



# ?The parliament is yours, the streets are ours? Let?s take them!

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The war on the Kurds in Turkey is not only a business of bombs and tanks, it is also a dirty bureaucratic process. What the governing ?Justice and Development Party?, AKP, started with the dismissal of many Kurdish mayors in the East, reached fever pitch in the parliament in Ankara on May 20.

In the elections in June 2015, the AKP failed to reach its target of a two-thirds majority. This would have allowed it to change the constitution into a presidential system, tailored to the wishes of Tayyip Recep Erdogan himself and giving a legal basis for his already over-powerful position. However, the success of the pro-Kurdish party, HDP, which passed the 10 percent threshold to enter Parliament for the first time, thwarted the AKP's plans.

Since then a war has been waged against the whole opposition with towns reduced to rubble by the Turkish army. In addition to the destruction of the armed opposition, the government's primary goal remained gaining the majority in the parliament. On May 20, parliament voted by more than a two-thirds majority, clearly more than just the AKP delegates, to lift the parliamentary immunity of 138 members. Of course, this hit the HDP the hardest, with 50 of their 59 delegates now facing trials and, in all probability, several years of imprisonment. The intention is clearly that they be removed from the political stage as fast as possible.

The all time favourite accusation is, of course, a connection to the banned Kurdish Workers' Party, PKK, and collaboration with the ?terrorists? of the Kurdish militia, PYD, over the Syrian border in Rojava. From the beginning of the war, the HDP leader, Demirtas, tried to curry favour with the AKP by calling for the PKK to apologise and announce a unilateral ceasefire, thereby giving up any legitimate self-defence, but the government showed no mercy.

At the same time, while Demirtas publicly attacked the AKP and Erdogan, the HDP took part in the commission on constitutional changes with the provisional government last year. The offensive by the AKP now shows very clearly that negotiations with them are built on sand. Demirtas' ingratiation helped neither the HDP nor the Kurds.

## Western imperialism

All this is seen very differently in Western Europe. While Merkel recognises that the lifting of immunity is an affront to democratic values, this should not be over-exaggerated and the wrong consequences drawn. Erdogan declares that all those affected are terrorists and adds that any state that disagrees can expect some thousand buses full of Syrian refugees.

This threat is actually unnecessary. None of the EU-governments is interested in solidarity with the Kurdish resistance, their only concern is that the repression against them should be more ?appropriate?, as the German Interior Minister, De Maizière, put it.

Indeed, the conservative camp, sees the ?Kurdish Question? in much the same way as Erdogan. Colin Dürkop, head of the Istanbul office of the Konrad Adenauer Institute, argues that the struggle against the HDP should be seen in the context of the justified struggle against terrorism and also that a Presidential system would have the advantage that there would be only one representative in international discussions and no friction between the Head of State and the head of government. One President, One discussion partner, One....

And what of the Left? That's a good question, apart from selfies in parliament and lurid posts on facebook there is not much to see from those who have lost their bloodily earned seats in parliament and have been deprived of their democratic rights. The same can be said for the Left in other countries, where solidarity movements are missing.

Nonetheless, the vote on May 20 is hugely significant. Whether the additional votes came from the Kemalist CHP or the fascist MHP is a question of speculation. What it shows once again is that the HDP is completely isolated in the parliament now. Their immediate response, the slogan, 'the parliament may be yours, but the streets are ours' was very spirited, but nevertheless the streets were empty.

In the Kurdish territories, the war goes on, the Turkish army has murdered at least 1,000 people so far. Many of them were civilians, children or civilians who were trapped in their buildings during the long curfews. Of course, the repression of rallies and demonstrations goes on, too. But when your voices in parliament are silenced, what illusions in a democratic change of Turkey through this parliament can there be?

Especially now, mobilisations on the streets are very important, because that is the only thing left when all other voices are silenced. It is also the only possibility for mobilising the working class. Since the beginning of the war, there have been no big strikes or other actions of the working-class or the trade-unions in solidarity with the political opposition and the Kurdish people in the East. But then HDP never tried to become the party of the working-class and never called for such actions!

Since the sharpening of the conflict, the HDP has concentrated on a nationalist policy in which the great divide is that between the East and West of the country, not between the top and bottom of society. No mobilisations by trades unions, no political strikes were organised. The main political weapon was the moralistic call for a democratic society inclusive of all the different peoples. This found some favour with the Kurds and parts of the Western middle class but could not generate a mass-movement or respond to the immediate needs of the working class.

This policy can only lead into a dead end. What is urgently necessary is to take to the streets and squares, filling them with huge protests. The trade-unions, the HDP and the Turkish left should call for strikes in the factories against the lifting of immunity, the attack on basic democratic rights, the presidential system and for the immediate cessation of attacks by the army against the Kurdish people.

The Left should not wait for the HDP to take the first step, just because it seems to be the most immediately affected. A united front of the workers, the youth, other oppressed and especially the Kurds against the AKP-government and Erdogan's presidential dictatorship must be fought for and built.

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