determined to fortify the “home front” and suppress all opposition, above all, the rise of an independent workers' movement.

The negotiations launched between Ankara and the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) in late 2024 are part of this process. It is essentially aimed at reaching an agreement between the Turkish and Kurdish bourgeoisies in alignment with the United States and at bringing the working class under control domestically. The events of the past 18 months have exposed the fraudulence of the claims of “peace and democratization” and the pseudo-left forces that support it.

In a parliamentary speech on Tuesday, CHP leader Özgür Özel opposed the state crackdown on miners and claimed that all workers' rights would be granted under a CHP government. This claim is fraudulent. The CHP has imposed poverty wages on workers in the municipalities under its administration in Istanbul and ?zmir and has broken strikes through a D?SK-affiliated union and by mobilizing other municipalities. The record of the social democratic allies with whom the CHP gathered at last week's “Global Progressive Mobilization” summit in Barcelona is one of imperialist war, social cuts and the erosion of democratic rights.

As the CHP defends the same interests as the Erdo?an government and is tied to the same imperialist financial and military system, it is organically incapable of resolving fundamental social and democratic issues affecting the working class. These tasks require a frontal assault on the ruling class's wealth, power and ties to imperialism. This means the working class struggle for power based on an international socialist program. The struggle for social and democratic rights must be combined with building an international anti-war movement.



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