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زبانهای اروپایی

Ulaş Ateşçi
26.05.2023

Turkish elections: Erdoğan, Kılıçdaroğlu both call to deport refugees, for “law and order”

Days before the second round of the Turkish presidential elections on Sunday, People Alliance candidate Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and Nation Alliance candidate Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu are both calling to deport millions of refugees and promoting “law and order” to “fight terrorism.”



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Sinan Oğan, the candidate of the far-right Ata Alliance, which came third in the first round with 5.2 percent (2.8 million votes), announced his support for Erdoğan in the second round. However, the alliance’s main force, the Victory Party, announced its support for Kılıçdaroğlu yesterday. The Victory Party received 2.2 percent of the vote (1.2 million) in the May 14 general election.

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Kılıçdaroğlu's reactionary anti-refugee propaganda, which he has been carrying out for years, has become the main campaign theme after the first round on May 14, accompanied by the "fight against terrorism" promises. This is a warning to all workers.

It exposes the political bankruptcy of the Kurdish nationalist People's Democratic Party (HDP)-Green Left Party (YSP) and the pseudo-left parties that lined up behind Kılıçdaroğlu, presenting him as an "alternative" to Erdoğan. By channeling growing social opposition of the masses behind another pro-imperialist right-wing faction of the ruling class, they helped the ruling class block any genuinely left-wing challenge to Erdoğan from the working class.

Contrary to the lying claims of the political establishment, defenseless refugees fleeing imperialist wars from Afghanistan to Iraq and Syria pose no threat to the social and democratic rights of workers and youth in Turkey.

The Erdoğan government has however attacked democratic rights and built-up a police state in the name of the "fight against terrorism." It used this as a pretext to justify the imprisonment of thousands of HDP members, including party leaders, the dismissal of elected mayors and acts of state repressions—and also Turkey's continued illegal military presence in Syria and Iraq.

This agenda, on which both Erdoğan and Kılıçdaroğlu essentially agree, constitutes the framework for the bourgeoisie's onslaught on the working class amid a deepening economic and social crisis in Turkey and internationally as NATO's war against Russia escalates.

The Sosyalist Eşitlik Grubu (SEG), the Turkish section of the International Committee of the Fourth International (ICFI), calls on workers and youth to reject both pro-imperialist candidates and their reactionary programs. It fights for the political independence and international unity of the working class. It is impossible to defend basic democratic rights without defending refugees against all reactionary factions of the ruling class and opposing imperialist war.

In a joint press conference with Kılıçdaroğlu yesterday, Victory Party leader Ümit Özdağ echoed the arguments of far-right and fascistic tendencies internationally. "If you don't want Turkey to become an 'immigrant land,' if you don't want to worry when your daughter goes out on the street ... then support the policy that will send 13 million refugees to their homeland and vote for Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu on May 28," he declared.

Özdağ's disgusting attack on refugees, who officially number around 4 million, as potential rapists is hardly unique. Kılıçdaroğlu, who has adopted the rhetoric of both Sinan

Oğan and the Victory Party, recently said: “Those who love their homeland should come to the polls before the incoming fugitives completely darken the lives of our daughters.” Before the press conference, Özdağ thanked the CHP youth for writing “Syrians will go home” on the walls.

Özdağ is a virulent xenophobe who emerged from the fascist Nationalist Movement Party (MHP), now Erdoğan’s main ally in the People Alliance. His father, Staff Captain Muzaffer Özdağ, was a member of the junta that launched the 1960 military coup.

Özdağ became a leader of the Good Party, led by Meral Akşener, which broke away from the MHP after the NATO-backed coup attempt against Erdoğan in 2016. Together with Kılıçdaroğlu’s Republican People’s Party (CHP), the Good Party leads the Nation Alliance.

After Özdağ supported Kılıçdaroğlu, a seven-point protocol agreed upon by the Victory Party and the Nation Alliance was published. Its “purpose” section blames the social destruction caused by Erdoğan’s policies on refugees. It also made clear that basic social demands of the working class will be met with violent state repression.

The purpose of the protocol, it wrote, is “to determine details of joint work and cooperation to ensure national unity and solidarity, solve the problems of poverty, corruption, prohibitions and severe economic problems, and deport refugees and fugitives who pose a serious security and demographic problem for Turkey.”

