Türkiye: Attacks on Kurdish seasonal farm workers and chauvinist provocations in football stadiums

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Throughout August, chauvinist demonstrations in football stadiums have been accompanied by physical attacks on Kurdish seasonal farm workers in the western Black Sea region of Türkiye.

More than 70 workers and their families, who had travelled from the Cizre and Silopi districts of ??rnak to the village of Bekta?l? in the Alapl? district of Zonguldak to pick hazelnuts, were assaulted with stones and clubs twice in the space of two days, on August 22 and 23.

The Sosyalist E?itlik Partisi—Dördüncü Enternasyonal (Socialist Equality Party—Fourth International) and the *World Socialist Web Site* strongly condemn these fascistic attacks and call on all workers to come to the defense of their class brothers and sisters.

According to press reports, the incident began with what was described as “a quarrel among young people.” The area where the workers were staying was then pelted with stones, and the vehicles carrying them as they set out to leave the village came under attack. Footage circulated on social media shows a large crowd attacking workers riding in the bed of a pickup truck, among them children. In further footage obtained by the *Mezopotamya Agency*, the attackers can be heard shouting at the workers: “Starving dogs, is there no work in your own homeland?”

Botan B., one of the workers who came under attack, told *Amida Haber* that the gendarmerie was present in the village and that their vehicles were stoned nonetheless. “We were terrified, there was a huge panic,” he said. In the aftermath of the attacks, the workers and their families were unwilling to remain in Bekta?l? and left the area for another district.

Members of parliament for the Peoples’ Equality and Democracy Party (DEM Party) from ??rnak stated that the authorities had informed them that the workers’ safety had been secured, and that the workers were nevertheless attacked again as they returned from the fields in the evening. Four people were taken into custody and, after giving statements to the prosecutor, released under judicial control. Such impunity can only encourage further chauvinist attacks of this kind.

Indeed, following this incident, Kurdish workers who had travelled from Mardin to Düzce were also attacked. Workers who did not wish to give their names out of concern for their safety described what had happened to the *Mezopotamya Agency*. They said that while they were sitting in the garden of the house where they were staying in the evening, a group suddenly approached the garden; one of them drew a knife, began cursing at them and told them they had to leave.

The workers said they were frightened, that they called the police, and that the officers who arrived took the man away. The suspect who drew the knife in Düzce, who has seven separate criminal records, was arrested. The workers said they now live in fear “that there will be a new attack every evening,” and that they are therefore considering leaving the area.

The attacks took place under conditions in which negotiations between Ankara and the imprisoned leader of the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK), Abdullah Öcalan, are continuing, and in which the parliament this month adopted a law related to those talks.

The response of the government and the authorities has been to play down their significance. Justice Minister Ak?n Gürlek declared the attack in Zonguldak “an isolated incident” and called on the public to give credence only to official statements. The attempted attack in Düzce followed.

That the attacks are anything but “isolated” is confirmed by the chauvinist demonstrations in the football stadiums. In Turkish Süper Lig matches that began this

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month, and at the Europa League fixture between Trabzonspor and Ferencváros on August 20, the chant “Does a terrorist get to speak in parliament?” rang out from the stands, along with insults directed at Öcalan.

The target of this chanting is the statement by Devlet Bahçeli—leader of the Nationalist Movement Party (MHP), the fascist ally of President Recep Tayyip Erdo?an—who initiated the negotiating process in October 2024 by declaring that Öcalan should come and speak in parliament.

August 24 witnessed an organized provocation in Kocaeli. Ahead of the away fixture of Amedspor—the team of the Kurdish city of Diyarbak?r, competing in the Süper Lig for the first time this season—yellow bags were waved from the Kocaelispor stands in the direction of the visiting supporters. This gesture is an open death threat. It references the yellow bags in which the bodies of PKK fighters killed in armed clashes with state forces have been placed. The prosecutor’s office opened an investigation on the charge of “inciting the public to hatred and enmity”; five supporters who were detained were released under house arrest.

Amedspor and its supporters have been the target of such attacks for years. Throughout last season, Kurdish supporters were assaulted at away matches while the club was fined hundreds of thousands of lira.

The “Law on Strengthening National Solidarity and Social Integration,” which establishes the legal basis for the process of the PKK laying down its arms, was passed by an overwhelming majority in parliament on August 10. Drawn up by the Erdo?an government, it has been endorsed by Öcalan.

The GOOD Party, which previously split from the MHP, together with the Victory Party and similar far-right and chauvinist nationalist forces, oppose the process, denouncing it as a “concession to the PKK” and an “amnesty,” and are encouraging provocative reactions.

The Socialist Equality Party and the *World Socialist Web Site* have explained from the outset that the Ankara-PKK agreement has nothing to do with its authors’ claims of democratization and peace. As is clear from the statements of Erdo?an and Öcalan themselves, the initiative is aimed at enabling the Turkish and Kurdish ruling elites to forge an alliance under the leadership of US imperialism, and to advance their interests in the escalating war in the Middle East. When Erdo?an speaks of “fortifying the internal front,” what he means is uniting forces for war abroad and suppressing social and political opposition at home.

Recognition of the existence and the rights of the Kurdish people is not on the agenda in the negotiations conducted between the Erdo?an government and Öcalan, and the DEM Party.

The same government that claims it will take steps toward “peace” and “democratization” is simultaneously eliminating what remains of basic democratic rights and preparing intensively for war. It has launched judicial operations against elected mayors of the Republican People’s Party (CHP), against Istanbul Metropolitan Mayor Ekrem ?mamo?lu—Erdo?an’s principal political rival—and against the CHP leadership. It has jailed hundreds of opponents of NATO and is violently suppressing the struggles of the working class. While an immense fortune is transferred to the major corporations, the bill for escalating military spending is being handed to the working class.

Our opposition to this agreement comes from the left. It is grounded in the interests of the international working class and in the uncompromising defense of the basic democratic rights of the Kurdish people, and it emphatically rejects the chauvinist reaction coming from the right. The only antidote to this poisonous atmosphere and to chauvinist nationalism is working-class internationalism.

Under conditions in which the imperialist aggression, dictatorship and social inequality produced by the capitalist system are escalating across the region and the world, the only way forward in the fight for genuine peace, democracy and social equality lies through a revolutionary socialist program that unites the working class internationally to take power and to establish a Socialist Federation of the Middle East. This is the program for which the Socialist Equality Party fights.

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