

SEP (UK) calls for the release of Ali Ercan Akpolat at Turkish embassy in London

Our reporters
2 July 2026

Socialist Equality Party Assistant National Secretary Tom Scripps spoke outside the Turkish embassy in London on Tuesday. He and a group of SEP members aimed to deliver a letter of protest to the Turkish ambassador protesting the unjust arrest of Mayor Ali Ercan Akpolat, and hundreds of others, by the Erdoğan government.

This followed a protest outside the Turkish embassy in Berlin held by the Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei, and protests held on Büyükada (Prinkipo) island—part of Ercan Ali’s municipality—participated in by the Sosyalist E?itlik Partisi–Dördüncü Enternasyonal (Socialist Equality Party – Fourth International).

Staff at the embassy refused to open the door or to receive the letter, which has been submitted by email. The text is posted below.

Dear Ambassador Osman Koray Erta?,

On behalf of the Socialist Equality Party of Britain, we are writing to you to protest the arrest of Ali Ercan Akpolat, the mayor of the municipality of Adalar, and to demand his immediate and unconditional release.

The arrest of Mayor Akpolat and other representatives and employees of the municipality of Adalar is a grave attack on democratic rights.

The charges brought against Akpolat are baseless, directed not against actual crimes but against elected mayors and opposition politicians. They are part of a broader campaign by the Erdoğan government to intimidate and disempower opposition-led municipalities through police operations, criminal prosecution and state intervention.

Akpolat is known in Türkiye and internationally for his commitment to preserving historical truth and cultural heritage. He has played a leading role in an historic project to restore the “Trotsky House” on

Büyükada, once known as Prinkipo.

Leon Trotsky, who together with Vladimir Lenin led the October Revolution of 1917, lived in exile there from 1929 to 1933 and wrote some of his most important works, including his autobiography *My Life* and *The History of the Russian Revolution*, and developed his perspective for the struggle against fascism, Stalinism and imperialist war.

As was reported by the *World Socialist Web Site*, published by the International Committee of the Fourth International, at a commemoration in Büyükada in 2024, Akpolat declared:

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 centre 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.

These words express an understanding of the international historical and cultural significance of Büyükada that is recognised and respected in Türkiye and internationally.

Akpolat's arrest threatens not only the democratic rights of an elected mayor and the population of Adalar. It is also directed against the defence of a historical heritage that is of significance to workers, youth, scholars and defenders of democratic rights throughout the world.

Earlier this week, large protests took place on Büyükada against the arrests. Protests in the UK outside your embassy and Downing Street last year mobilised thousands, involving members of parliament and leaders of some of Britain's main trade unions. The Trades Union Congress has denounced previous waves of arrests.

The SEP and our sister parties internationally call on the Turkish government to:

1. Immediately and unconditionally release Ali Ercan Akpolat and all those arrested as part of the operation against the municipality of Adalar;
2. Drop the prosecution of Akpolat and all others;
3. End the campaign against elected mayors, municipal councillors and municipal employees of the opposition;
4. Release all political prisoners, including the more than 200 anti-NATO activists arrested in recent days;
5. Fully respect the democratic rights of the population, including the right to elect representatives to office and for them to exercise these offices without intimidation and state arbitrariness;
6. No obstruction in the work of preserving Leon Trotsky's house on Büyükada and creating an international cultural and educational centre.

Mr. Ambassador, we ask you to forward this protest and these demands to your government without delay. We will inform workers, youth, intellectuals, artists and defenders of democratic rights internationally of the repression, the response to our demands for the release of Mayor Akpolat and organize protests in the UK and internationally.

Yours sincerely,

Chris Marsden (Socialist Equality Party National Secretary)

Thomas Scripps (Socialist Equality Party Assistant National Secretary)



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