

Turkish and Kurdish elites seek to profit from Israel's genocide of the Palestinians

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President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's Turkish government is desperately trying to hide its complicity in Israel's genocide in Gaza and to appease public anger.

Özlem Zengin, Erdoğan's Justice and Development Party (AKP) parliamentary group deputy chairperson and an MP from Istanbul, has denied allegations that Azerbaijani oil is being transported to Israel via Turkey—claiming that his government is “not involved” in the oil that passes through the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan (BTC) Pipeline.

“Our minister said once again that all the companies that send [their oil] through this pipeline have been asked and that there is absolutely no oil flowing to Israel through this line,” Zengin said, adding: “Turkey has nothing to do with the oil flowing through this pipeline. As Turkey, we are only responsible for the operation of this pipeline. In other words, we have nothing to do with the oil flowing through it”.

Zengin said that Turkey earns one dollar and 27 cents for every barrel of oil that passes through the pipeline.

In reality, the oil flowing through the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan Pipeline, the Turkish section of which is operated by the state-owned BOTA? International A?, feeds Israel's war machine. A study by Oil Change International shows that many countries, including signatories to the Geneva Conventions on genocide, use the pipeline to supply oil to Israel and are implicated in crimes against the Palestinian people. Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan are the most prominent.

The research analysed shipping records, satellite imagery and other open-source industry data to track 65 oil and fuel shipments to Israel between October 21, 2023 and July 12, 2024.

Israel imports almost 99 percent of the oil it uses. According to the report, Azerbaijan is the main

supplier, providing 28 percent of the crude oil going to Israel. It is followed by Kazakhstan and the African country Gabon with 22 percent. These three countries meet three-quarters of Israel's oil needs.

Crude oil from Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan is delivered through the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan pipeline, in which BP is a partner. The crude oil is loaded onto tankers at the Turkish port of Ceyhan for delivery to Israel.

According to BP's figures, “In the first half of 2024, about 110 million barrels (14 million tonnes) of BTC-exported crude oil was lifted at Ceyhan and loaded on 150 tankers. The BTC pipeline currently carries mainly ACG crude oil and Shah Deniz condensate from Azerbaijan. In addition, other volumes of Caspian regional crude oil and condensate (Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, SOCAR non-ACG volumes) continue to be transported via BTC.”

Turkey, Italy, Cyprus and Greece play a key role in providing transshipment services to Israel. As the terminus of the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan Pipeline, Turkey ranks first in terms of volume, accounting for 26 percent of shipments to Israel. Cyprus follows with 21 percent.

Erdoğan and his government officials continue to loudly condemn Israel in the hope of covering up these exposed facts and tensions between the two countries continue. According to Turkish and Azeri media reports, Israeli President Isaac Herzog wanted to use Turkish airspace to attend the United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP29) in Baku, but Turkish authorities rejected the Israeli authorities' request.

The official statement from the Israeli President's office said that Herzog's trip to COP29 had been cancelled for “security reasons”. However, Azerbaijani media reported that the real reason was Turkey's

refusal to allow an Israeli “Wing of Zion” government transport plane through its airspace.

The main concern of the Turkish ruling class and the Erdoğan government is not the genocide and persecution of the Palestinians, but fear that the expansion of the war in the Middle East could undermine its own interests.

The risk of the Israeli genocide in Gaza escalating into a regional war involving Iran has prompted the Erdoğan government and its partners in the People’s Alliance to take significant steps over the past month to strengthen their hand at home. Erdoğan’s statement “While the maps are being redrawn in blood, while the war that Israel has waged from Gaza to Lebanon is approaching our borders, we are trying to strengthen our internal front,” was a clear expression of this.

At the end of last month, Devlet Bahçeli, leader of the Nationalist Movement Party (MHP), the fascist ally of the “People’s Alliance” led by Erdoğan, made an unprecedented statement. Bahçeli suggested that jailed PKK (Kurdistan Workers’ Party) leader Abdullah Öcalan should lift his isolation and address parliament, “shouting that terrorism is completely over and the organization [PKK] has been dismantled”. Bahçeli’s statement, supported by Erdoğan, was seen as the beginning of a new “peace process” with the PKK, which Ankara has been trying to suppress since 1984.

However, just one day after Bahçeli’s speech, while Erdoğan was in Russia for the BRICS summit, a bomb and gun attack by the PKK took place at the Ankara facilities of the state-owned strategic defence company Turkish Aerospace Industries Corporation (TAI).

The PKK claimed responsibility for the attack, but also claimed that it was not aimed at a new “peace process”. The government responded by targeting elected Kurdish mayors. Elected Kurdish mayors in Esenyurt, Şırnak, Mardin and Halfeti were unconstitutionally dismissed and replaced by trustees.

Various leaders of the PKK have repeatedly stated that the transformation of the Middle East under the leadership of the US imperialism could be an opportunity for them and that any agreement with Ankara must recognise the position of the Kurdish movement in Syria and Iraq.

As a movement organised in four countries, the PKK also represents the interests of the Kurdish bourgeoisie

in Iraq, Syria and Iran and has become an important political-military force in the Middle East on the basis of close cooperation with the US in the last decades.

In an interview with *Medya Haber Digital*, Zübeyir Aydar, a member of the executive committee of the KCK (Union of Communities of Kurdistan), the umbrella organisation of which the PKK is a member, suggested that Ankara’s borders could expand if it made a deal with them, and shrink otherwise. The first possibility was the main objective of the “peace process” between Ankara and the PKK, which came to a bloody end in 2015.

Aydar said the following:

“Under the conditions of a world war, others would be knocking on the door of the Kurds. The Kurds are not without alternatives here. (...) What we want is for our neighbour to knock on our door in good faith, not someone from outside. Let’s solve our problem with our neighbour. In other words, others should not come and interfere between us... There are conditions. If Turkey acts with common sense on this issue, it can grow by getting along with the Kurds. But as long as it does not get along with the Kurds, as long as it confronts the Kurds and excludes them, Turkey can shrink.”

While listing the countries with which the Kurdish bourgeoisie will negotiate according to its interests, Aydar said: “This could be the Americans, the Europeans, the Russians, the Chinese, Turkey, Iran, the regional states... We do not approve of [Israel’s] policies, especially in Palestine. We do not approve of the absence of a solution. But we can have relations with Israel.”

Gideon Sa’ar, who took over as Israel’s foreign minister, said at the handover ceremony on November 11: “The Kurdish people are a great nation, one of the great nations without political independence. They are our natural allies.”



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