



Turkey: the regime wants civil war

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The situation in Turkey has escalated dramatically recently. Across the country, 400 offices of the Kurdish HDP have been attacked, some buildings were even set on fire. At the same time, fascist and nationalist mobs rampaged through the streets, destroying Kurdish shops and attacking people of Kurdish origin. In Istanbul, a young man was even stabbed because he was heard speaking Kurdish on his phone at a bus stop.

Although the conflict between the Kurds and Turkish nationalists has existed since the founding of the Turkish Republic, in recent years it had eased, particularly after the many concessions made by the Kurdish Workers' Party, PKK, and its legal political party, the HDP. Now, however, people are again afraid to speak Kurdish or to be heard criticising the over-powerful Turkish state. The lines are hardening and this can be seen on the streets. Supporters of the regime, and Nationalists who are even further to the right, hang out the red crescent flag on their businesses or on cars and motorbikes or even close their shops for three days, to commemorate the dead soldiers.

Since the assassination of Suruc, there have been massacres of Kurdish populations in the east of the country and the city of Cizre was completely besieged by the military who imposed a 24 hour curfew on the population. At the same time, the military attacked anyone who tried to defend themselves or their families. In just one night, 10/11 September, 20 people, including children, were killed. Unbelievably, mothers had to store the bodies of their dead children in refrigerators because they were not allowed out of their houses to bury them.

A delegation of HDP deputies tried to reach Cizre by road, but their buses were stopped by the police, so they had to continue on foot. Among them were the chairman, Figen Yuksekdag, and Selahattin Demirtas and Ertugrul Kurkcü, one of the activists of '68, who narrowly escaped death at that time. On the way, the delegation was attacked several times by the police both on the road and when crossing the River Tigris. In response, one of the MP's went on hunger strike.

Kurkcü explained that the regime and army justified refusing the delegation access to Cizre by saying the visit was just "another provocation" intended to attract attention. But the whole of Turkey paid attention when an entire city was cut off for a week from the outside world and its inhabitants were allowed neither electricity nor water supply.

Erdogan and his AKP are consciously using the conflict against the Kurds, even in Kurdish areas outside Turkey, to delegitimise the HDP, ideally, even to illegalise it and to present themselves as a "stabilising factor". It would not be possible for there to be 400 raids on HDP and newspaper offices without the state at least "looking away", especially when they go hand in hand with anti-Kurdish rallies of government supporters, nationalists and fascists.

A "policy of tension" is intended to help Erdogan push through his presidential constitution after he failed to win the last election, whether by an AKP majority after the snap election he has called or via a state of emergency or something similar. In any event, it is clear that the dictatorial, Bonapartist traits of the regime are coming ever more to the fore, and the war against the Kurdish people is a means to legitimise this development.

The strategy of the HDP

Demirtas rightly accuses the AKP and the state of warmongering and taking deliberate advantage of the situation, but does not go beyond admonition and moralising words. With their official statements, the leadership of the HDP hopes to contribute to the "de-escalation" and maintain its posture as the "peace party" and, as a result, it wavers between

opposition and opportunism. With the announcement of new elections, a transitional government was formed, consisting of AKP, one MHP member (who was expelled from his party as a result) and two HDP-MPs (!).

While Demirtas defends the PKK guerrillas among the Kurds, in Parliament, he calls on them to lay down their weapons. This shows the whole dilemma not only of the HDP policy, but ultimately also that of the PKK, both really want to revive the "peace process" that Erdogan has long denounced. The AKP regime does not want negotiation, it wants surrender.

As long as the battle is limited to the war against the guerrillas in the towns in the East, Erdogan can use it to stir up feelings elsewhere. What is urgently needed now is the formation of self-defence organisations across the country, not only for the HDP-offices, but also for its voters and members who are attacked on the street. Secondly, there has to be a rethinking of how to pursue the Kurdish liberation struggle. The question crops up in every conversation. Everyone is affected by it, everyone is talking about war and the heartfelt desire for peace and humanity.

But this cannot be achieved just by begging or through moral superiority. In this situation, you have to take a clear stand; for the oppressed, who are being deprived of their political voice. The self-defence struggle of the Kurds is legitimate and the HDP should clearly say so, instead of just trying, at any cost, to repeat their mantra of unarmed resistance up to the next elections or to submit to bourgeois democracy, while its base is discussing the way to socialism.

This does not mean a return to the guerrilla strategy. The current war against the Kurdish people can ultimately only be stopped when Erdogan meets resistance throughout Turkey, when the urban working class and all oppressed layers are mobilised to take to the streets with mass demonstrations, when the unions call for solidarity with the Kurdish people and organise political strikes, when there is agitation amongst the Turkish soldiers, not to be abused as cannon fodder by Erdogan. The mass demonstrations last weekend could be a step in this direction. Only when the Turkish workers drop their support for, or at least passive acceptance of, the AKP policy of Turkish nationalism and stand alongside the Kurdish masses, will they be able to raise themselves against Erdogan's exploitation and oppression.

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