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women's
organisation -turkey

NEWSLETTER

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FOUR YEARS AFTER

4 years have passed since the reactionary military coup of September 12th. in Turkey. For tens of millions of people these have been years of injustice, torture, poverty, for the whole Kurdish people increasing national oppression. In short, years full of suffering and difficulties. In spite of establishing one of the cruellest dictatorships in the world, the pro-imperialist, reactionary circles of Turkey could not even achieve the objectives they had set for themselves in this period.

The economic situation is actually much worse today. Inflation and foreign debts are on the rise, whereas investments and production decrease. Big bosses, who rapidly smuggle their huge profits abroad, also complain of Prime Minister Özal's economic policies. Speculation and bribery have increased several fold. Recently a scandal at the customs revealed that high state officials stand at the back of such fraudulent dealings. Cruelty and oppression could not silence the people. On the contrary, opposition to the regime grows and gets more active. Despite the collaborationist, treacherous leadership of the Türk-İş Confederation, workers prove their determination to defend their rights, as was witnessed in the first massive workers' rally organised by Türk-İş. Various actions take place in workplaces, with women workers playing an active role.

Honest, patriotic intellectuals who issued a joint manifesto now continue their resistance to the regime in military courts where they are on trial.

Even traditional rightist forces draw attention to the developments in the society, some of them trying to present themselves as alternatives to the shaky Özal government and searching ways to direct social opposition from endangering reactionary forces.

The fascist government on the other hand reverts to more repressive measures to defend itself. Workers' rights, already severely restricted by the new constitution and trade union laws, are reduced to nil with decrees and practical implementations. The censure mechanism is in full force. The pro-regime press has lost its credibility to such an extent that daily newspaper sales dropped by one third. Since August, on pretext of an attack to some military establishments, repressions in the Turkish Kurdistan have been increased many fold. The Turkish government also cooperates with Iran and Iraq to suppress the Kurdish popular movement, sending troops to regions in these countries.

Since the "elections" of last November, military courts passed hundreds of new death sentences. Torture and terror in prisons show no sign of abating. Leaders of DİSK (Union Confederation) have been released (temporarily), after 4 years in prison, under international pressure, but Peace Committee members still languish in jails.

These are the general lines of the situation in Turkey 4 years after the coup. All of them show that the regime which attempts to strengthen its positions and to institutionalise fascism is actually shaking in its foundations. On the other hand, two tasks come more and more into the forefront for the patriots of Turkey and the real friends of the country: to achieve the unity of all opposition forces and to strengthen international solidarity.

WOMEN OF THREE GENERATIONS STRUGGLE FOR PEACE

At the beginning of September an international meeting was held uniting three generations of women and their struggle against fascism, for peace. The seminar attended by representatives of women's organisations in Europe, USA and Canada took place in Warsaw, precisely 45 years after the Hitler armies started the 2nd World War by attacking Poland. The city in itself was a proof of the prevalence of the forces of peace over those of war and death. Warsaw, which Hitler ordered to be wiped off from the maps, stands up today in all its beauty, fighting against new imperialist aggressions. Among the participants were women who had experienced fascist concentration camps and fought against German fascism, those who had live through the cold war period and struggled for detente, and young girls who are active militants in the peace struggle today. The oldest delegate was 80, and the youngest 18. Both the experience of the elderly and the dynamism of the young were directed towards the same aim: to prevent a much greater catastrophe for humanity - the nuclear war. In spite of the great danger, a spirit of optimism was prevalent in the meeting, as also reflected in the appeal it adopted to the women of the world: "...We must struggle against war before it starts. United, effective and vigorous actions by all peace-loving forces against the aggressive course of imperialism are needed to defend peace... We are convinced that it is possible to safeguard peace and life. Never before was the movement for peace so strong as today. In the strengthening of the peace forces lies our hope.. In the name of the present and future - in the name of life - united we can avert the nuclear danger."

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I was taken directly to the Metris military prison and detention centre in Istanbul.