“All refugees and fugitives, especially Syrians, will be deported within one year at the latest,” it declared. According to international conventions to which Turkey is a party and to domestic Turkish law, this deportation plan is illegal. However, the European Union’s “Fortress Europe” policy and Erdoğan’s collaboration with it have largely abolished in practice the basic democratic right to asylum.

The document pledges “an effective and decisive fight against all terrorist organizations,” stating that “appointing state officials instead of mayors whose links to terrorism are established by legal evidence will continue within the framework of judicial rulings ...”

This means that Erdoğan’s policy of dismissing elected HDP mayors in Kurdish provinces without a judicial ruling and replacing them with state officials will continue.

The HDP-YSP has allied with Kılıçdaroğlu based on their joint orientation to US and NATO imperialism. Despite CHP support for state repression of the Kurdish people, it issued a hypocritical statement after a leadership meeting yesterday criticizing the compromise on the “appointment of trustees” targeting the HDP’s elected mayors. However, it raised no objections to plans to deport refugees within a year and other

undemocratic provisions. The HDP has said that it would declare its final decisions on the election today.

The agreement between the Victory Party and the Nation Alliance came after Oğan announced his support for Erdoğan on Monday, despite Kılıçdaroğlu's best efforts. Oğan said he and Erdoğan had agreed on almost identical terms. "An uninterrupted, consistent fight against all kinds of terrorist organizations will continue. There is now a timetable for the [deportation] of refugees and fugitives," he declared.

"The CHP chairman ... supposedly started his political journey as 'Gandhi Kemal' and will end it as 'Nazi Kemal,'" Erdoğan said at a rally on Tuesday. But his reactionary record and alliance with Oğan reveals that his criticism of Kılıçdaroğlu on refugees is hollow demagoguery.

In an interview, Erdoğan said his government will continue its policy of "sending back refugees." He said, "We have been supporting the safe and voluntary return of refugees from the beginning. So far, nearly 560,000 refugees have returned to areas cleared of terrorism [in Syria]. This number will increase as terrorist organizations are cleared from Syria."

Since 2016, Ankara has launched several invasions into northern Syria attacking the US-backed Kurdish nationalist People's Protection Units (YPG) to prevent an emergence of a Kurdish state next to Turkey in northern Syria. Today, the Turkish army, along with its Islamist proxies, occupies significant parts of the region.

Erdoğan's government plans to completely eliminate the possibility of a Kurdish state by settling Syrian Arabs in illegally built housing in these areas. This dirty plan is accompanied by efforts to restore relations with Russian-backed Syrian President Bashar al-Assad.

The pseudo-left parties that lined up behind Kılıçdaroğlu and remained silent on his anti-refugee campaign responded cynically to Oğan's endorsement of Erdoğan, who they hoped would support Kılıçdaroğlu.

The major pseudo-left Workers' Party of Turkey (TİP), which received nearly 1 million votes in the parliamentary elections, posted an edited picture of Erdoğan and Oğan's faces together and declared, "You will lose Erdoğan!" But the TİP did not object to Kılıçdaroğlu's alliance with the Victory Party, the main force behind Oğan in the first round. The TİP is now campaigning for Kılıçdaroğlu.

The Stalinist Communist Party of Turkey (TKP), from which the TİP emerged, also called for a vote for Kılıçdaroğlu in a statement on Tuesday, revealing its own political

bankruptcy. It absurdly declared: “This vote does not mean a choice between two candidates who compete with each other on Americanism, bigotry and anti-immigrant sentiments, nor does it mean accepting either the People Alliance or the Nation Alliance, which have formed new alliances even before the election process is completed.”

The Sosyalist Eşitlik Grubu rejects the pseudo-left’s claim that there is no alternative to supporting Kılıçdaroğlu. In reality, the election has shown Kılıçdaroğlu is no alternative to Erdoğan. The way forward is the struggle to mobilize the working class independently, on an international, socialist anti-war program, rejecting both pro-imperialist candidates of the ruling class. This means building the Sosyalist Eşitlik Partisi as the Turkish section of the ICFI.

World Socialist 25.05.2023