

# Turkey: Erdogan moves to crush HDP and Kurdish resistance

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## **Phil Hearse reports on the latest wave of arrests in Turkey.**

Turkish police arrested November 2 the two co-chairs of the left-wing, pro-Kurdish, HDP (Peoples Democratic Party), and nine other HDP MPs. Arrest warrants for all the party's 59 MPs have been issued.

After the raids to arrest Demirtas and Yüksekdag, it was reported that the government has blocked access to Facebook, Twitter and other social media.

In a parallel move Yüksekdag has been sentenced to a 10-months in prison for participating in the funeral of Yasemin Ciftci, a supporter of the outlawed Marxist Leninist Communist Party (MLKP) in 2012. The government claims the funeral was an act of 'terrorist propaganda'.

The HDP arrests are part of a wider move by the Islamist Justice and Development Party (AKP) government of Recep Tayyip Erdogan to further clamp down on the Kurdish resistance and other opponents of his move towards dictatorship.

Gultan Kisanak and Firat Anli, the co-mayors of Diyarbakir, the largest majority Kurdish city, have been arrested and removed from their posts. Like other HDP mayors in 27 Kurdish towns and cities, they are to be replaced by commissioners appointed by the government. The AKP government is intent on crushing the experiment in democratic autonomy, which everywhere has pushed women to the fore, in the mainly Kurdish region of south east Turkey.

These measures against the HDP come together with other sharply repressive moves:

- On October 29 the government issued two decrees sacking 10,158 government employees, in addition to the 100,000 or more already sacked.
- 1267 academics have been sacked, bringing the total to more than 2000 (the exact number is not known). The list includes several members of the Academics for peace, who organised a petition for the ending of the government's military attack on the Kurdish towns last winter.
- Another decree of October 29 orders the recording of all conversations between detainees and their lawyers, and provides that these recordings must be available to the prosecution.
- Fifteen media outlets have been shut down by the same decrees, including Jinha, a news agency staffed solely by women. Overall, 168 media outlets have been shut down and around 100 journalists arrested since July 15, bringing the total number of journalists in jail to 133, more than Russia, China and Iran combined.

A report by Human Rights Watch on 24 October documented 13 cases of alleged abuse, including

sleep deprivation, severe beatings, sexual abuse and rape threats since the coup attempt in July this year, revealing the extent to which the state of emergency conditions negatively affect the rights and conditions of the post-coup detainees.

The latest repressive moves leave no room for doubt that the aim of the Erdogan government is the crushing of the HDP, and all other centres of resistance. The AKP government is also using the devastation of Kurdish areas caused by the fighting last autumn and winter, to knock down rebel neighbourhoods and rebuild them with gentrified housing that will force out and disperse the original Kurdish inhabitants. This is particularly the case in Sur, the largest Kurdish community in Diyarbakir, virtually destroyed in fighting in January and February. Locals claimed the destruction was deliberate and part of a project to drive them out of a community that has existed for thousands of years.

Crushing the Kurdish communities is a key part of the plan to try to finish off the Kurdish resistance. But it also involves moves against Rojava – the Kurdish name for the self-governing cantons in northern Syria. Turkey's military incursion into Syria is ultimately aimed at overrunning these areas and crushing the Rojava experiment in democratic self-government.

Erdogan and his AKP government have moved cautiously since the attempted coup on July 15, waiting four months before launching an all-out attack on the HDP. Since that time they have established that the EU will make only the mildest of criticism of its dictatorial moves, because the Europeans are desperate to ensure Turkish co-operation in preventing migrants and refugees crossing over to Greece. Meanwhile democracy is being crushed by an Islamist dictatorship in Turkey.

It is essential that, in the face of silence from the EU and the British government, labour movement and left wing organisations in Britain speak out to demand the freedom of the HDP and all other Turkish political prisoners.

A picket of Downing Street will be held 10am-12 noon November 5. Further details of protests will be posted here as soon as details are known.

**Phil Hearse**

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**P.S.**

\* Left Unity. 4 November 2016:

<http://leftunity.org/erdogan-moves-to-crush-hdp-and-kurdish-resistance/>