

Greetings to All Delegates, Trade Unionists at the TUC Conference '88



- SUPPORT TRADE UNIONS
- SUPPORT RETURNING POLITICAL REFUGEES
- SUPPORT DEMOCRACY IN TURKEY!

The suffering of the working people in Turkey is becoming more and more unbearable as the years pass under a dictatorial regime.

Ruthless implementation of economic austerity programmes for the last eight years ended up with the rate of inflation running at about 75%, a very unstable economy, inefficient industry and unlivable wages for the working people. In these eight years of repression, buying power of wage earners has gone down by half. Share of wages and salaries in the gross national income went down from 34% in 1980 to 13% in 1988 while that of profits, rents and interests went up from 43% to 73% in the same period. Average wage is £12 per week while prices of many consumer goods are comparable to those, say, in Britain.

This savage robbery of the working people was made possible by the military regime shelving democracy and trade union rights, silencing democrats and progressives for a long time.

The present "civilian" government is nothing but a modified continuation of the outright military regime formed after the coup on 12th September 1980.

The present government is enjoying the tight jacket put on the trade union movement by repressive trade union laws introduced by the military regime in 1983.

The government has been ignoring the criticisms of the ILO and the demands for changing the trade union laws in such a way to make them compatible with internationally accepted standards. Its only concern is to diffuse the rising anger in the trade union movement by making some minor concessions, particularly aimed at pleasing the present trade union leaders.

The Trade Union Confederation Türk - is has been taking good decisions such as campaigning to get trade union laws repealed or calling on its rank-and-file to vote against the government in the polls disregarding the legal ban on involvement in politics. But in many cases, the leadership has wavered when it came to the crunch or to concrete action.

Wider sections of the working people are coming to realize that the lack of democracy is at the core of all their social and economic problems.

Struggle for Democracy

The main problem of democracy at the present is the restrictions on the freedom of expression, imposed by Articles 141 and 142 of the Turkish Penal Code. These Articles have been and are being used extensively against any "undesired" views, persons or organisations (e.g. DISK Trade Union, Turkish Peace Association).

The ongoing trial of the leaders of the United Communist Party of Turkey has brought "virtues" of these two Articles to the focus of attention of the public.

There are people even within the government party who admit that these Articles borrowed from Mussolini's Italy are not compatible with democracy. There is a government initiated review of the Turkish Penal Code which may bring (if an effective campaign can be built) some important changes in this regard.

Another burning issue is of course the denial of national and democratic rights of some 10 million Kurdish people living in Turkey. Even their very existence is denied by the establishment. The Turkish Security Forces are still continuing its clamp down on Kurdish people.

The PM Ozal's efforts to portray himself as the protector of what he refers as "Iraqi citizens" escaping chemical weapons is nothing but a cynical ploy aimed at political gain in the run up to the public referendum to be held on 25 September.

Return of Political Refugees

There are thousands of political refugees from Turkey living in various countries in Europe. Some 250 of them, mainly leaders of trade unions, political parties and groups, Kurdish groups and democratic mass organisations, came together in March this year in Cologne, Germany, to discuss the possibility of an organised return. They decided to launch a campaign for a safe return for the political refugees and that this would be an important contribution to the struggle for democracy in Turkey.

Human Rights Association in Turkey acted swiftly and formed a special group to investigate the possibility of creating conditions for a safe return of the political refugees abroad.

The issue is being widely discussed, but there has not so far been a commitment on the part of the Turkish government for the safety of returning political refugees. Yet, some refugees declared that they would return soon, regardless. They believe that their return will help pave the way for others, although it involves a very real risk of detention and possibly torture. Amongst them is Nafiz Bostanci, a political refugee living in Britain.

NAFİZ BOSTANCI - Trade Unionist Ending His Exile

Brother Bostanci is a well-known figure in the trade-union and labour movement in Turkey. He was Istanbul Region Secretary of Genel-İs, General and Municipal Workers' Union led by DISK President Abdullah Bastürk.

