

# Mass protest on Prinkipo against arrest of Mayor Ercan Akpolat

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On Sunday a mass march and protests were held on Büyükada (Prinkipo) to demand the immediate release of Mayor Ali Ercan Akpolat and others.

Thirty-nine people—including Republican People’s Party (CHP) Mayor Akpolat, who was detained in the police operation mounted against Adalar Municipality on Friday morning—were referred to the Anadolu Courthouse on Monday. Under a detention order issued against 47 people on allegations of corruption, 42 were taken into custody, three of whom were released on the instruction of the prosecutor’s office. As this article was written, the decision of the criminal judgeship of peace—whether for arrest or for release under judicial control—was still being awaited.

The operation targeting Adalar Municipality is part of a broader politically motivated judicial campaign by the government of President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan against the CHP. The *World Socialist Web Site* and the Sosyalist E?itlik Partisi–Dördüncü Enternasyonal (Socialist Equality Party–Fourth International) oppose this political repression, which violates basic democratic rights, and demand the immediate release of those detained and other political prisoners.

The political character of this operation, like those before it, is obvious to broad layers of the population. According to a survey conducted by AREA Research at the end of March, only 23.7 percent of the public believes the allegations regarding operations targeting CHP-run municipalities are true, while 61 percent believe they are “politically motivated.”

From its very first hour, the operation led to mass outrage on Büyükada and beyond. On the afternoon of June 19, island residents gathered on their own initiative at Clock Square. According to a report in the *Gerçek*, the head of the Islands Volunteers Association, attorney ?rem Berksoy, pointed out that figures associated with corruption within President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan’s

ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP) had been left untouched, underscoring that the claim of “fighting corruption” was hollow.

Speaking to WSWWS reporters during the protest on Sunday, CHP ?anlı?urfa deputy and lawyer Mahmut Tanal stated that Akpolat’s detention was based “not on legal but entirely political” reasons. Tanal said that detaining elected mayors, including Akpolat, through dawn raids—rather than summoning them to give a statement to the prosecutor’s office—amounted to an unlawful act of “intimidation.” Tanal also drew attention to the selectivity of the judiciary:

This is what we want: We want equality in crime and punishment. We want justice in crime and punishment. Whatever law is applied to Mayor Ercan, apply that same law to AKP mayors. Whatever law is applied to AKP mayors, apply the same to Mayor Ercan... What are they doing? They mount operations against CHP mayors. [But] if [a mayor] goes over to the AKP ... any investigation is closed; a non-prosecution decision is issued. There are examples: Aydı?n Metropolitan Municipality, Gaziantep ?ehitkamil Municipality... What are these? Once [mayors] cross over to the AKP, they are acquitted in cases that have already been opened, and non-prosecution decisions are issued in the investigations against them.

One of the most concrete proofs that these operations are not independent of the Erdoğan government—and that no genuine “fight against corruption” is involved—is the question of against whom such allegations are directed and against whom they are not.

Since the local elections of March 31, 2024—in which

the CHP overtook the AKP to become the top party nationwide—the operations have been directed almost entirely against municipalities held by the CHP and the Kurdish People’s Equality and Democracy Party (DEM Party), while there has been no comparable wave of operations against AKP-run municipalities. Following the March 2025 arrest of Istanbul Metropolitan Mayor Ekrem İmamoğlu—who was seen as capable of defeating Erdoğan in a presidential election—the operations have continued without pause. Most recently, last month a court overstepped the bounds of its authority and removed the CHP’s elected leadership under Özgür Özel from office.

According to Interior Ministry figures cited by DEM Party co-chair Tuncer Bakırhan in early April, of the 1,048 municipalities placed under investigation since March 31, 2024, 472 were AKP-run, 217 CHP-run, 78 run by the Nationalist Movement Party (MHP), AKP’s ally, and only 16 DEM Party-run. However, the appointment of trustees and the removal of elected mayors were applied only to municipalities run by DEM Party or the CHP.

The form of the political repression of the government is shaped according to the party in question. Against the Kurdish movement—and against those CHP figures who formed the “urban consensus” alliance with it in the 2024 local elections—the “terrorism” template is applied: membership in, aid to, or propaganda for the armed organization [the Kurdistan Workers’ Party, PKK], as in Esenyurt, İli, Ovacık and DEM-run municipalities. Against CHP municipalities, the “corruption” template is used. That the wave of trustee appointments targeting DEM Party municipalities came to a halt after imprisoned PKK leader Abdullah Öcalan’s February 27, 2025 call on the group to lay down its arms is further proof of the political character of the operations. A possible collapse of the negotiations between Ankara and the PKK could bring with it a fresh wave of repression against elected Kurdish politicians.

The municipalities Tanal cited are highly revealing. Umut Yılmaz, the mayor of Şehitkamil in Gaziantep, was the subject of an investigation while he was a member of the CHP; shortly after he resigned from the CHP and joined the AKP, the prosecutor’s office decided there were no grounds for prosecution. Aydın Metropolitan Mayor Özlem Çerçioğlu crossed over to the AKP in August 2025—at a time when CHP mayors were being arrested—and was acquitted in the cases against her. CHP Chairman Özgür Özel said Çerçioğlu had been told, “Either you go to Silivri [prison], or you go over to the

AK Party.” The irregularities identified by Court of Accounts reports in these municipalities that defected to the AKP, meanwhile, became the subject of no operation whatsoever.

Another incident that exposes the political character of judiciary is the cancellation—following the reaction of business circles—of the operation against major poultry companies and the measures taken against them. In the June 12 operation against 13 poultry firms, 32 people were detained, and trustees were appointed to the corporations. But in the face of opposition from industrial and commercial circles, the executives were swiftly released and the trustees withdrawn just seven days later. ANKA agency Economy Coordinator Erdal Saflam reported that, behind the scenes, it was being said that the Justice Ministry had been “seriously warned” by President Erdoğan over the affair. The contrast between an operation reversed within a week under pressure from the business and the operations against the CHP that have continued without interruption for months shows that the judiciary functions not as an independent legal apparatus but as a political instrument.

Aside from the political character of the operation targeting the Adalar Municipality, Büyükada is an island of historical significance. It is the island where Leon Trotsky—who, together with Vladimir Lenin, led the October Revolution of 1917—spent the years of his exile between 1929 and 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 conducted a principled collaboration with Adalar Municipality for the preservation and commemoration of Trotsky’s historical and cultural heritage; the “International Leon Trotsky Commemoration” has been held every August since 2023. The Akpolat administration became an important supporter of the project to restore the house where Trotsky lived on Büyükada and transform it into an international cultural center.



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