

# Türkiye launches police dragnet ahead of NATO summit: War, dictatorship and permanent revolution

Ula? Sevinç  
24 June 2026

Türkiye is being subjected to a police state mobilization in the shadow of the 36th NATO Summit, which will be held in its capital Ankara on July 7-8. As it prepares to roll out the red carpet for US President Donald Trump—who is leading the war of aggression against Iran and made the genocide in Gaza possible—and other imperialist war criminals, the regime of President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan is seeking to suppress all opposition to war, genocide and militarism.

The Ankara Governorate placed the capital under a de facto state of emergency, banning all demonstrations, press statements, hunger strikes and the distribution of leaflets across the city for 13 days, from June 28 to July 10. This was followed on Tuesday morning by the detention of 209 people in simultaneous house raids in numerous provinces. Coming after the arrest of more than 30 anti-NATO activists in previous weeks, this operation targeted representatives of anti-war parties and mass organizations, journalists, academics and lawyers.

During the same time, operations were carried out against the Adalar Municipality in Istanbul and the Silifke Municipality in Mersin, both run by the Kemalist Republican People's Party (CHP). Dozens of people, including elected mayors, were arrested, and the constitutional right to vote and to be elected was once again violated without any court ruling: Adalar Mayor Ali Ercan Akpolat and Silifke Mayor Mustafa Turgut were removed from office by the Interior Ministry.

The International Committee of the Fourth International (ICFI) and the Socialist Equality Parties affiliated with it condemn this widespread police state repression and demand the immediate release of all political prisoners. In addition to the campaign by the Sosyalist E?itlik Partisi in Türkiye, the Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei (SGP) in Germany held a rally on Wednesday in front of the Turkish Embassy in Berlin and delivered an Open Letter to the ambassador demanding freedom for Ercan Akpolat, other elected politicians and anti-NATO activists.

The operations targeting these municipalities are the latest moves in an ongoing politically motivated judicial campaign against the CHP. This wave of repression was triggered when the CHP overtook President Erdoğan's Justice and Development Party (AKP) to become the leading party nationwide in the March 2024 local elections, and when Istanbul Metropolitan Mayor Ekrem ?mamo?lu (CHP) pulled ahead of Erdoğan in the polls.

?mamo?lu's arrest in March 2025 was followed by similar operations and arrests targeting dozens of municipalities. Last month a court exceeded its jurisdiction to remove the CHP's elected leadership under Özgür Özel.

These measures constitute the two faces of the Erdoğan regime's response to the imperialist war engulfing Türkiye's borders and to the social explosion brewing at home. The regime is seeking to manage this insoluble crisis by constructing a presidential dictatorship—doing so with the approval of US President Donald Trump and the European capitals and on behalf of the Turkish bourgeoisie. At the same time, the progressive suspension of constitutional and legal norms in Türkiye serves as an example and an inspiration to the American and European ruling elites, who confront the same crisis.

The significance of the operation against the Adalar Municipality goes beyond Erdoğan's drive to neutralize his political rival, the CHP. Büyükada (Prinkipo, part of Adalar) is the island where Leon Trotsky spent his years of exile between 1929 and 1933, where—alongside *My Life* and *The History of the Russian Revolution*—he wrote works of critical importance against the rise of fascism and against Stalinism, and where in 1933 he issued the call to found the Fourth International. Together with Vladimir Lenin, Trotsky led the Soviet regime, whose military and political support played a decisive role in the victory of Türkiye's national liberation war of 1919-1922. President Mustafa Kemal Atatürk himself acknowledged the role of this support in 1929.

Since 2023, the *World Socialist Web Site* has conducted a principled collaboration with the Adalar Municipality and Akpolat, within the framework of the “International Commemoration of Leon Trotsky” events held on the island every August and the project to transform Trotsky's house into an international cultural center. The operation also objectively threatens this historical memory project of international significance.

Erdoğan's purge of his political rivals is part of the collapse of democratic forms of rule internationally. What is taking place in Türkiye gained momentum with Trump's return to office in the United States and his war on basic democratic rights. In Europe, the ruling elites are raising military spending to record levels and imposing social cuts, while promoting far-right forces and intensifying repression against the growing opposition among workers and youth.

