

# Twelve killed in two school shootings in Türkiye

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Türkiye was shaken last week by two successive school shootings, in ?anl?urfa and Kahramanmara?, that left 12 people dead, including the armed attackers, and dozens injured.

These unprecedented attacks cannot be explained as isolated eruptions of individual pathology. They are a tragic product of the social crisis rooted in the capitalist system, and of the normalization of widespread violence and mass death.

On Tuesday, April 14, a former student armed with a pump-action shotgun opened fire at Ahmet Koyuncu Vocational and Technical Anatolian High School in the Siverek district of ?anl?urfa, injuring 16 people before taking his own life.

According to BBC Turkish, the school principal had warned both the prosecutor’s office and national education authorities of the possibility that a former student could carry out an attack. Following the shooting, four officials from the District Police Department and the District National Education Directorate were reportedly suspended as part of the investigation.

The following day, a second attack at Ayser Çal?k Middle School in Kahramanmara? turned into a massacre. A 14-year-old student opened fire with guns taken from his father, a police officer, killing one teacher and ten students, including himself. Dozens of students were reportedly injured, five of them admitted to intensive care. The weapons reportedly included five guns and seven magazines.

After the attack, it emerged that the 14-year-old attacker had set his WhatsApp profile picture to an image of Elliot Rodger, who killed six people in California in May 2014. Before carrying out the attack, Rodger had uploaded a “revenge” video to YouTube and written a lengthy manifesto. His family had alerted police before the massacre. In Kahramanmara?, however, the sequence of events was different.

According to media reports, the 14-year-old attacker, who was known to have psychological problems, had practiced shooting the previous day at a police firing range with his

father. His father, a police inspector, was arrested after the attack, while a police officer at the range was suspended.

The response of President Recep Tayyip Erdo?an’s government was to launch token investigations, impose publication bans and expand police measures. An official statement dated April 17 said access to 1,866 URLs had been blocked, 411 people had been detained and 111 Telegram channels had been shut down. In addition, two-person police teams were deployed outside elementary, middle and high schools across the country.

In his condolence statement, Erdo?an sought to deflect criticism of his government, urging that “the attack should not be used as fodder for political polemics” and declaring, “There is no room for politics in grief.”

The Republican People’s Party’s (CHP) call for military measures, like the government’s police measures, is completely bankrupt and ignores the deep-rooted social causes of the attacks. CHP spokesperson and Istanbul MP Zeynel Emre stated, “Due to the AKP’s failed policies, violence has reached our schools, which are the cradles of education. Our party’s proposal to deploy 65,000 specialist sergeants as security personnel in schools must be implemented immediately.”

CHP leader Özgür Özel, meanwhile, said, “No one should look to our statements to cover up their own mistakes. They should take responsibility for their own actions and apologize to the people.”

Following the attacks, several teachers’ unions called work stoppages across Türkiye on April 16–17 and organized protests outside the Ministry of National Education and local education directorates.

On Thursday, police blocked a march by teachers from various cities across Türkiye to Ankara. The teachers, who were demanding the resignation of the Minister of National Education, held a sit-in late into the night.

Zülküf Güne?, general secretary of the E?itim-Sen union, said, “The lack of a future and the hopelessness imposed on these children, the fact that they go to bed hungry due to malnutrition and poverty, and that they are left to face

insecurity and death instead of being in a safe educational environment is unacceptable.”

The debate in the mainstream media, however, has focused on violent content in video games and television series, family and psychological problems, and school security. Such discussions serve to obscure the fact that an entire socioeconomic and political system has collapsed.

According to an Anadolu Agency report based on Ministry of Justice data, the annual number of juveniles pushed into crime has risen from around 150,000 a decade ago to more than 180,000, an increase of approximately 20 percent. In 2025, the most common offenses involving juveniles pushed into crime were intentional assault, theft, insult, threats and property damage.

In the latest survey conducted by GÜNDEMAR Research between January 21 and 24, 2026, involving 2,255 participants across 60 provinces, respondents were asked, “To what extent do you agree with the view that young people in Türkiye look to the future with hope?” Some 77 percent said they disagreed, while only 10 percent said they believed young people look to the future with hope. Asked what problem the rising sense of hopelessness among young people would most likely lead to in the future, 59 percent answered, “an increase in crime and violence.”

Both attacks occurred in provinces devastated by the 2023 earthquake, which caused a massive number of preventable deaths and widespread social trauma. While more than 53,000 people officially died in Türkiye, no high-ranking official has been held accountable in court.

The spread of violence and crime among children is a social and global issue rooted in the capitalist system. Under conditions of massive social inequality, the younger generation, deprived of any hope of securing a decent job or a peaceful future, is growing up amid mass death caused by imperialist aggression, genocide and the pandemic.

Children born in Türkiye in 2011, now 15 years old, have lived through the wars in Libya, Syria and Ukraine, the genocide in Gaza, and now the war against Iran. Just a few weeks ago, they witnessed the leader of an imperialist power, the United States, threaten to destroy Iran, an oppressed nation with an ancient civilization, while facing no sanctions and continuing to be treated with respect by governments around the world, including Türkiye.

Social resources that should be used to ensure a decent future for children are instead being poured into war and military buildup, while the ever-rising costs are covered through cuts to social spending, including public education and healthcare.

This social crisis, a global phenomenon, finds one of its sharpest expressions in the United States, where children and educators face one of the highest rates of school shootings in

the world. In 2022, 2023, and 2024, there were a total of 80, 82, and 83 school shootings, respectively.

These attacks are unfolding amid unprecedented social inequality, rampant police violence and the deepening collapse of American society after decades of war. In the United States, the primary source of imperialist violence, the Trump administration is carrying out an unconstitutional witch hunt against immigrants, while its agents kill people on US soil with impunity.

The contradictions of the capitalist system, which give rise to imperialist war, oppression and violence, also lay the basis for the social revolution that can make possible the elimination of these conditions.

Since October 2023, masses of youth and workers across the globe, from the United States to Europe, Africa, Asia and Australia, have defied state repression and mobilized against the genocide in Gaza. In the US, millions participated in three “No Kings” protests against the Trump administration in less than a year. In Kenya, Morocco, Madagascar, Indonesia and Nepal, “Generation Z” protests have shaken governments.

In Türkiye as well, large numbers of students have joined the struggle against growing attacks on democratic rights, including the right to vote and to stand for election, and against rising social inequality. This was reflected in the protests against the March 2025 arrest of Ekrem İmamoğlu, the mayor of Istanbul and the CHP’s presidential candidate.

The critical issue is to explain to young people that the struggle for their own future is a struggle for socialism, and to orient them to the international working class, the only social force capable of carrying this fight forward. Those who agree with this perspective should join the Sosyalist Eşitlik Partisi – Dördüncü Enternasyonal and its youth movement, the International Youth and Students for Social Equality (IYSSE).



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