Turkish police attack teachers in Ankara: “No money” for education, billions for war and corporations

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Turkish educators employed in the private sector and teachers victimized by the official interview system gathered once again in Ankara on Tuesday, July 14, demanding the reinstatement of the base salary application and the resolution of appointment grievances. Exercising their democratic rights, the teachers were subjected to a violent police attack on Thursday; 52 teachers were detained.

On Tuesday, around 100 teachers gathered in front of the Private Sector Teachers’ Union (Ö?retmen Sendikas?) building in Ankara and made a press statement. Surrounded by a police blockade, the teachers marched to the Miners’ Monument, chanting “The Bosses’ Minister [of National Education] Yusuf Tekin, resign!”

The teachers demanded that their requests be addressed in the National Education, Culture, Youth, and Sports Commission convened in the Turkish parliament, stating that they were raising their voices not only for their own rights but “for public and quality education.” According to official figures for the 2024-2025 term, there are approximately 180,000 teachers working in private schools. It is estimated that the number of unappointed teachers exceeds 600,000.

In the commission chaired by Ay?en Gürcan, Eski?ehir Deputy of President Recep Tayyip Erdo?an’s Justice and Development Party (AKP), a 28-article bill was discussed. However, the teachers’ demands were not on the commission’s agenda. In contrast, the omnibus bill in the Planning and Budget Commission contains a regulation regarding the employment of teachers who will work in private educational institutions: the National Education Academy preparatory training requirement, which is mandatory in public schools, is being abolished for private educational institutions, thus facilitating the cheap and fast supply of teachers to private schools.

Stating that one of the institutions preventing the re-implementation of the base salary application is the Ministry of Treasury and Finance, teachers held a press statement in front of the ministry on Thursday. Subsequently, police attacked the teachers who wanted to march to the Ministry of National Education. Union Chairman Eren Edebali was handcuffed behind his back and detained along with Secretary General Ozan F?nd?k and Organizing Secretary Hüseyin Aksoy. Mothers supporting the protest were also battered and detained; the teachers’ children were present in the area as well. While teachers were dragged on the ground, no union confederation called for action to defend the teachers or attempted to mobilize its millions of members.

The 52 detained teachers were released in the evening following public outrage and solidarity protests extending from Izmir to Istanbul. The teachers were welcomed in front of the union building in K?z?lay with the chants of “Teachers are giving the lesson in struggle.”

This attack demonstrates that the de facto state of emergency implemented prior to the NATO Summit held in Ankara on July 7-8 is being made permanent. Before the summit, nearly 1,000 anti-NATO activists across the country were detained in unlawful house raids, and more than 200 were arrested. Lawyers report that political prisoners who are still in jail are being subjected to mistreatment.

Teachers had started a protest in Ankara on June 14 and were repeatedly attacked by the police. The teachers, who went on a hunger strike, suspended their protests on June 27 due to the extraordinary measures and arrest threats taken by the Erdo?an government for the NATO Summit.

The Ministry of Treasury and Finance has rejected the teachers’ demands, saying “there is no money.” In reality, the government’s budget and spending are shaped according to the interests of the capitalist class, which is deeply tied to imperialist powers.

At the summit, a consensus was reached on further armament and the escalation of imperialist aggression. Following the gathering, Türkiye officially announced that it would join the Canada-based Defense Security and Resilience Bank, expected to become operational in 2027, as a founding member. Nine countries, including Türkiye, have pledged support to the bank, which is stated to provide approximately US$134 billion in financing to increase NATO’s armed forces. According to SIPRI’s April 2026 report, Türkiye’s military spending reached US$30 billion in 2025, increasing by 7.2 percent

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compared to the previous year; and by 94 percent compared to 2016. More than 11 billion Turkish liras were spent solely on preparations for the NATO Summit.

During those same days, resource transfers to corporations continued. The corporate tax for manufacturing and agricultural companies was reduced from 25 percent to 12.5 percent; a monthly premium support of 3,500 liras per insured worker was introduced for tourism companies; and 188 billion liras are being allocated to extend incentives to the manufacturing industry until 2028. At the same time, teachers, retirees, and other sections of the working class are told "there is no money."

According to the June 2026 calculations of the pro-government Türk-?? confederation, the monthly minimum food expenditure (hunger limit) for a family of four has risen to 35,759 liras—well above the 28,000-lira minimum wage received by the vast majority of private sector teachers. With the same claim of "no budget," the lowest pensioner's monthly salary is planned to be increased from 20,000 liras to 23,552 liras; this figure is 4,448 liras below even the highly inadequate minimum wage. The increase in war budgets goes hand in hand with cuts in social spending everywhere, including health, education, and retirement pensions. The war abroad is accompanied by a war against the social and democratic rights of the working class at home.

On July 15, teachers made a press statement in front of the Union of Chambers and Commodity Exchanges of Türkiye (TOBB). This was the latest of the union's protests targeting the organizations of education bosses. On June 30, teachers had gathered in front of the All Private Educational Institutions Association (TÖDER), which represents more than two thousand private educational institutions; and on July 3, they had marched in front of Çözüm Educational Institutions in Samsun.

These protests demonstrate the true nature of the front opposing the teachers. The president of the Türkiye Education Assembly under the umbrella of TOBB is Metin Özer, the owner of S?nav Educational Institutions; Ministers of National Education attend the meetings of this assembly. TÖDER President and owner of Final Educational Institutions, ?brahim Ta?el, and the owner of Çözüm Educational Institutions, Ahmet Akça, are members of the Presidential Education and Teaching Policies Board. As the union stated during the TÖDER protest on June 30: "Private school bosses are not merely employers; they are directly involved in the mechanisms that determine education policies through the associations they have established."

Those who profit from the 2014 law amendment that effectively reduced teachers' wages to the minimum wage by abolishing the base salary application are sitting on these very boards. On July 3, pointing out that teachers are being employed "illegally with 10-month contracts," the union had also voiced the demand to transition to indefinite-term contracts. As the union said in front of TOBB, "Precarity is no longer an exception, it has been turned into a system."

However, this correct diagnosis also reveals the dead-end of the union's perspective. On July 3 in Samsun, Hüseyin Aksoy, the Organizing Secretary of the Teachers' Union, addressed Ahmet Akça, who is also the Chairman of ÖZDER and a board member of the Ankara Chamber of Commerce, saying: "If Ahmet Akça says, 'Teachers should receive a base salary,' this issue will be solved... You must take a stance in favor of the teacher here. You have authority, power, and connections."

Expecting a boss who directly profits from the cheapening of teachers' labor power and the removal of their personal benefits to side with the teachers is hoping for a solution from the source of the problem. The fate of the promise given by Erdo?an before the 2023 elections and the promises during the 2025 struggles also underlines the same lesson: it is not possible to achieve lasting gains by appealing to the government, establishment parties, or corporate organizations. The problem is that public education, like other basic needs of society, is subordinated to capitalist profit, and there is no solution to this within this socioeconomic system.

The struggle of teachers can only advance by developing into a struggle that unites public- and private-sector educators and encompasses other sections of the working class and students. The instrument for this is rank-and-file committees to be built in every school and workplace.

The *World Socialist Web Site* calls on teachers in the public and private sectors to unite under the umbrella of the International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees (IWA-RFC) and put forward the following demands:

- 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 and imperialist war! Demand the release of all political prisoners!

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