In Türkiye—a country bearing the stamp of belated capitalist development and one of the key hubs of global geopolitics—international and class contradictions are no longer compatible with even the most limited democratic norms.

A driving force behind this repression is the war encircling Türkiye. NATO is convening in Ankara at a time when, under the leadership of the European powers, it is escalating the war against Russia and forcing member states into record military spending. The fragile ceasefire in the Iran war has not assuaged US imperialism’s drive for total domination of the Middle East and the world; far from diminishing this offensive, the debacle in the war of aggression against Iran will only make it more reckless. All of this is ultimately part of the preparations for war against China and the imperialist redivision of the world. Commanding NATO’s second-largest army, Erdoğan is tightening his ties with his imperialist allies through air defense reinforcements and a naval headquarters established in Istanbul against Russia.

The Erdoğan regime is seeking to prevent the population’s powerful anti-imperialist sentiments from erupting in the form of a mass movement against war and genocide. Polls show that more than 90 percent of Türkiye’s population oppose the war against Iran and the US bases in the country. Erdoğan, for his part, despite his rhetorical criticisms of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, brokers the flow of Azerbaijani oil to Israel, expands the US-NATO presence in the country, participates in Trump’s “Board of Peace” for Gaza, and—in the war against Iran—condemns Iran’s legitimate retaliation rather than the United States aggression. The construction of a presidential dictatorship is an attempt to close this chasm by force: the chasm between the Turkish ruling class’s ties to imperialism and its reactionary interests, on the one hand, and the anti-war sentiment of the working masses, on the other.

Another major factor accelerating the collapse of democracy is the unprecedented level of social inequality and the intensifying class struggles. Türkiye ranks among the highest in Europe in social inequality. While the financial oligarchy adds wealth to wealth, workers are caught in the grip of an ever-worsening cost-of-living crisis. This polarization expresses itself every day in new struggles: private-sector teachers fighting in Ankara for a guaranteed base wage and decent working conditions; workers who have torn down gendarmerie barricades to seize a mine, defied the armed assault of corporate thugs and rebelled against the trade union bureaucracies. The Turkish ruling class is sitting on a social powder keg, and police state repression is increasingly aimed directly at the working class and the threat of social revolution emanating from it.

Although the CHP is a target of Erdoğan’s repression, it is completely unable to provide a progressive response to this crisis. The CHP—or any other bourgeois party—is, by its very nature, incapable of consistently defending democratic rights or opposing imperialism. The CHP is the party of Atatürk, who founded the Republic of Türkiye in 1923. It is a party that represents the interests of the same ruling class as the AKP and is deeply tied to NATO imperialism. Özgür Özel’s rhetoric of “resistance” to the repression has rapidly turned into acquiescence, because Özel, like Erdoğan, fears above all else the development of an independent

movement of the working class that would shake the foundations of the capitalist system and bourgeois rule.

For this reason, Özel appeals not to the working class but to its enemies and the enemies of democracy—the imperialist NATO powers. In an article he wrote for *Newsweek* magazine, he warned these powers that the growing social opposition to the Erdoğan government had reached a point beyond control, and that the consequences of a revolutionary explosion would affect them as well. It could not be demonstrated more clearly that democratic rights cannot be defended under the leadership of a bourgeois party dependent on imperialism.

All of this proves in practice the correctness of Trotsky’s theory of permanent revolution. In the epoch of imperialism, no section of the bourgeoisie in countries of belated capitalist development is capable of establishing a democratic regime, achieving independence from imperialism or answering the social aspirations of the working people. The task of halting imperialist war, securing the democratic rights of the Kurdish people and all the oppressed of the region and putting an end to social inequality falls to the working class in Türkiye and internationally. The struggle for democratic and social rights cannot be separated from the struggle against imperialism. This means the struggle for a Socialist Federation of the Middle East, based on the perspective of world socialist revolution.

The crisis in Türkiye demonstrates that there is no solution to the global collapse of bourgeois democracy within the existing capitalist institutions. The only way forward is the establishment of workers’ power through the revolutionary mobilization of the working class. This is the perspective for which the International Committee of the Fourth International and its Turkish section, the Sosyalist E?itlik Partisi, are fighting.



To contact the WSW and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

**[wsws.org/contact](https://www.wsws.org/contact)**