

Nine arrested in Turkey for protesting Erdoğan's complicity in genocide

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Nine people were arrested after protesting against President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan over Turkey's ongoing trade and oil shipments with Israel.

While Erdoğan was speaking at an event organised by the state-owned *TRT World* channel on November 29, two protesters chanted, "Ships are carrying bombs to Gaza" and "Why is Azerbaijani oil going [from Turkey to Israel]?" The two protesters and two others allegedly preparing for the protest were detained inside the hall, while five people chanting slogans calling for a halt to trade with Israel were detained outside the convention centre.

Nine protesters were arrested on Monday after a three-day custody period. It is alleged that the headscarves of the female detainees were cut at the entrance of the prison, while three correctional officers were reportedly suspended from duty following an investigation.

The demonstrators were arrested on charges of "violating the Law on Meetings and Demonstrations" and "insulting the President". The charges were based on the slogan "Stop Fuelling Genocide" written on the banners carried by the demonstrators and the slogans, "Why is the Ship of Conscience [aid ship of the International Freedom Flotilla] not allowed?", "Zionists continue their activities in our seas and ports", "They invite those who collaborate with the genocidaires to the TRT World Forum", shouted by the demonstrators.

The fact that slogans, which contain no insults or calls for violence, are being used as evidence of a criminal offence itself exposes Turkey's complicity in Israel's genocide in Gaza. The *World Socialist Web Site* and the Socialist Equality Group condemn the arrests and call on the masses of workers and youth to demand the release of those arrested.

These arrests have no legal basis and reveal the

lawlessness of the authoritarian presidential regime.

The government had previously arrested members of the group "One Thousand Youth for Palestine" for calling for a break in relations with the Zionists. A Palestinian university student was sent to a detention centre under threat of deportation after protesting against Turkey's mediation in the supply of oil from Azerbaijan to Israel at another panel discussion on Palestine organised by *TRT World*.

While previously arrested protesters have been released due to social opposition and the lack of a legal basis, the government continues to use its influence over the judiciary to suppress dissent.

77 out of 83 bar associations in Turkey issued a joint statement on the recent arrests. "This peaceful protest, which was carried out without resorting to violence, should be considered within the framework of freedom of expression," the statement said.

"Freedom of expression is one of the main pillars of a democratic society. Freedom of expression is guaranteed by the Constitution and international conventions to which we are a party. All expressions that do not instrumentalise violence are protected by national and international law."

During his speech, Erdoğan hastily accused the protesters of being "Zionist instigators" and cynically said, "My little one, don't be the mouthpiece of the Zionists here. No matter how much you try to provoke here by being the tongue, mouth and eyes of the Zionists, you will not get any results. The Zionists in the world know very well where Tayyip Erdoğan stands. But you still do not understand."

The bourgeois opposition parties approach the issue with equal cynicism. Özgür Özel, Chairman of the Republican People's Party, wrote on his X account: "The decision to arrest 9 young people protesting

against Tayyip Erdoğan proves the grave situation that our country's democracy has fallen into. Young people who exercise their right to express themselves must be released. I promise from here that under the administration of our next President, no one who exercises their right to protest will be arrested and all obstacles to freedom of expression will be removed."

Ekrem Imamoglu, the CHP mayor of Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality, said: "Unfortunately, 9 young people who showed their reaction to the persecution in Palestine have been arrested. The arrest of the young people who criticised the president on trade with Israel and who raised their voices at jet speed is a new legal curiosity that hurts the conscience. What is this intolerance? Why are they afraid? These young people are protesting against the hypocrisy in the country and they are not afraid of you. So what are you afraid of?"

The CHP's concern is not the genocide against the Palestinians or basic democratic rights, but the exploitation of public anger against the Erdoğan government. Since the beginning of the Gaza genocide, the CHP, the Peoples' Equality and Democracy Party (DEM Party) and the pseudo-left forces in their orbit have deliberately refrained from mobilising the masses and mounting an effective opposition on the issue. They, like Erdoğan, are defenders of the interests of the ruling class.

The bourgeois opposition parties, which rhetorically criticise Erdoğan, have no objection to Ankara's close cooperation with imperialism, which determines its hypocritical policy towards Gaza. They, like Erdoğan, are in favour of maintaining military-strategic relations with the US and NATO, Azerbaijan, and also friendly relations with Israel in one form or another.

The US-NATO bases in the country, as well as the mediation of the transport of Azeri oil and the maintaining of indirect trade, prove that Turkey is feeding Israel's war machine.

A study by Oil Change International shows that many countries, including signatories to the Geneva Conventions on genocide, use the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan Pipeline to supply oil to Israel and are implicated in crimes against the Palestinian people.

Crude oil from Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan is delivered through the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan Pipeline, in which BP is a partner. Crude oil is

loaded onto tankers at the Turkish port of Ceyhan for delivery to Israel.

The Turkish section of the pipeline is operated by the state-owned BOTA? International A? and Ankara earns one dollar and 27 cents per barrel of oil passing through the pipeline. As the terminus of the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan Pipeline, Turkey ranks first in terms of volume, accounting for 26 percent of shipments to Israel.

Turkey continues its trade with Israel, which it claims to have officially cut off, through Palestine. According to the November 2024 data of the Turkish Exporters Assembly (TIM), while exports to Israel have dropped to zero, exports to Palestine increased by 560 percent in November compared to the previous year and rose from \$7,329,000 to \$48,354,000. There is a similar increase for the first 11 months of 2024.

In 2023, exports to Palestine was \$110 million, while in 2024, it was around \$710 million with an increase of 544 percent. In terms of sectors, the largest item seems to be steel. In November, steel exports to Palestine, in the midst of genocide and destruction, increased by 19,094 percent from \$63,000 to \$12 million.



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