



Turkey's war on the Kurds

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Turkey is preparing for an assault on Kurdish rebels operating from Iraqi Kurdistan, writes Mark Booth

On 1 December the Turkish army launched a severe attack on the bases of the PKK (Kurdish Workers Party), carrying on the nation's policy of trying to crush the Kurdish separatist struggle.

Roughly one fifth of the Turkish population is Kurdish who have been systematically and brutally oppressed for generations by the Turkish ruling class. Recently the police and anti terror forces have been condemned for their use of torture and extra judicial executions of Kurdish people. Kurdish women are regularly raped and tortured by police and guards in Turkish prisons.

The national liberation struggle by the Kurds is a fight that must be supported by all consistent democrats, workers and socialists in Turkey.

The Turkish ruling class fears that an autonomous Kurdish region in Iraq will give impetus to the national struggles of the Kurds in Turkey and threaten the breakaway of several Southern regions to form an independent Kurdistan.

Following the parliamentary elections, which returned the governing AKP (Justice and Development Party) to power, the PKK resumed attacks against the military in southern Turkey. Although partly a response to the increasing repression suffered by the Kurdish people, it is also due to the fact that for the first time the ruling AKP received more votes in the Kurdish regions of Turkey than the DTP, a Kurdish party sympathetic to the PKK.

The PKK has seen its support decline in the past years and is hoping to regain support as the situation polarises and repression increases. Despite this reactionary policy of the PKK, it is correct to support their struggle against the Turkish state and resist attempts by the parliament to ban the DTP.

2007 has been marked by an increasing tension in the country, as the military and right wing organisations, with the help of the media, whipped up nationalist fervour against the Kurds. The military demanded action and was able to secure a vote in parliament, authorising actions against PKK bases in northern Iraq.

This threatened to draw Turkey into conflict with the US, whose main base of support within Iraq is the Kurdish controlled north which maintains some semblance of stability compared to the rest of the country. To prevent a split in the coalition - whilst generating support for a Turkish incursion - Turkey's generals sent a delegation to the US. Having secured US support, the army launched artillery attacks on the Kurdish rebels. The Pentagon is passing intelligence to the Turkish army to locate PKK bases.

Turkey now has 100,000 troops stationed in the region bordering Iraq and the Turkish cabinet has voted to allow the army to pursue Kurdish rebels into Iraq. Yet the attack on the PKK is only a pretext for the Turkish ruling class to crush the Kurdish people and cripple any attempt they make at establishing an independent state.

While we do not support the tactics or nationalist politics of the PKK and other Kurdish organisations, socialists must recognise that theirs is a legitimate struggle for national self-determination against the oppressive Turkish state.

However, the Iraqi Kurdish leaders that have done a deal with imperialism are being used by their new masters in Washington - they are now providing a bulwark of support to the occupation of Iraq. Ultimately the US will prioritise

its alliance with Turkey and allow attacks on the Kurds to take place, as long as it is not too destabilising for the region.

Only a genuine national liberation struggle, led by the working class, can organise across Kurdish area and link up to the Turkish, Iranian and Iraqi workers for support. What is required to make this happen is a revolutionary communist party.

Only this way will the Kurdish people be able to throw off the chains of oppression.

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