

Turkish police storm CHP headquarters, as court ousts elected party leadership

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On Sunday, police acting on the orders of the Ankara Governorship stormed the headquarters of the Republican People's Party (CHP) using pepper spray, forcibly removing the party's elected leader Özgür Özel and his supporters, including deputies, from the building.

This unlawful police operation followed a politically motivated judicial ruling issued under pressure from President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's government. On Thursday, May 21, the Ankara Regional Court of Appeals declared the party's 2023 congress "absolutely null and void" on charges of "fraud," removing Özel and all party organs from their positions and reinstating former leader Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu by court order.

This ruling violated the authority of the Supreme Electoral Council (YSK), which is constitutionally responsible for overseeing and approving political party congresses. The CHP's appeals to both the court and the YSK were immediately rejected. After Kılıçdaroğlu's lawyer applied to the Ankara Police Headquarters demanding that the party's central building be handed over to them, the Ankara Governorship ordered police to move in, citing the need to "enforce the court ruling."

The political nature of the court decision is also evident in its timing. It was issued just before the start of a nine-day Eid al-Adha holiday beginning on Friday, a move clearly intended to minimize mass protests. One day before the ruling, Kılıçdaroğlu posted a video on his social media account implying he would return to the party leadership, as if he had been forewarned of the impending court ruling.

The situation that has emerged from this unlawful ruling and police operation is clear. The Erdoğan government's interference with the elected leadership of the CHP—a party that came first in the March 2024 local elections and is currently leading in polls—signals that even the limited constitutional multi-party system in NATO member Türkiye may be coming to an end. The constitutional and legal norms upon which the legitimacy of the Erdoğan government rests are being violated one after another. Özel's response to what is an existential assault on his party, and perhaps on himself personally, however, is constrained by the limits of the CHP's bourgeois character.

Özel, who had been removed from the CHP headquarters, before marching toward the Turkish parliament along with those accompanying him, said, "I am leaving the family home, with the intention of coming back in a way that no one will ever be able to take it away again." Earlier, he had posted on social media: "No

one but the delegates who seated us in these chairs can remove us from them. They may take our bodies, but they cannot take our struggle."

In his speeches, Özel referenced the national liberation war fought between 1919 and 1922 under the leadership of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, recalling that the CHP was founded during that process. That struggle—which unfolded under conditions in which millions of people worldwide were inspired by the 1917 October Revolution led by the Bolsheviks under Vladimir Lenin and Leon Trotsky—involved the mobilization of armed popular resistance against the occupation by British and French imperialism and their proxies.

Today, however, the picture is fundamentally different. Both Erdoğan's Justice and Development Party (AKP) and the CHP, as the two major factions of the Turkish ruling class, are allied with and cooperate with the very imperialist powers that stood on the opposing side in that historical struggle.

Despite more than 90 percent of the population opposing the imperialist war against Iran, Erdoğan is aligning himself with the Trump administration's aggression in the Middle East and, for now, keeping this social opposition under control. Erdoğan does not expect his imperialist allies to go beyond merely expressing "concern" at a time when Ankara is set to host the NATO summit in July, while deepening military coordination with Britain and France within the framework of the "Coalition of the willing" against Russia, and continuing to hold back refugees for the European Union (EU). Moreover, those very allies—foremost among them being Trump, who is constructing a presidential dictatorship in the United States—are eroding democratic forms of rule in their own countries through similar methods.

Just one day before the court ruling, on May 20, Erdoğan and Trump spoke by phone. There had also been a phone call between Erdoğan and Trump before Istanbul Mayor and leading CHP presidential candidate Ekrem İmamoğlu was arrested in March 2025, leading to mass protests across the country.

Shortly before Sunday's police raid, Trump posted on Truth Social: "Thank you President Erdoğan," sharing an alleged quote attributed to Erdoğan praising him: "President Trump is the leader the world has been waiting for centuries—He doesn't just talk about strength—He embodies it." When the Erdoğan government was compelled to deny the remarks, Trump deleted the post within approximately two hours.

