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The Massacre of Kurds in Sirnak

Turkish State Terror in Action

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The ruling AKP government in Turkey (*Adalet ve Kalkinma Partisi*, Justice and Development Party) has made a huge effort in recent years to promote to the outside world an image of an almost “progressive” government, verbally embracing the Palestinian cause and condemning in the strongest terms the repression in Syria. This has been part of its bid to win a position for Turkey as a regional power in the Middle East, trying to overcome the reluctance of their Arab neighbours towards them since the time Ottoman Empire.

When Turkey lost, in the eyes of NATO, the strategic position it had at the end of the Cold War, it has tried to carve out a position of influence in a region plagued by political instability. On the one hand, Turkey has continued to cultivate its ties with the U.S. through NATO (as demonstrated by the central role the regime of Ankara played in the negotiations of the “transition” in Libya), but at the same time, with no small dose of demagoguery, it tries to gain the sympathies of the Arab world by posing in favour of the pro-democracy rebellions (while trying

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to channel them in a conservative direction) and of the Palestinian self-determination. In this double game, Turkey cultivates a Neoliberal image for the West and an Islamic image for the East. Meanwhile, internally it strengthens its militaristic and repressive policies, especially toward the Kurdish people.

Not for nothing did Netanyahu, after protests from the Turkish Prime Minister Erdogan after the sinking of the Gaza flotilla, the *Mavi Marmara*, point out that instead of talking so much about the Palestinians, he should pay attention to the Kurdish situation in his own country. This statement by Netanyahu is undoubtedly obnoxiously hypocritical. But Erdogan is equally hypocritical when he goes around merrily pontificating on the right to protest and the need for greater democracy in the Middle East, proclaiming himself a spokesman of the “Arab Spring”, and a self-proclaimed champion of the Palestinian cause, while he oppresses, persecutes, imprison, torture and massacres its own oppressed minority, the Kurds.

Protests in the Kurdish region were drowned in blood, with dozens of deaths, while the world had its attention focused on Libya and Syria. When the AKP first won the Turkish elections in 2002, it was thanks to demagogic promises of reform and modernization, which, to some extent, created tensions with the army and the Turkish nationalists, the Kemalists, who have had a monopoly on power since the end of World War I, when the Turkish Republic was founded on the ashes of the Ottoman Empire. These promises of reform and democracy included the Kurdish question True, it is largely decriminalized to speak the Kurdish language and it is allowed for Kurdish to broadcast today on television and radio. But these measures are, at best, symbolic, and mere cultural concessions. They do not change at all the nature of the oppression or discrimination against the Kurdish people that they experience every day. And the failure of the AKP’s strategy to end the loyalty of the Kurdish towards the movement for autonomy by playing the Islamist card, it started again with the sabre rattling returning to Turkey’s tra-

ditional policy towards ethnic minorities: simply crush them if they do not assimilate.

There is no interest in resolving the conflict raging since 1984 between the State and Kurdish guerrillas, the PKK (*Partiya Karkerên Kurdistan*, Workers Party of Kurdistan) by dealing with the demands of the insurgents: land restitution and land reform, political autonomy (not independence), democratization through experiences of participatory local governance, the dismantling of paramilitaries armed by the Turkish state (the village guards), full equality of Kurds with the Turkish people and recognition of the multinational nature of Turkey, full equality of women, respect for the experiences of popular power built during the armed resistance. The militarization of the Kurdish territories remains the same and since 2007 we have witnessed an escalation of Turkish military actions against the rebels, with increasing bombings against insurgent camps on the border with Iraq. Since 2009 there began a process of systematic political persecution on the social, political and popular movements of the Kurdish people, with the closure of the main Kurdish party, the DTP (*Demokratik Toplum Partisi*, Democratic Society Party) on charges of being the political arm of the PKK. Under the umbrella of the “anti-terrorist” law over 3000 elected representatives, parliamentarians, mayors, trade unionists, academics and intellectuals, students, human rights defenders, poor people, have been imprisoned without any due process nor solid charge, for the sole crime of supporting the Kurdish cause, for the crime of being Kurds.

This witch hunt has not only failed to arouse any condemnation from the so-called “international community”, but rather the U.S. military intelligence has provided assistance to the Turkish regime, while negotiating a U.S. military base on Turkish soil in which to maintain a fleet of UAV Predators, those responsible for brutal massacres in Yemen, Pakistan and Afghanistan. The last six months have seen increasing acts of war against the Kurdish resistance, who have responded with

well-aimed blows against the Turkish military forces. This situation has led the Turkish army to bomb and attack wantonly, its actions being increasingly brutal and indiscriminate.

Last night, this wanton military policy stained the Kurdish province of Sirnak, on the border with Iraq, in blood. A group of 50 farmers was bombed by Turkish F-16 fighters at a border crossing. Of these, at least 36 have died and 13 are missing. Others are seriously injured and it is possible for the death toll to rise. According to the government, who now acknowledges its mistake after saying in a previous military statement that they were insurgents, they were cigarette smugglers. According to other versions, they were returning from work or were bringing diesel for personal use. Anyway, they were not insurgents as the military statement said, which was later rejected, nor was this a model of surgical military operation.

This unjustifiable carnage has again exposed the true face of state terrorism in Turkey. This slaughter exposes the hypocrisy of Erdogan, whose regime has its hands soaked in Kurdish blood while he speaks cynically of human rights in other countries. But it also highlights the hypocrisy of an “international community” that is shocked by the repression in Syria, while it assists the silent slaughter of the Kurdish people.

The Kurdish people are now mobilized to define their political project of liberation and to resist the four States which occupy them and oppress them (Syria, Turkey, Iran and Iraq). The slightest sense of decency and humanity should impel us to show solidarity with them. The peoples of the world must not allow Erdogan to open his mouth again to pontificate on human rights anywhere. Wherever he poses as democratic and humane, we must mention only one word which will be forever marked as a terrible shame, as a reminder of the awful monstrosity of state terrorism: Sirnak.