

Free Ercan Akpolat, the Turkish mayor of the historic Prinkipo island where Trotsky lived! Stop the political witch hunt by the Erdoğan regime!

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The Istanbul Anatolia Chief Public Prosecutor's Office carried out a wide-ranging operation against Adalar (Büyükada, and other islands) Municipality Friday morning. More than 40 people—including the Kemalist Republican People's Party (CHP) Mayor Ali Ercan Akpolat, his deputy mayors, department heads, council members and municipal staff—were detained in simultaneous raids.

The *World Socialist Web Site* and the Sosyalist Eşitlik Partisi—Dördüncü Enternasyonal (Socialist Equality Party—Fourth International) condemn this police-state operation by the government of President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and demand the immediate and unconditional release of all those detained, including Akpolat. Without concealing our political differences, we stress that this is part of the ongoing, politically motivated judicial campaign against the CHP and demand an end to this political witch hunt.

Büyükada (Prinkipo) is an island of historical importance. It is the island where Leon Trotsky—who, together with Vladimir Lenin, co-led the October 1917 Revolution—spent his years of exile from 1929 to 1933, where he wrote *My Life* and *The History of the Russian Revolution* and his unparalleled warnings against the rise of fascism in Germany. He issued the call to found the Fourth International in 1933 on this island.

Since 2023, the *World Socialist Web Site* has developed a principled collaboration with Adalar Municipality for the preservation of Trotsky's historical and cultural heritage. In the week of August 21—the date on which Trotsky died after being assassinated by a Stalinist agent in 1940—the “International Commemoration of Leon Trotsky” was held, with WSWs International Editorial Board Chairman David North as the keynote speaker. This began in 2023 under the previous Adalar mayor, Erdem Gül, and has continued since 2024 under Akpolat's administration. A new

commemorative event has also been planned for this August.

Although Akpolat is a member of the CHP, he took a stance on the historical and cultural significance of Trotsky and the years he spent on Büyükada that went far beyond his party's class and historical basis. In his opening remarks at the 2024 event, he said the following:

We are here today for an event of historical and contemporary political importance. It has been 91 years since Leon Trotsky, the indomitable defender of the working class who fought for an egalitarian world and lost his life for this cause, left Büyükada.

It is also the 84th anniversary of his assassination in 1940. On this occasion, I remember him with respect.

Trotsky settled in Büyükada in 1929 and spent four years here on our island. He wrote the most important of his works based on a free and egalitarian world in his house on the island. His life was intertwined with the ups and downs of the class struggle. And today we will talk about the world in chaos in the light of Trotsky's dream, struggle and works.

We have an internationally important historical and cultural heritage left by Trotsky that has been neglected for many years. Our aim is to restore the house where Trotsky lived on Büyükada and turn it into an international library and museum house. Our research and work in this direction is ongoing. Wouldn't it be great if this house, which has been abandoned to its fate for years, is transformed into a cultural center that opens its doors to the whole world?

As I conclude my speech, I respectfully salute

Leon Trotsky and all revolutionaries who fought and paid a price for a better world.

Akpolat's administration became an important supporter of the project to restore the Trotsky House in a manner worthy of this great Russian revolutionary and to transform it into an international cultural center open to workers, youth and intellectuals from around the world. Today's operation also objectively threatens this project of historical memory and culture of international significance.

The allegations surrounding the operation targeting Akpolat and his municipality follow in the footsteps of previous ones. Those detained face charges of "bribery," "extortion," "forgery of official documents," "establishing and directing an organization for the purpose of committing crime," "violation of Law No. 2863" and "abuse of office." It was also noted that an investigation had been launched following reports that major renovation and construction work carried out on buildings within the archaeological site had been authorized under the guise of "minor repairs."

In a written statement, Adalar Municipality emphasized the presumption of innocence and said it expected the legal process to be conducted transparently. This was followed by another operation, against the CHP-run Silifke Municipality in Mersin. Numerous people, including Mayor Mustafa Turgut, were detained, while no official statement was made about the operation yet.

These political operations, which previously targeted the Kurdish political movement, have been directed at the CHP since the March 2024 elections, in which the CHP became the largest party nationwide.

The basic democratic rights, including engaging in politics, voting and standing for election, to a fair trial and to freedom of expression, are under danger. What is involved is the detention of politicians elected by popular vote through police operations while they are still in office and despite the absence of any flight risk, their arrest without any judicial verdict and their removal from office. Workers must oppose these police-state methods, which are eliminating what remains of constitutional and legal rights, and must defend basic democratic rights with the methods of class struggle.

This operation is the latest link in a systematic judicial campaign that began with the raid on Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality Mayor Ekrem İmamoğlu on March 19, 2025, and subsequently spread across the country. Since then, more than 20 CHP mayors elected by popular vote have been arrested, 25 mayors—including İmamoğlu—have been removed from office, trustees have been appointed to a series of municipalities and the administration of some municipalities has been handed to the Justice and

Development Party (AKP) or CHP mayors have defected to the AKP.

According to an April 1 report by *Bianet*, together with the municipalities run by the Kurdish nationalist Peoples' Equality and Democracy Party (DEM) that have been placed under appointed trustees, the mayors who are no longer in office had won 8.8 million of the votes of the 17.2 million voters who went to the polls on March 31, 2024, in the municipalities concerned.

In addition, a trustee was appointed to the CHP's Istanbul provincial organization in September 2025. This was followed—as a preventive judicial coup—by the unlawful removal last month of the CHP's elected leadership under Özgür Özel through a court ruling of "absolute nullity," and the reinstatement in its place of the administration of former leader Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu.

The WSWS explained afterward that Erdoğan was "attempting to forestall a likely defeat in the next elections by neutralizing his principal rival," but that the issue was not confined to the outcome of the next election.

In Türkiye, the ruling class is sitting on a social powder keg. Police-state repression is increasingly targeting the emerging workers' movement. At the same time, Erdoğan is deepening his collaboration with US imperialism under Donald Trump, who is hated by the overwhelming majority of the population. Preparing to host the NATO summit in Ankara on July 7–8, the government—by preventively arresting more than 30 anti-war activists in recent days—is declaring that it will suppress every form of opposition to imperialism.

This demonstrates that the struggle for democratic and social rights and the struggle against imperialism are inseparable. It is precisely for this reason that the CHP—which has itself become a target of the Erdoğan regime's police-state repression—is incapable of leading this struggle: It represents the interests of the same ruling class as Erdoğan's AKP and is bound to the same imperialist powers. This struggle requires the independent political mobilization of the working class on the basis of a socialist program, against both the Erdoğan regime and the ruling class and imperialism behind it.



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