

# The emerging global war and the international strategy of the working class

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12 May 2024

*The following speech was given by Ula? Ate?çi, a leading member of the Sosyalist E?itlik (Socialist Equality Group) in Turkey, at the International May Day 2024 Online Rally, held Saturday, May 4.*

Revolutionary greetings from the Sosyalist E?itlik Grubu in Turkey.

One hundred and ten years after the outbreak of the First World War and 85 years after the outbreak of the Second World War, we are witnessing the expansion of a third world war that has already begun and is threatening to escalate into a nuclear conflict. This catastrophic course must be stopped by the conscious political intervention of the international working class.

The maelstrom of imperialist war is engulfing the entire region. NATO's war against Russia over Ukraine has been raging for more than two years. Israel's NATO-backed genocide in Gaza, which has been going on for seven months, is accompanied by escalating war provocations against Iran and its allies.

Other major flashpoints in the region include border disputes between Serbia and Kosovo, parts of the former Yugoslavia, and between NATO allies Turkey and Greece, while a war between the two former Caucasian Soviet republics of Azerbaijan and Armenia threatens to flare up again.

The aggression of NATO imperialism, led by the United States, is driven by the motive to re-divide the vast territories of Russia and China, from which they were excluded for decades as a result of the 1917 Russian and 1949 Chinese revolutions, and to completely dominate the Middle East.

While the US-led imperialist powers have failed since February 2022 to achieve their goal of militarily defeating Russia, bringing about a regime change in Moscow and completely subordinating this vast resource-rich country to them, the deployment of NATO troops on the battlefield and the use of nuclear weapons is becoming an ever closer possibility.

This war, which is the result of NATO's aggressive eastward expansion since the 1990s and the transformation of Ukraine into a centre of aggression against Russia, is also the terrible price of the Stalinist bureaucracy's ultimate betrayal of the October Revolution and the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991.

The slaughter that has been going on for decades on the Middle East front of the global war, the first stages of which we are witnessing, has been made possible by the complicity of the pro-imperialist reactionary regimes in the region—Turkey, the Arab states and the Zionist regime in Israel.

The ruling class in Turkey, which acted as a NATO outpost against the USSR before 1991, has been a critical regional pillar of imperialist aggression in the Middle East and against Russia in the post-Soviet period.

It has been complicit from the Gulf War of 1990-91, to the break-up of Yugoslavia and the bombing of Serbia in 1999, to the invasions of Afghanistan in 2001 and Iraq in 2003, and the instigation of imperialist wars of regime change in Libya and Syria in the midst of the revolutionary working class uprisings in Tunisia and Egypt in 2011.

Millions have been killed in these wars, and tens of millions became refugees. During the same period, tens of thousands of people died in a civil war in Turkey, which intensified when the Turkish ruling class had no answer to the legitimate democratic aspirations of the Kurdish people other than state repression.

Ankara's collaboration with the imperialist aggression in the Middle East has only deepened the Kurdish question. Today, danger of a full-scale war between the Turkish forces and the US-backed Kurdish nationalist militias in Syria, where Iranian and Russian forces are also present, continues. At the same time, thousands of Kurdish politicians continue to be imprisoned in Turkey in violation of their basic democratic rights.

The Kurdish people live in Turkey, Iran, Iraq and Syria and the Kurdish question is of an international character in nature. It cannot be solved on a "national" basis. The way forward is a socialist federation that will end national oppression and guarantee democratic rights, instead of the nation-state system that has historically proved to be bankrupt in the Middle East.

Although the imperialist aggression against Iran and Russia also threatens its own interests and draws Turkey into the maelstrom of war, the Turkish bourgeoisie's deep-rooted dependence on US and European imperialism puts it in an insoluble dilemma within the framework of bourgeois nationalism.

As with the bourgeoisie of countries with belated capitalist development all over the world, the main fear of the Turkish bourgeoisie is the threat of revolution from the working class, and it sees its main allies against this danger in the imperialist centres.

The same objective class position applies to bourgeois nationalist movements, whether Palestinian or Kurdish, whether they are direct targets or allies of imperialism. All bourgeois nationalist regimes and movements, which are inherently incapable of addressing the international working class against imperialism, are always subject to reactionary manoeuvres based on the search for

reconciliation with imperialist powers within the capitalist nation-state system, the root cause of the problem.