6 months later I was released for child-birth. Of course during these 6 months I had undergone other pressures. In the prison, the cells were filled over their capacity. Two or three persons had to share a bed. The words and the attitudes of the policewomen were extremely degrading. The place we were taken out to get clean air and the period were highly insufficient. Fighting the cold was another problem. Newspapers, journals, books, and even the radio and television were banned. Meetings with lawyers and families through iron bars and glasses were unsatisfactory. Moreover, policewomen and soldiers listened to every word that was said. The prison administration deprived the prisoners of their most natural right to be present in court, thus prolonging further their period of detention. Everything was in the hands of this prison administration. Health facilities were practically non-existent and when the prisoners started a hunger strike to obtain some rights, the prison administration tried everything to break them down. Periodically soldiers were barging into cells to beat the prisoners and particularly those who did not want to wear the uniforms were beaten to death. Almost every month, on pretext of a search, the cells were turned upside down, beds and clothes torn to pieces. It might surprise you to learn that there were people who had been forced to live these prison conditions for years without knowing which crime they were accused of. This was another form of psychological torture.

As a mother and a doctor living in the 20th century, my duty is to protect human life and to impress upon others the importance of this task. I appeal to the members of the sub-commission to take up seriously the situation of the political prisoners in Turkey.. I wish also that a special reporter be assigned to investigate the conditions of political prisoners in Turkey..."

AMNESTY REPORTS ON TORTURES ON WOMEN IN TURKEY

Torture of women prisoners in Turkey also took place in the July issue of the newsletter "Amnesty for Women" published by Amnesty International. The newsletter prints statements from Sema Ogur, Meryem Sendil Çolakoğlu, Nursel Yılmaz and Gülhan Tomak, who tell of the tortures inflicted on them in the torture centres in Ankara and İskenderun and of the conditions in prisons. Among the tortures they suffered are falaka (beating the soles), beatings, electric shocks all over the body, crucifying, hanging from the wrists. They also tell how married couples or relatives are tortured in front of each other and of the psychological methods of repression.

SOLIDARITY ACTIONS IN GREECE

A broad solidarity campaign was started in Greece in August for hunger strikers in Turkish prisons. During the campaign, on the appeal of the Union of Progressive Mothers (PEME) women held a demonstration in front of the Turkish embassy in Athens. The protest letter handed in to the embassy was signed, in addition to PEME, by the Federation of Greek Women (OGE) and the Union of Greek Women (EGE).

Branch organisations of OGE also collected signatures to a letter stating their solidarity with the hunger strikes and the PWO and protesting the fascist regime and sent it to Evren and the Turkish embassy.

SUPPORT FROM CYPRUS

The progressive organisation of the women of Cyprus (POGO) sent a cable to the PWO on occasion of the 4th year of the military coup in Turkey. The message says: "Cypriot women on occasion 4th anniversary military coup express solidarity with struggle of its women and people against US-backed regime for democracy, peace, progress. Protest the continuation of repression, tortures, persecutions, political assassinations against democratic minded people in Turkey. Demand release of political prisoners and respect of fundamental human rights."

WOMEN RAISE THEIR VOICE

Under the Directives of the IMF, the Özal government continues the price hikes. The annual rate of inflation has already reached 50%. Any increase in workers' wages have already been eroded. Many "collective negotiations" are kept waiting. A few have ended with terms totally unsuitable to the rise in prices.

A mother who used to buy half a kilogramme milk every day to her children last year says she cannot keep it up now.

The rapidly deteriorating situation causes unrest over the whole country, expressed in various forms:

In Bursa, 20 women working in a factory protested their union who was ineffective in solving the problems in their workplace. They arranged a sit-in in front of the union office calling union leaders to a more active position.

In Diyarbakır women marched to the governor's house to protest price raises. Women demanded to see the governor and asked him a single question: "Do the authorities expect us to die of hunger?"

In İstanbul, women living in working class districts (shanty towns) hold another sort of guard-against trucks dumping sewage in their district. The sewage collected from other parts of the city is emptied into water channels near shanty towns, causing serious threats for the people. Women say that their children are infected with many diseases such as jaundice, and that there are death instances. When all of their initiatives to prevent this practice remained without results, the women found the solution in keeping a guard with sticks. When the trucks come near the district, then they get busy with their sticks and prevent trucks from emptying their load. One woman says: "Now we have taken the matter in our own hands. I will break the head of anyone who dares to throw this dirt here."

Obviously women of Turkey do not approve this course of events and are starting to show it !