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**Turkey**

# **“To fight the Coronavirus is to fight capitalism!”**

- IV Online magazine - 2020 - IV543 - April 2020 -

Publication date: Thursday 2 April 2020

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**Since the announcement on 10 March, 2020 of the first case of infection and, a week later, of the first death due to Covid-19, Turkey now has 7,500 infected and 108 dead. We are thus entering the weeks when the number of cases and deaths are very likely to increase dramatically. But which will also show whether the measures taken so far have helped to contain the spread of the virus.**

## **Saving capital first**

The multiple public or private campaigns, such as “there is life at home” or in a more direct style “stay at home”, have certainly weighed on the choice of those who had the possibility of not moving from their home. Various sectors of “white-collar workers” whose companies have adopted telework measures have also remained compartmentalized at home. However, a significant part of the labouring strata could not practice this self-quarantine and was thus exposed to the risk of contamination during the past two weeks.

The measures taken by the Erdogan regime are no exception to the rule and clearly show that the “life or profit” choice, even in an “apocalyptic” conjuncture, presents no dilemma for the ruling class and bourgeois governments. Everything is done to save capital and the measures for the people such as reductions in VAT or facilities for obtaining mortgage loans are meagre, as is the supposed economic support mainly aimed at strengthening the policy of household debt. However, there is still no question of calling for a general lockdown and stopping non-essential economic and professional activities.

On the other hand, the Turkish economy having been hit by a deep crisis for almost two years, the state has declared a support package for only a small sum - around 14 billion euros - that it will most likely be forced to revise or increase depending on the course of events.

## **And repression continues**

However, it is business as usual for Erdogan and his Islamo-nationalist bloc. In the midst of the Coronavirus crisis, the Interior Ministry appointed governors to head five other municipalities headed by HDP mayors - who were removed from office. Thus among the 64 town halls won during the municipal election of March 2019, a total of 37 were “recovered” by the regime and 21 of these dismissed mayors were placed under arrest.

The AKP and its far-right ally MHP have also proposed a bill to delay the execution of prison sentences, aimed at reducing the number of prisoners in prison faced with the risk of contamination. This would include, inter alia, those convicted of sexual violence but would not concern those who are serving a sentence or are in pre-trial detention for acts assimilated to terrorism (recall that any criticism of the regime or expression of solidarity with the Kurdish people is classified among this category of “crime”). Many journalists, intellectuals and in particular deputies and activists imprisoned by the HDP will not be able to benefit from this law.

Faced with the coronavirus crisis, the regime also had to temporarily abandon its policy of opening borders for migrants who wanted to reach Europe. To evacuate the camp that had formed on the Greek-Turkish border and force

the migrants to leave, the Turkish authorities burned down the tents and brought the migrants back to detention centres where they will be quarantined for two weeks.

## **Impose another policy**

The next few weeks will be crucial in order to force the government to take more radical measures for the health of workers such as the cessation of non-essential production activities, the imposition of paid holidays, the deferral of bill payments (gas, electric, water), the ban on layoffs and so on. So many demands expressed, among others, in the campaign waged by the Turkish section of the Fourth International, Yeniyol, with two other revolutionary Marxist groups (Ba?lang?ç and the Party of Workers' Democracy - IDP linked to the IWU-FI) whose slogan sums up very well the task of all left forces at the international level: “To fight the Coronavirus is to fight capitalism!”

*30 March 2020*

*PS:*

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