As Leon Trotsky, co-leader of the Russian Revolution and the founder of the Fourth International, explained in his Theory of Permanent Revolution, and as the history of the 20th and 21st centuries proves, independence from imperialism and the establishment of a democratic regime require the working class to take power as part of the international socialist revolution.

The genocide of the Palestinians in Gaza by the Zionist regime in Israel has exposed the complicity of the government in Turkey as well as in all NATO and allied countries. President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's government has been exposed as a collaborator of imperialism and Zionism by continuing the exports that fuel Israel's war effort against the Palestinians, regardless of its rhetorical criticism of Netanyahu. Moreover, Erdoğan maintains US-NATO bases in Turkey that provide support to Israel.

Under conditions of growing social inequality and deepening crisis of the cost-of-living, which led to a wave of wildcat strikes, Erdoğan's insistence on this policy—despite the anti-imperialist, anti-Zionist and pro-Palestinian sentiments of the overwhelming majority of the population—was a significant factor in the ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP) losing millions of votes in the local elections last March, becoming the second-ranked party for the first time.

But there is no disagreement between Erdoğan and his bourgeois rivals on the military-strategic alliance with imperialism and Zionism. The Republican People's Party (CHP), the undeserved beneficiary of the popular opposition against the government in the local elections, has given its full support to the NATO membership of Finland and Sweden as part of escalating aggression against Russia. The CHP has close ties with Washington and Berlin, the main imperialist centres behind the genocide in Gaza and the aggression against Iran.

Turkey has almost doubled its defence budget to around \$40 billion by 2024. The rise of militarism and preparations for war abroad are accompanied by a class war against the working class at home.

The Erdoğan government and the bourgeois opposition also agree on the implementation of a brutal capitalist program of social attacks against the working class and the suppression of the resistance of workers through the trade union apparatus or other means under their control. In early April, when the sanitation workers of the AKP-run Altındağ municipality in the capital Ankara went on a wildcat strike, the CHP-run metropolitan municipality broke the strike by having its own vehicles collect the garbage.

Protests against the Erdoğan government's refusal to end Turkey's trade with Israel were met with violent police attacks. As the American police violently tried to suppress university students who bravely opposed the US-backed genocide in Gaza, demonstrators protesting against Germany's complicity in the genocide were attacked by the Turkish police when German President Frank-Walter Steinmeier visited Istanbul. Among those welcoming and accompanying Steinmeier was Ekrem İmamoğlu, the CHP mayor of Istanbul, backed by the pseudo-left parties.

This underlines the absence of an anti-war or pro-democracy

faction among the ruling elite. However, the global protests against the Gaza genocide since last October have made clear that there is massive social opposition to the war. This opposition must be oriented towards the working class and armed with a clear international socialist strategy.

The ruling class's normalization of death and debilitation from the pandemic, its normalization of genocide and nuclear war must be responded to with the normalization of socialism.

It must be understood that the policy of putting pressure on imperialist or capitalist governments to stop war and genocide, or the pretence of achieving an era of "peaceful imperialism," is bankrupt. As the great Marxist leaders, Vladimir Lenin and Leon Trotsky explained, the causes of imperialist war lie not in the subjective intentions of political leaders, but in the material class interests and insoluble contradictions of the capitalist system. As long as capitalism exists, there will be imperialist wars.

Moreover, the Israeli genocide against the Palestinians, the war against Iran and Russia and the preparations for war against China cannot be stopped by the struggle of the workers of these countries or regions alone. The best allies of the workers of these regions are the working class in the imperialist centres, especially in the US.

The socialist revolution that began in Russia in 1917 must be understood as a unified global process. The success of this world revolution and, it must be added, the very existence of human civilization, depends above all on the working class taking power in the US and Europe and taking measures to eradicate imperialist aggression.

In this critical May Day, the Sosyalist Etilik Grubu in Turkey calls on workers and youth throughout the Middle East: Join us in the international struggle for socialism to stop genocide and imperialist war and to end their root cause, world capitalism. Build the International Committee of the Fourth International as the centre of the global anti-war and socialist movement!



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