



# Turkey: vote HDP on June 7 - then build a revolutionary party

Svenja Zhenot Sun, 07/06/2015 - 10:03

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Turkey's Parliamentary elections on June 7 will take place against a background of sharpening political crisis in the region. President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's AKP (Justice and Development Party) has been in power since 2002, maintaining its stronghold over Turkish politics with their brand of conservative Islamist and neoliberal policies.

This has led not only to sharp wage cuts and the proliferation of precarious work, but to increasingly intense political repression against those who try to resist the government's policy.

One example of this 'iron fist' policy was demonstrated during the Gezi Square protests in 2013, in which lethal force was used against protestors. In 2015 little remains of the Gezi movement but without doubt many people who witnessed and were subjected to repression have developed an increased political awareness, and no longer feel represented by the AKP or any of the mainstream political parties.

## Foundation of the HDP

Shortly before the Gezi protests began a new party was founded in Turkey: the HDP (People's Democratic Party). It supports the Kurdish population in Turkey and also those in the Kurdish enclave of Rojava in northern Syria. The HDP also seeks to attract other oppressed social groups into their ranks especially women, Alevis, atheists and LGTB+ people. In their platform for the elections they say:

'We the democratic forces of Turkey, peace activists, workers, environmental activists, women, youth, LGBTI activists, intellectuals, democrats, actors, people independent of parties and representatives of all social and religious currents, jobless, pensioners, peasants, handicapped people, scientists - all of us whose living conditions are under attack or being destroyed - have come together. We have organised in the form of peoples councils on a local scale.' (<http://www.hdpberlin.de/Materyaller/> [1])

It is no surprise that this new party is the subject of relentless attack by the Turkish government nor that it is attracting the hopes of a wide spectrum of groups, especially the youth. To them the HDP finally seems to provide an alternative to the dominant conservative, nationalist, and religious parties in Turkey.

This is why the election campaign of the HDP was subjected to fierce attacks from Turkish nationalists and probably also state forces. On June 5, just two days before the elections, there was a pro-government terrorist attack against a HDP rally in Diyarbakir, killing two HDP supporters with several hundred injuries.

A good result in the elections for the HDP could contribute to thwarting Erdogan's plans to establish a presidential system that would enable him to rule with few effective democratic checks. This, too, would give him additional power to evade being taken to court over numerous corruption scandals. Furthermore every additional percentage point for the HDP vote would indicate a positive attitude by the Turkish population at large towards the question of the Kurds' right to independence and civic equality.

This struggle is of central importance not only to the Kurdish people. Workers, youth, women of all nationalities,

including the vast majority of Turks, will not liberate themselves if they do not openly support the right of Kurdish self-determination.

The HDP election campaign expresses this struggle for liberty against the Turkish state, one that has been going on for decades. The struggle of the whole Kurdish people against oppression represents the mass base of the party.

Despite the fact that Abdullah Öcalan, the historic leader of the Kurdish Workers Party (PKK), imprisoned since 1999, declared a ceasefire in 2013, expressing his willingness to make peace with the Turkish state, Erdogan and the Turkish establishment have made clear that they are not willing to make such a deal.

In Rojava they have tried to block and undermine the Kurdish struggle and have effectively sided with ISIS. The PKK remains illegal and thousands of Kurdish militants continue to languish in jail. Despite coming under systematic attack throughout the election campaign, the HDP has likewise pledged itself to exclusively peaceful methods.

What sort of programme?

Without doubt the HDP is not a working class party but a petty bourgeois organisation both in its social base and its programme. It is nevertheless an organisation of mass resistance against national oppression. Every vote for it is a vote asserting the rights of the Kurdish people. This is why the League for the Fifth International supports voting for the HDP, despite our criticisms of its programme. In this it says:

?The things we are lacking most are liberty, equality, peace, and justice. That is what we are standing for. The HDP is committed to democracy, to workers' rights and for a decent human life. Environmental protection as well as securing the right to life for all men and all living beings is of great importance.?

The HDP programme is entirely made up of such hopes and wishes. Whilst we share these aspirations for peace, justice, and liberty we also have to warn people against closing their eyes to the forces that stand in the way of their realisation.

The brutal repression going on against political opposition and the minorities in Turkey, the ultra reactionary anti-union laws originating in the era of the military coup, and the rhetoric of the AKP politicians show one thing clearly: only the struggle of the working class, a combined effort by Kurdish and Turkish workers and peasants, against a government sponsored by capital, against its allies in the region, and imperialist states, can fulfil the hopes and wishes which have been aroused.

The HDP takes no clear cut political position on these principal questions. In short it has no programme that is anticapitalist or revolutionary, one that could transform the political conditions in Turkey in the interests of the working class. The main reason for this is its failure to adopt a socialist programme. This is made explicit in its rejection of the working class as the decisive agent of revolutionary change. According to their social base the HDP instead clings to a petty bourgeois programme:

?We fight against unemployment and poverty, commit ourselves to fight against successive destruction of small enterprises and against exploitation of peasants or farmers. We understand ourselves as a part of social movements fighting against exploitation and oppression, and fighting for a decent human life.?

Instead of a programme clearly addressing all urgent issues we often find only phrasemongering:

?Due to the thirst for profit the environment is threatened with destruction. On this planet there are other living beings, animals and plants like the forests, the wolves, the birds, and the beetles that have a right to live. Our aim is to maintain and protect the ecological balance and order.?

Workers' party

We regard the building of a workers' party in Turkey as the central task for the progressive forces within and outside

the HDP. Only such a party can, in the long run, defeat and end the oppression against the Kurdish people and the attacks against the Turkish working class by the reactionary Turkish state. Only under the leadership of the working class can the oppressed and exploited build structures of democratic organisation and self-defense.

At the same time the situation in this region clearly shows the necessity of a socialist solution. There are a whole series of powder kegs that could explode, drawing in Turkey at any time. These include the fascistic violence of Daesh (ISIS), the reactionary bonapartist Assad regime, NATO member Turkey's own interventions, or the corrupt Barzani clan in the northern Iraqi part of Kurdistan. All these forces are fomenting reactionary conflicts not only in their own particular territories but across the entire region.

Therefore the call for a United Socialist States of the Middle East has to be posed against all these forces. We call for a vote for the HDP not because of, but in spite of, its programme: because the HDP represents the decades-long struggle for freedom of the Kurdish people.

But we also say openly: only a revolutionary programme can be the solid rock on which the struggle for a secular state with freedom and equality for all social national and religious minorities can be built. One in which decisions are taken in interests of the working population and in which their exploitation by capital is ended. Only a socialist economy will provide a real development and wealth for the population in Turkey!

One solution ? revolution!

Tek yol ? Devrim!

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**Links:**

[1] <http://www.hdpberlin.de/Materyaller/>