During his stay in Britain since 1982, Brother Bostanci has played a key role in organising the migrant workers from Turkey and getting them join the British unions, as well as in the campaigns for trade union rights and democracy in Turkey. He is currently the President of "Halkevi", the Turkish Community Centre in London which has developed within 5 years of its existence to be the only mass, united democratic organisation of the migrant workers from Turkey, with a membership of about 1200.

Nafiz Bostanci and other political refugees returning to Turkey are relying solely on the support of the democratic forces in Turkey and international democratic public opinion when taking such an enormous risk.

- DEMAND LIFTING ALL RESTRICTIONS ON TRADE UNION ACTIVITY IN TURKEY!
- DEMAND FREEDOM OF POLITICAL PRISONERS IN TURKEY!
- DEMAND ABOLITION OF ARTICLES 141 & 142 OF TURKISH PENAL CODE FOR FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION.
- DEMAND SECURING A SAFE RETURN FOR NAFIZ BOSTANCI AND OTHER RETURNING POLITICAL REFUGEES.
- SUPPORT DEMOCRACY IN TURKEY.

Publicise these issues in your union branch and organise pressure on the British government which is one of the closest supporters of the Turkish regime. Write to Turkish Embassy, 43 Belgrave Sq., London SW1 for your demands and protestations. Contact us for further information.

Human Rights Record of Evren-Ozal Regime

- * Since 1980, 51 people have been hanged, 27 of them for political offences;
- * 187 death sentences are awaiting ratification by the Parliament while several hundreds of death sentences are at the appeal stage;
- * 253 detainees are known to have been tortured to death or shot "while trying to escape", the exact number of the disappeared are estimated to be much higher;
- * There are still some 15,000 political prisoners.

Some Recent Examples

- * Mustafa Gulmez, a conscript officer, was found dead in a police cell where he had been taken for interrogation, police claimed he had committed suicide;
- * Two students of Selcuk University in Konya were arrested, tortured, put on trial at state security court and sentenced to 11 months in prison for posting stickers calling for the release of Kutlu and Sargin as well as all other political prisoners;
- * In Siirt about a dozen people were detained on political grounds, two of them being former leading activists of the banned Progressive Youth Organisation, who are accused of distributing postcards with pictures of Kutlu and Sargin.
- * Hunger strikes were staged in various prisons, protesting against the horrifying conditions in which prisoners are being held: the one in Aydin prison lasted for 30 days - many of them joined by prisoners' families;
- * Former Justice Minister, Mr. Sungurlu said the following about the hunger strikers: "I hope they won't die; but if they do, well, may they rest in peace."

- * Due to some changes in laws, in Ankara alone 444 people will be required to go back to prison to serve more.
- * *Milliyet* (The Nationality), one of the major daily papers, was confiscated throughout the country for publishing an interview with a Kurdish leader;
- * Offices of another daily, *Cumhuriyet* (The Republic) were raided by the police and one of the prominent columnists of the paper was detained for publishing excerpts from the statement made to the police by the man arrested for attempting to assassinate PM Ozal;
- * The recently formed Socialist Party is on trial at the Constitutional Court, facing closure;
- * Ms. Fatma Yazici, editor of the weekly *2000'e Dogru* (Towards 2000), has 26 courtcases against her for various articles published in the magazine which had been confiscated several times;
- * Similarly, Mr. Sefik Calik, editor of the new monthly journal *Yeni Acilim* (The New Opening) has a number of courtcases against him for the articles published in the first three issues of the journal (issue no.2 was confiscated)...

SOME RESTRICTIONS ON TRADE UNIONS

About 1/3 of trade union members are denied the right to strike by exemption on the grounds of "national security and public safety".

Some 800,000 civil servants are denied the right to join unions or even to form professional associations.

Unions or other associations can not involve in politics in any form.

Government is equipped with extensive powers for inspecting unions financially and otherwise.

International affiliations are subject to government's permission.

Conditions to be nominated for union organs.

TÜRKİYE SOSYAL TARİH ARASTIRMA VAKFI
TÜSTAV
ARŞİVİ

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