

# Corporate thugs open fire on miners in Türkiye

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On Sunday, June 14, in the Uzunköprü district of the northwestern city of Edirne, miners who had been fighting for 26 days at the Öz?en Mining pit over unpaid wages and benefits and against layoffs came under armed attack—carried out in full view of the security forces by assailants reported to be acting at the behest of the mine’s owner, Bekir Kiremitçi.

In a video statement issued together with the miners’ families after the attack, Ba?aran Aksu, organizing specialist of Ba?ms?z Maden-?? (Independent Miners Union), declared that they would not back down.

“Shots were fired three times from two separate weapons in a place where there were children, women and workers. This attack is directed not at the Öz?en mine workers, their families and their children alone, but at the entire working class,” he said, before adding: “Let those who rob workers of their hard-earned wages and send guns and gangs against families demanding their rights know this: this resistance will grow, these workers will win, and all of Turkey will see it.”

Aksu had previously been summoned to give a statement to the authorities over his remark, “As the miners who do the producing, we will run this mine ourselves.” One day before the armed attack, the miners occupied the pit and began a hunger strike 1,200 meters underground.

The attack, in which by sheer luck no one was injured or killed, lays bare the extent to which the class struggle has intensified. Just one day earlier, construction workers and members of Dev Yap?-?? union employed at the building site of the new Palace of Justice, under construction in Ankara, were attacked with knives and clubs by thugs from the subcontractor Gül Pa ?n?aat because they had demanded their unpaid wages.

These attacks, which are not isolated incidents and are steadily mounting, can be countered only by building a politically conscious and organized movement of the working class from below. The International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees (IWA-RFC) was founded to free workers and their struggles around the world from the stranglehold of the trade union apparatus and to unite them on an international scale. Building the IWA-RFC is also indispensable if workers are to take measures to protect themselves collectively.

Ula? Sevinç, national chairman of the Sosyalist E?itlik

Partisi–Dördüncü Enternasyonal (Socialist Equality Party–Fourth International), described the armed attack on the miners as “a major attack aimed at intimidating the entire working class.” And he made the following call on X:

This event must become the central issue in every workplace and every neighborhood for every worker, and the attack must be answered with mass solidarity actions alongside the Öz?en Mining workers across the country. The rotten trade union confederations will not do this.

An organized, mass working-class resistance to the capitalist class’s mounting social and physical assault can be developed only by building independent committees from below. The miners’ allies in this struggle are not this or that organization of the capitalist establishment, but the working class in Turkey and internationally.

As imperialist war escalates around the country’s borders, the Turkish ruling class and the government of President Recep Tayyip Erdo?an are steadily intensifying police-state repression at home. For decades, with the assistance of the Türk-??, Hak-?? and D?SK confederations, the capitalist establishment has driven workers’ conditions backward, the class struggle has been suppressed, and social anger has been kept within the bounds of the existing system. Not only in Türkiye but across the world, class tensions can no longer be contained by these methods, nor even within the limits of constitutional norms.

According to a 2023 report by Credit Suisse, Türkiye leads Europe in the inequality of wealth distribution. The top 1 percent of the population controls 40 percent of wealth, and the wealthiest 10 percent controls 70 percent. While this trend has accelerated since 2023, Türkiye also ranks first in Europe in income inequality, according to Eurostat.

According to the World Inequality Database, as of 2023 the share held by the poorest 50 percent—half the population—was only 2.6 percent. That figure is 2.5 percent in the United States, where Elon Musk recently became the world’s first trillionaire

and President Donald Trump is seeking to secure the wealth of the financial oligarchy by building a fascistic police dictatorship.

This level of social inequality is incompatible with democracy; suppressing a working class movement that comes from below and is turning to ever more militant struggles now requires state force and the deployment of corporate thugs. The history of the class struggle in Türkiye—particularly from the second half of the 1960s, amid the intensification of class struggles on both the national and international scale—is filled with such attacks by the hired thugs of the corporations and by fascists seeking to break workers’ struggles. The corporations that set these assailants in motion have always acted with the consciousness and confidence that the state belongs to them.

On the same day as the armed attack on the miners, police in Ankara assaulted a protest by teachers who had taken up a struggle over wages and appointments. For a government preparing to roll out the red carpet for its imperialist war-criminal allies at the NATO summit to be held in Ankara on July 7-8, the prospect of educators launching an indefinite action in the capital—and of this triggering a broader movement within the working class—is regarded as intolerable. The 41 teachers detained in violation of their constitutional rights, along with their supporters, were later released.

The Öz?en Mining workers began their struggle on May 20 under the leadership of the independent union Ba??ms?z Maden-?. The company has not paid the workers a full year’s overtime wages, nor their salaries since February. Retiring workers were likewise denied their severance pay. Twenty-one workers were dismissed without severance, while others were threatened with dismissal. The workers held actions around demands including payment of what they are owed, the reinstatement of those dismissed and improvements in occupational safety conditions.

This is a continuation of a series of militant workers’ struggles in Türkiye. Over the course of this year, there have been the wildcat strikes of the Migros warehouse workers and the Polyak miners, and the 140-kilometer march from Eski?ehir to Ankara and struggle by the Doruk Mining workers. After the Doruk Mining workers, who had been promised in April that their back pay would be settled, went unpaid, they returned to Ankara once again, and at the beginning of June all that they were owed was paid. The common feature of these struggles, which ended in gains, was that they developed outside the control of the trade union confederations and called on other sections of the working class to mobilize.

Throughout all these struggles, workers faced mounting state repression; they were detained en masse, and labor leaders were arrested repeatedly:

- In March, Mehmet Türkmen, chairman of the independent textile union B?RTEK-SEN, was arrested over a speech he gave in support of the striking S?rma Hal? carpet workers in Gaziantep.

- Esra I??k, a peasant leader who has fought against the handover of the Akbelen Forest and surrounding land in Mu?la to mining companies, was jailed at the end of March for exercising her right to protest.

- In April, just before the struggle of the Doruk Mining workers, Aksu and Do?ukan Akan of the Ba??ms?z Maden ??’s legal department were unlawfully arrested.

Demonstrating the baselessness of the arrests, all of them were released at their first hearings. Nevertheless, these arbitrary arrests have themselves become a technique of punishment and intimidation. This is accompanied by the systematic stripping away of even the workers’ extremely limited legal rights.

Öz?en Mining, owned by Bekir Kiremitçi—a former deputy provincial chairman of Erdo?an’s Justice and Development Party (AKP) in Tekirda?—filed for a composition with creditors in February. Yet the company had applied for licenses for two mining sites just before the filing. Declaring a composition agreement or filing for bankruptcy serves as a pretext for stripping workers of their legal rights. While corporations continue to operate, workers are forced to turn to the courts in proceedings that drag on for years with uncertain outcomes.

When the Öz?en Mining workers sought to present their demands in person to Erdo?an, who came to Edirne on Friday, they were blocked by the gendarmerie, beaten with batons, and two miners were detained. The same government is increasingly opening public resources, living spaces and natural wealth to plunder by the mining companies. According to the daily *Evrensel*, in 2025 approximately 2 billion Turkish lira (US\$43 million) was transferred to mining companies from the public budget. For 2026 the amount of support has increased still further. Mining companies that raise output per worker by 10 percent are granted an incentive equal to the full minimum wage.



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