



# Eye witness to the biggest massacre in recent Turkish history

Svenja Spunck Wed, 14/10/2015 - 14:37

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What began as a great demonstration for peace and against the state terror of the governing AKP ended in the bloodiest massacre in the recent history of the Turkish Republic. About 10,000 young people from across the country had travelled overnight to gather in front of the main railway station in Ankara. The main unions that mobilised for the demonstration were DISK, KESK, TMMOB and TTB together with the Kurdish party, HDP, and many other leftist groups.

It was generally understood that this was to be a peaceful demonstration, a leisurely march with, at most perhaps some clashes between police and the youth at the end of the afternoon. When we gathered in front of the station, there was a lively atmosphere as comrades from distant towns were welcomed, we danced the Halay and sang Kurdish songs in support of Rojava. People carried placards and posters that said, "How we have missed seeing skies without bloodshed!?"

Shock, grief, anger

Then, at 10:04, one after the other, two bombs exploded in the middle of the HDP-contingent. One at least was detonated by a suicide bomber. Flags and body parts were hurled through the air as the smell of burnt flesh and blood spread through the crowd. People panicked, began to scream and run. In the first few minutes no one knew what had happened. Your brain defaults to a defensive mode as you try to make sense of what you have just seen. Was that the noise of something very heavy collapsing? or had the police opened fire on the crowd? That meat on the floor was it perhaps just from the kebab stall? Could that really be a heart on the pavement, and next to it a liver?

Even as we were running and trying to find our comrades, the police attacked the crowd with tear gas and blocked the access of the, in any case completely inadequate, two ambulances. This certainly contributed to the deaths of more than 100 people over the next few hours, with more than 500 others hospitalised. Later, we saw a video showing trade unionists defending themselves against the police attack with planks of wood.

After we had regrouped on some open ground nearby, we shared the only good news of the day: all our comrades were safe, no one was missing or injured. In a state of shock, many in tears, we set off to the party office downtown. As we passed the hospital, people were standing in front of the doors asking everyone who passed by for their blood group and donations. All through the night, people went to the hospitals to help, even if only with warm blankets or chocolate.

In the office, there was silence, dead silence, as in a cemetery. Automatically, as new people arrived, they were asked "how are you" and answered equally automatically, "fine". Every phone call began with "I'm alive". Over the next few hours, not only the number of deaths rose, but also the number of absolutely mindless press releases and interviews with AKP politicians on TV.

It was suggested that it was probably terrorists from the PKK, or two other left groups, who were behind the attack, or perhaps ISIS. Since one could not be sure, anything was possible. Supposedly the PKK motive was to arouse sympathy and thus more votes for the HDP in the forthcoming elections on November 1. Basically, these cynical insinuations and lies just show the mentality of the AKP leadership. They project onto the Kurdish liberation movement a policy that they themselves have adopted towards the oppressed masses for years.

The HDP Chairman, Demirtas, was probably closer to the truth when he blamed the government, arguing that the attacks took place at least with the approval of state agencies and possibly with their collaboration.

The massacre in Ankara was the third on left gatherings since the AKP lost its parliamentary majority in the last elections. Shortly before those elections, several people died in Diyarbakir and after it many more in Suruc. Erdogan himself recently declared that if the people had given him and his party 400 seats in parliament, the country would not be sinking into chaos. It seems very much as if this threat is now being followed by actions to create the desired facts.

Only on October 9, the PKK had announced a unilateral ceasefire, so long as their positions were not attacked. At a time of looming civil war and massive repression against the Kurdish population in the country, this is really a remarkable offer. As before, the HDP remains focused entirely on the elections with the possibility that it will be returned with more than the 10 percent threshold in early November. Their main demand, which distinguishes them from other parties, is the call for peace in the country.

That the divisions within the population are growing was shown most recently by fascist attacks on 400 HDP offices across the country. In order to maintain their support, perhaps even increase it, the HDP is making it clear that it is the only party that is serious about peace and about the egalitarian coexistence of peoples in the country.

What next?

But how far can you get with a permanently pacifist, "reformist" policy, in a country that its own membership describes as fascist, where the freedom of the press has been set aside and assassinations are carried out without anyone be brought to justice?

This question is now being asked by many on the Left here. The discussions over "What Next?" are taking place at a time when blood and death stain the streets, yet many people still have hopes for an improvement and for more democracy through the forthcoming elections even though everyone is facing a qualitatively new scale of violence that could recur at any future demonstration.

Can we go on as before? Holding small demonstrations at the universities, calling for general strikes in which only a few workplaces take part, then sharing pictures of the dead on Facebook, with captions demanding justice? Or are we slowly reaching the point where other means become necessary?

The massacre of Ankara shows that in Turkey we are dealing with an increasing tendency to only the most thinly veiled dictatorial rule and that the AKP regime is anything but a "normal" parliamentary regime. Even with its reformist orientation and generally petty bourgeois social base and programme, the mere existence of the HDP as a legal mass party that connects the Kurdish liberation movement with large parts of the Turkish left, is too much for the Turkish state.

Against the increasing repression and the provocations of the state it is necessary to establish a united front of all organisations of the left and the workers' movement. This is the only way to lay the basis for mass political strikes, which could force the regime onto the defensive and, at the same time, defend itself against fascist and semi-fascist forces and against state repression.

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