

Turkish teachers suspend Ankara protest ahead of NATO summit

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3 July 2026

Educators and teachers fighting for the appointment of teachers, improvements to their personal benefits and an increase in minimum wages in the private sector suspended their protests in Ankara, along with their hunger strike, on June 27. Their actions in Ankara had been continuing since June 14. Having been subjected to relentless police violence, the teachers were being directly threatened by the bans imposed ahead of the NATO summit on July 7–8.

In its statement, the Private Sector Teachers' Union declared that the "NATO Directive" issued by the Ankara Governor's Office—in coordination with the government of President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan—had officially banned constitutional and democratic rights, and that the hunger strike was among the actions covered by this ban. It added: "We are not talking about rights that have merely been shelved. What we are emphasizing is that the repression and violence inflicted on teachers over the past 14 days is about to be given official form."

The statement continued: "Acting responsibly in the face of the threat to the lives of our friends and families and the harm they might suffer, and responding to the call of the public—and of the intellectual, academic and artist friends who have taken up the representation of the public—we are suspending our resistance in Ankara and ending our hunger strike. Our struggle will continue in the provinces in different forms, with great motivation and energy."

The teachers announced that, unless their demands are met, they will return to Ankara in mid-July.

The actions had been launched on June 1 by the Private Sector Teachers' Union, an independent rank-and-file union, together with the Platform for Teachers Affected by Interview Discrimination. The platform represents teachers who, despite scoring high on exams, had their scores lowered during the interviews and were not appointed. According to official figures for the 2024–2025 period, roughly 180,000 teachers work in private schools. The number of unassigned teachers is estimated to exceed 600,000.

On June 14, teachers who had gathered at Ankara's

Güvenpark and sought to march to the Grand National Assembly of Türkiye (TBMM) to make a press statement—together with their families and supporters—were detained in a violent police assault. On June 15, teachers seeking to make a press statement at Ankara's Kurtuluş Park were once again detained and handcuffed behind their backs, following a police attack with pepper spray. The teachers announced that they were beginning a hunger strike to protest police violence until their demands were met. The hunger strike and the protests in front of the union building in Ankara spread to other cities.

The police-state repression against the teachers is part of a de facto state of emergency regime that aims to suppress every form of social and political opposition ahead of the NATO summit, and that has unlawfully arrested more than 200 opponents of NATO. Emphasizing Türkiye's "indispensable" role in NATO's imperialist war machine, the Erdoğan government is preparing to roll out the red carpet for the war criminals who will attend the summit, including US President Donald Trump.

Aware of the widespread anti-imperialist and anti-war sentiment among the population, the government is taking sweeping measures in addition to the preventive arrests. The Ankara Governor's Office banned all assemblies, demonstrations and marches, press statements, sit-ins, rallies, hunger strikes, the setting up of stands and tents, the distribution of leaflets and the hanging of posters and banners across the city from 00:00 on June 28 until 23:59 on July 10—for 13 days. The governor's offices of Adana, Bolu, Eskişehir, Karabük and Mersin subsequently adopted similar decisions.

The government has been targeting municipalities run by the Republican People's Party (CHP) through a political judicial operation since March 2025, and it is seeking to suppress the developing labor movement. To press ahead with its agenda of austerity, militarism and political repression—which has no popular support—it will seek to make permanent the anti-democratic measures it declared ahead of the NATO summit.

For this reason, the struggles of the educators, of the miners and workers in other branches of industry who have entered into struggle, of the young people seeking to defend their future, of the villagers seeking to defend their forests and living spaces, and of those opposing NATO cannot be considered in isolation from one another. For teachers, the way forward lies in a struggle that mobilizes the collective strength of all educators and of the other sections of the working class. Student youth, too, are an important ally.

There is powerful potential for the struggles of educators to win the support of other sections of the working class. While the education of their children is a major concern for parents, the government's education policy is built on weakening public education and working people in every respect. In this way, and especially over the past quarter-century, the education system has been turned into a profitable field of investment for the corporations. The children of working-class families who cannot afford the exorbitant fees of private schools, meanwhile, are subjected to an education that has been scientifically hollowed out and fed with reactionary ideologies, and they are being prepared to serve as cheap labor for the capitalists. This is why the government is planning to shorten the 12 years of compulsory education.

Educators in the private sector work for something close to the minimum wage (28,000 lira)—far lower than roughly half of those of teachers employed in the public sector. The way was opened for this brutal attack in 2014, when an amendment to the Private Education Institutions Law repealed the provision under which private school teachers could not be paid less than their public-sector counterparts. The policy of dividing teachers into public and private sectors is extended by dividing teachers working in public schools into permanently appointed teachers (915,000), contract teachers (65,000) and salaried teachers (86,000). Contract teachers work without job security, while salaried teachers are paid the minimum wage.

The demand for education to be nationalized entirely, and for major resources to be devoted to high-quality, scientific education, will be the cement that unites teachers with students and their families. It will also provide the basis for teacher appointments to be carried out and for improvements in wages and working conditions. Such a struggle requires opposition to the policy of channelling resources to war, rearmament and the capitalist oligarchy, and to the class relations that stand behind it.

This struggle must aim to unite the educators and young people who face the same problems all over the world in a common struggle. The union bureaucracies, which have become an appendage of the corporations and the state, will not organize such a struggle. Unions organized in the public

sector—such as E?itim-Bir-Sen/Memur-Sen, Türk E?itim-Sen/Türkiye Kamu-Sen, E?itim-??/Birle?ik Kamu-?? and E?itim-Sen/KESK—have ignored the privatization of education, the plight of teachers in the private sector and unemployed teachers.

The way forward in the teachers' struggle runs through the building of rank-and-file committees that unite all educators—public, private or unassigned—from below, independently of the union bureaucracy, for scientific, high-quality, secular, mother-tongue and free education. These committees must establish links with other sections of the working class and with students and set them into motion. The International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees (IWA-RFC) has been established as a global instrument for such struggles of the working class.

The following demands must be raised in this struggle:

- Nationalize all private schools, for a scientific, high-quality, mother-tongue and free education system!
- All educators in private schools and all unassigned teachers must be employed in the public sector, with full pay, benefits and job security!
- Resources must be redirected from war and the corporations to education, health care, transport, housing, earthquake preparedness and other urgent social needs!
- Build independent rank-and-file committees in every school and workplace to fight for these demands!
- Broaden the struggle, including a strike encompassing the entire sector! Organise joint struggles with other sections of the working class and with students!
- Oppose the trampling of democratic rights, imperialist war and the NATO summit! Demand the release of all political prisoners who have been detained, and the lifting of the de facto state of emergency and the bans!



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