

# Preventive arrests targeting anti-war activists ahead of the NATO summit in Ankara

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The 36th NATO summit, to be held in Ankara on July 7–8, will bring together the world’s greatest war criminals at the Presidential Complex. It will be led by US President Donald Trump, who has directed the war of aggression against Iran and armed and backed Israel’s genocide in Gaza. He will be joined by the European imperialist leaders who support these crimes and who are seeking to escalate the NATO war against Russia in Ukraine.

The government of President Recep Tayyip Erdo?an is preparing for the summit by stepping up repression against NATO and anti-war opposition groups at home. The aim of the police operations—which began weeks before the summit and reached their peak in recent days with a series of arrests—is clear: to suppress in advance any opposition that might emerge as it hosts the imperialist war criminals.

The operations began on the morning of June 12. As part of investigations centered in Eski?ehir and Zonguldak, simultaneous house raids were carried out in eight provinces (Bal?kesir, Eski?ehir, Karabük, Kastamonu, Mardin, Mu?la, Van and Zonguldak), and 14 students who are members of the Revolutionary Youth Associations (DGD) were detained. According to the DGD’s statement, the pretext for the investigation was “activities carried out against NATO and imperialism.” Within a few days, 10 students were jailed—1 in Bal?kesir, 3 in Zonguldak and 6 in Karabük.

The character of the operation is revealed in the question put to the students in police custody: “What activities will your association carry out at the NATO summit?” This is an interrogation of “thoughts and intentions,” aimed at punishing a democratic protest that has not yet even taken place.

The same day, in a separate investigation centered in Diyarbak?r, five members of the Socialist Party of the Oppressed (ESP) and the Federation of Socialist Youth Associations (SGDF) were detained.

These were followed by a wave of arrests in Istanbul. On June 15, house raids and detentions were carried out against the Independent Revolutionary Class Platform (BDSP), the Revolutionary Textile Workers’ Union (Dev Tekstil), the

Revolutionary Youth Union (DGB), the Revolutionary Students’ Union (DÖB), the Workers’ Unity Association, the *League of Struggle* journal and the Federation of Socialist Councils (SMF). Of the 23 people brought before the courthouse on June 18, 21 were arrested.

The 23 were referred to a judge with a request for their arrest without the prosecutor’s office even taking their statements. This has become an established method; the daily *BirGün* reporter ?smail Ar? was likewise arrested in March on a charge of “publicly spreading misleading information” without being given the opportunity to give a statement to the prosecutor. Ar? was released after being imprisoned for 75 days.

At the protest held in front of the Istanbul Courthouse following the arrests, the activities alleged in the case files to be “crimes” were listed: carrying out trade union work, taking part in the November 25 demonstrations opposing violence against women, distributing leaflets and organizing an anti-NATO meeting. Entirely legal, constitutional and legitimate political and trade union activities have been made the direct grounds for arrest. This list is a confession that the operation targets anti-war political opposition. Workers and youth, as part of the struggle against NATO and imperialist war, must demand the immediate release of those arrested.

These arrests are proceeding in tandem with the declaration of a de facto state of emergency in the capital for the NATO summit. As Ankara is declared a “red zone,” according to TRT some 70,000 security personnel—55,000 of them police and gendarmerie—will be mobilized for roughly 6,000 participants over the course of the summit.

From the morning of July 6 until midnight on July 12, all public events—exams, panels, graduation ceremonies, festivals, concerts and “similar” gatherings—have been banned; even the nationwide teaching examinations have been postponed to July 26. Businesses, dormitories and associations around the hotels where the leaders will stay are being searched, and employees’ identity details are being reported to police stations. Entry into the city is to be

restricted against the possibility of protest. According to *T24*, the Air Force Command will also be mobilized: “Ankara’s airspace will be kept under control with helicopters, unmanned aerial vehicles and drones.”

The entire might of the state apparatus is suspending basic democratic rights—the freedoms of assembly, demonstration and expression—for an imperialist war summit.

With this repression, the government also seeks to prevent any protest in Türkiye against Trump, who has been opposed by millions in the “No Kings” demonstrations in the United States. Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan boasts, “Had it not been for our president [Erdo?an], Trump would not have come.” Erdo?an treats it as a matter of prestige to host a war criminal who launched a war on Iran, threatened to annihilate it with nuclear weapons and is complicit in the genocide of the Palestinians in Gaza.

The chasm between Erdo?an’s “high-pitched” rhetoric on Gaza and the policy he pursues along the US-NATO axis becomes visible precisely here: the same government that attacks Israel in words throws the anti-war youth into prison so that Trump—Israel’s chief patron—may “be comfortable” as it welcomes him with a red carpet. The approaching NATO summit exposes the dependence of the Turkish bourgeoisie and political establishment on imperialism, and the fraud of its “anti-imperialist” rhetoric.

The NATO summit in Ankara and the government’s repression of anti-war opposition is taking place under conditions of intensifying class struggle. In recent months, Türkiye has been the scene of one workers’ struggle after another. The government is trying to suppress this movement by unlawfully arresting the labor leaders and detaining an increasing number of workers.

The Doruk Mining workers waged an important protest, marching some 190 kilometers to Ankara over their unpaid wages and other benefits, and placed the class struggle on the country’s agenda. When the promises made to them were not kept, they came to the capital once again and, on June 4, succeeded in obtaining everything they were owed. The Öz?en Mining workers in Edirne, defying an armed attack against them, forced the acceptance of their demands in the struggle they sustained. Private sector teachers also came to Ankara demanding a base wage and appointment to permanent posts and were detained repeatedly.

At the Sedef Shipyard in Tuzla, Istanbul, which employs 2,000 workers, a revolt by the rank-and-file broke out. The will of the workers—who voted by an overwhelming majority on June 1 to strike and were preparing to walk out on June 18—was trampled by the union bureaucracy: the chairman of Dok Gemi-?? union, affiliated to the Türk-?? confederation, came to the shipyard and signed a contract without consulting the workers. The workers marched within the

shipyard against this sellout agreement, chanting “Union, resign!” and ran after the union bureaucrats.

This experience makes clear the division of labor between state repression and the trade union bureaucracy. On one side, the government arrests opponents of NATO and war without even taking their statements; on the other, the apparatus strangles the struggle of workers preparing to strike by making secret deals with the corporations. This collaboration is aimed at preventing the working class from emerging as an independent social and political force against capitalist exploitation, imperialist war and its devastating consequences.

The arrests ahead of the NATO summit are the domestic expression of the logic of imperialist war. In Türkiye, where the overwhelming majority are opposed to US imperialism, NATO and their wars, the more the government deepens its alliance with these powers, the less it can tolerate growing social opposition. War and dictatorship are two manifestations of the same crisis of the global capitalist system.

Social opposition to war and savage austerity finds no expression within the political establishment. The Republican People’s Party (CHP), itself a target of the government’s political repression, is a determined defender of NATO and of Türkiye’s place within the imperialist alliance.

The social force that must be mobilized against the NATO summit and imperialist war is the working class in Türkiye and internationally. The Sosyalist E?itlik Partisi – Dördüncü Enternasyonal (Socialist Equality Party – Fourth International) calls for the working class to organize and take action on the basis of rank-and-file committees independent of the entire capitalist political establishment and the trade union bureaucracy. The demand for the immediate release of the arrested youth and workers is an inseparable part of this broader struggle.



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