As in the United States, the source of the assault on democratic

rights in Türkiye is the domination of society by a capitalist oligarchy—a tiny layer of billionaires whose wealth and power are incompatible with democracy. Türkiye is one of the most socially unequal countries in Europe. The entire political establishment, including the CHP, itself a target of the Erdoğan government, is committed to defending this class rule. That is why Özel is doing everything in his power to prevent the working class, which is growing increasingly militant in response to unbearable social conditions, from acting as an independent force and why he continues to seek a path of compromise.

Before the latest operation against the CHP, the Ankara march and struggle of Doruk Mining workers had placed the class struggle firmly on the country's agenda, with miners facing violent police attacks and detentions. This struggle was the latest link in an independent workers' movement that is growing further in 2026. The police state that Erdoğan has been building for years, now reaching a qualitative turning point, is aimed above all at the working class and the threat of social revolution from below.

In a speech delivered after the raid on party headquarters, Özel, referring to Kılıçdaroğlu, said: "There is nothing for us to cleanse ourselves of other than the betrayal of one we considered a friend!" It had long been apparent that Kılıçdaroğlu was in de facto collaboration with Erdoğan's judicial operation against the CHP and would accept being installed as party leader by an unlawful ruling. Yet the Özel leadership refused to expel Kılıçdaroğlu from the party, refused to prepare the public for mass mobilization against this offensive and continued to pursue reconciliation with Kılıçdaroğlu.

Indeed, immediately following the "absolute nullity" ruling, Özel first refused to meet with Kılıçdaroğlu and then agreed to a phone call. In that conversation, Kılıçdaroğlu told Özel that he would "take the party to a congress at the most appropriate time." The expectation of a "new congress," which Özel himself also called for, amounts to a de facto acceptance of the unlawful ruling that also mandated the transfer of the party's headquarters.

On Saturday, Özel was elected chair of the party's parliamentary group, receiving 95 of the 96 votes cast at a meeting attended by 96 members of parliament. Fifteen deputies submitted excuses for their absence, while 27 did not attend and gave no explanation. This points to the existence of a CHP that has been effectively split apart between the pro-Özel and pro-Kılıçdaroğlu factions, in conjunction with its judicial operation. In response, Özel stated: "If the Republican People's Party is being governed by those chosen by the palace [Erdoğan], then the Republican People's Party is finished!" and called for elections in the party and across the country, addressing both Kılıçdaroğlu and Erdoğan.

The Socialist Eşitlik Partisi–Dördüncü Enternasyonal (Socialist Equality Party–Fourth International) is drawing an unbridgeable political line between itself and the Stalinist, Pabloite and pseudo-left tendencies that uncritically support Özel today, just as they lined up behind Kılıçdaroğlu in the 2023 presidential election despite his pro-NATO and anti-immigrant campaign. The same applies to the Kurdish nationalist People's Equality and Democracy Party's (DEM Party) bankrupt political perspective, which, while condemning the crackdown on the CHP, perpetuates the illusion that the same Erdoğan government can resolve the

Kurdish issue based on "peace and democratization."

In a statement issued on X during the police raid on the CHP headquarters, the Sosyalist Eşitlik Partisi condemned the police attack and called for the building of an independent political mobilization within the working class, stating:

It is clear that CHP leader Özel's conciliatory stance toward Kılıçdaroğlu—who was appointed as a trustee to the party through a political court ruling—paved the way for the escalation of this repression. As we stated in our previous statement, the CHP is, by virtue of its class character, incapable of consistently defending democratic rights, for that struggle requires mobilizing the working class and youth against the actual class force behind the construction of an authoritarian regime—against the power of the ruling class—on the basis of democracy, social equality and anti-imperialism.

This struggle cannot be waged by establishment parties that defend the capitalist system, which is the main source of all fundamental social problems, including the elimination of what remains of democracy. It requires a revolutionary leadership.

This means the struggle to build the Sosyalist Eşitlik Partisi as the Turkish section of the International Committee of the Fourth International. We call on all those who agree with this perspective to join in building the party and to establish rank-and-file committees in every workplace, school and neighborhood in order to unite the struggle to defend the social and democratic rights of the working class with the struggle against imperialist war.



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