

# Report on universities in Turkey reveals disastrous social conditions of students

Ozan Kutlucan  
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As universities across Turkey open amid the escalating war in the Middle East and Ukraine and increasing attacks on the social conditions of the working class, a report published by Eğitim-Sen, an educators' union, shows the disastrous conditions of the students' education, housing and living.

The report, which aims to reveal the financial and psychological problems of university students, also reflects the concerns of the youth about the future.

According to the report published on October 8, prepared with the participation of 279 students, 48.6 percent of students continue their education entirely with the financial means of their families. Only 36.7 percent say they have access to scholarships or student loans. In addition, student loans are a huge burden for young people who must repay them for many years.

Many students are forced to work because of inadequate or non-existent scholarships and income. According to the report, about 15 percent of students continue their education by working. A much larger number of students want to work for a living but cannot find a job. According to the report, 36.7 percent of students complain about the lack of decent part-time jobs.

One of the most important problems facing university students is housing. Only one-third of respondents have access to public dormitories. However, the actual use of public dormitories is much lower. Out of 7 million university students, only about 880,000 live in public dormitories. Under conditions of high inflation and exorbitant housing rents, this results in students paying high rents for private dormitories or apartments.

While 45.7 percent of respondents were dissatisfied with the conditions of their dormitory or apartment, 28.3 percent said that the dormitory did not provide a healthy environment.

In addition to housing, more than half of the students said they believe their diet is not healthy. Seventy-one percent believe that their monthly income does not allow them to eat an adequate and balanced diet. The number of students who said they skip meals due to lack of time and financial reasons is close to 70 percent. 56 percent said that "sometimes there are days when they do not eat."

The report reflects the consequences of decades of attacks by the ruling class on the social conditions of the working class.

The idea that university graduates will find well-paid jobs has been erased from the consciousness of the younger generations. Students are not only unable to find a job according to their skills while they are still studying but start to worry about unemployment even before they graduate. 81.2 percent of students are worried about their future. The rate of those who fear that they will not be able to find a job in the future is 73.3 percent.

About half of the students are unable to attend cultural activities such as theatre and cinema due to financial constraints. Students are deprived of opportunities to socialize both for financial reasons and due to lack of time.

Social wealth is created by the working class. These resources, which should go to social services such as education, health and basic infrastructure, are diverted to banks and corporations through war industries, bailouts, subsidies and tax amnesties. Basic rights such as education and health are subordinated to capitalist profit and wealth accumulation, while social spending is slashed.

With the transformation of education into a major area of profit in recent decades, the number of private universities has increased dramatically (from 20 in

1999 to 78 in 2024) in Turkey, while the quality of scientific and vocational education in the growing number of public universities has declined.

The youth are not helpless in the face of all these destructive policies and problems. However, they must realize that social rights, including free and decent education, health, housing, food and access to cultural activities cannot be fulfilled within the current economic and social order. The capitalist system confronts humanity with major problems such as war, genocide, the rise of fascism, massive social inequality and climate change. Therefore, the issues that concern today's youth cannot be separated from the broader global issues facing the working class.

The International Youth and Students for Social Equality (IYSSE), the student and youth movement of the International Committee of the Fourth International (ICFI), fights to orient students and youth to the working class, the only social force that can end capitalist exploitation and war and build a global society based on human needs, socialism. For this, we are fighting to build a mass anti-war movement internationally.

The IYSSE in Turkey puts forward the following demands towards the urgent social problems of the university students:

- Nationalization of all universities and educational institutions and free education.
- Providing all students with free scholarships to enable them to live humanely and cancelling their student loan debts.
- Build decent and earthquake-resistant public dormitories and free housing.
- Free, healthy and nutritious meals at universities and dormitories.
- Free public transportation.
- Free access to cultural activities.
- Resources are available! The resources that are diverted to militarism and corporations should be used for the needs of students and the entire society.
- Put an end to the shaping of universities as R&D departments and labour depots for corporations.
- No place for falsification of history, militarist and chauvinist-nationalist propaganda in universities! Scientific and mother tongue education.
- Abolish institutions such as the Council of Higher Education established by the military junta after the

1980 coup that prevent the democratic functioning of universities.

- End the presence of private security units and police in universities, remove obstacles to political activity and the reinstate all academics suspended for their political views.

- Job security for all students after graduation. The right of young people to work cannot be subordinated to capitalist profit and wealth accumulation. New employment opportunities must be created, including reducing working hours in every workplace.

Realising these urgent demands is only possible through a fundamental social transformation, which requires a frontal attack on the power and wealth of the ruling class. This can only be achieved by mobilizing the working class based on a socialist programme. The students must join this struggle.

Youth are ready to fight. Last year, students and academics around the world organized mass demonstrations on campuses and in the streets against the Israeli genocide in Gaza. This year too, universities have opened with demonstrations of solidarity with the Palestinian and Lebanese people.

However, moral appeals to the ruling classes, capitalist governments and international institutions have failed. A new strategy is required.

The fundamental problems facing the students stem from the same capitalist system that produces genocide and war. Students need to fight for their future. The way forward is to turn to the international working class to fight against capitalism and imperialist war. We call on all students who agree with this perspective to contact us to join the struggle for socialism.



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