

Bomb attack in Istanbul: At least six people killed, 81 injured

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Yesterday afternoon, at least six people were killed and 81 injured, two of them seriously, in a bomb attack on Istiklal Avenue, one of the most crowded areas in Istanbul.

While no one has yet claimed responsibility for this murderous terrorist attack targeting civilians, Interior Minister Süleyman Soylu made a statement this morning, claiming that the outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) was behind the attack and that the real “killer” was the United States.

Soylu said, “The person who left the bomb was detained. Within the framework of the findings we have obtained, [the organization that carried out the attack] is the PKK/PYD terrorist organization.” The US-backed Democratic Union Party (PYD) is the Syrian sister organization of the PKK.

Before vowing to retaliate harshly, he said “We have an assessment that the instructions for the action came from Kobani. We have an assessment that the perpetrator of the action passed through Afrin.” Most importantly, he then directly accused the US of being the real “killer.”

After the blast, which occurred a few hundred meters from Taksim Square, many police and ambulances arrived at the scene. While the police completely evacuated and closed Istiklal Avenue, gunshots were heard close to the scene shortly after the blast. According to a report on halktv.com.tr, police allegedly shot a person, but no statement was made about the incident.

Before leaving the country for the G-20 summit, President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan said: “It would be wrong to say with certainty that this is terrorism, but the first developments, the first information conveyed to us by my governor is that there is a smell of terrorism here.” He added: “As of now, the first

determinations are that a woman played a role in this [attack].”

In a statement on the attack, Vice President Fuat Oktay claimed that security and peace prevailed in Turkey. Implying that the attack was intended to send a message to Turkey, he said Turkey “is a country that has achieved stability in every aspect, in terms of development, security and peace. No one can send a message to Turkey, which has a voice in many aspects in its region and in the world, with such acts, nor can anyone turn it from its path.”

The bomb attack in Istanbul occurred amid the ongoing war between NATO and Russia in Ukraine. While the major NATO powers, led by the United States, escalate their proxy war with Russia in pursuit of their imperialist objectives, Ankara is trying to play the role of a mediator and end the conflict. This is not because Ankara is “peace-loving,” but because of its political ties with both Ukraine and Russia, as well as the economic concerns of the Turkish bourgeoisie.

Meanwhile, in Syria, where the Turkish army has maintained a military presence since 2016, tensions between Ankara and its Islamist proxies have been rising for some time. Fehim Ta?tekin wrote in *Al-Monitor* on Wednesday that al-Julani’s Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) recently entered Afrin, which is under the control of the Turkish army and its proxies, taking advantage of disagreements within the Turkish-backed “Syrian National Army” (SMO).

“Turkey has launched a fresh effort to reorganize allied rebels in northern Syria and is reportedly using threats and ultimatums to discipline the disorderly factions that have backed Turkish forces in the Olive Branch and Euphrates Shield pockets in the Aleppo countryside,” Ta?tekin wrote.

On the other hand, Justice Minister Bekir Bozda?

announced an investigation into the Istanbul attack, while state-owned Anadolu Agency reported that the Istanbul Chief Public Prosecutor's Office had launched an investigation into "negative posts" on social media about the blast.

The Radio and Television Supreme Council (RTÜK) imposed a broadcast ban on the media on the incident. Moreover, the Information and Communication Technologies Authority (BTK) restricted access to social media platforms on the grounds of preventing "inappropriate images."

Mehmet Akku?, a worker at a restaurant on Istiklal Avenue, told Reuters about the attack: "When I heard the explosion, I was petrified, people froze, looking at each other. Then people started running away. What else can you do? My relatives called me, they know I work on Istiklal. I reassured them."

After the blast, statements came from the political establishment and Turkey's allies. NATO, the United States, the European Union, France, Ukraine and Greece were among those issuing statements of "solidarity" with Ankara.

Kemal K?l?çdarolu, the leader of the opposition Republican People's Party (CHP), wrote on Twitter: "I wish God's mercy to our citizens who lost their lives in the blast on Istiklal Avenue and a speedy recovery to the wounded. My condolences to our nation!" His far-right ally, Good Party leader Meral Ak?ener, also expressed her "condolences."

The Kurdish-nationalist Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP) also issued a written statement, declaring: "We are deeply saddened and pained by the blast in Istanbul. We wish God's mercy to our citizens who lost their lives, a speedy recovery to the wounded and our condolences to our people."

Former HDP co-chair Selahattin Demirta?, who is currently serving a multi-year jail term, condemned the attack. "No matter for what purpose or justification, every attack targeting civilians is terrorism in law, politics, morality and conscience. We never accept it," Demirta? declared on Twitter.

"Efforts to defeat Turkey and the Turkish people through terrorism will fail today just as they did yesterday and as they will again tomorrow," President Erdo?an said in his remarks.

After yesterday's blast, certain commentators drew a parallel between the escalation of terrorist attacks in

2015-2016 and the current situation. Amid a deepening economic and social crisis, Turkey is heading into presidential and parliamentary elections in June 2023. Many polls suggest that Erdo?an could lose both elections.

In the general elections of June 7, 2015, Erdo?an's Justice and Development Party (AKP) lost its parliamentary majority in the face of massive social opposition. In fact, the terrorist attacks that started before the elections have escalated since then.

Around 150 people were killed in terrorist attacks by the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) in Suruç, on Turkey's southern border, and then in the capital, Ankara. At the same time, the Erdo?an government's discontent that the People's Protection Units (YPG), the Syrian sister organization of the outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), had become the main US proxy force, led to the end of the "peace process" between Ankara and the PKK and the outbreak of a violent civil war.

While a coalition government could not be formed, the AKP managed to regain its majority in parliament in early elections held on November 1, 2015 in an atmosphere of terror and fear. Terrorist bombings by jihadists and the PKK-linked Kurdistan Freedom Hawks (TAK) and violent clashes in Kurdish towns and cities continued. After conflicts between Turkey and its imperialist allies, led by Washington, erupted with a failed coup attempt against Erdo?an on July 15, 2016, Ankara launched multiple invasions into Syria to target the YPG. It occupied significant territory over the objections of Damascus.

Whatever exact forces were behind yesterday's attack, this climate of terror cannot be understood apart from the thirty years of wars in the region waged by the US-led imperialist powers. These wars, in which the Turkish ruling elite has been complicit, have devastated countries like Iraq, Libya and Syria, while the war in Ukraine threatens all of humanity with a specter of a nuclear conflict.



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