

NEWS BULLETIN

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1st LABOUR CONGRESS ORGANIZED IN ISTANBUL ON 23 NOVEMBER 2013

The labour movement in Turkey is on the rise.

The working class in Turkey constitutes about 65 percent of the whole labour force. Every year, thousands of expropriated peasants and artisans join the ranks of the working class. The third global crisis of capitalism since the end of 2008 has had its negative impacts on the Turkish economy and on the workers. Besides, the imperialist exploitation and the pro-capital practices of the current government have led to further deterioration in the living standards and working conditions of the masses.



The Workers' Party is leading the struggle of the workers against the assaults of imperialism and capital in general.

The cadres of the Workers' Party have an important influence on the labour movement. The Aydinlik Newspaper and the Ulusal Channel, with an increasing circulation and audience, respectively, are operating in line with the Workers' Party's program and strategy and having a considerable influence on the public opinion.

Aydinlik Newspaper organized the 1st Labour Congress in Istanbul on 23 November 2013, at the large meeting hall of the Petroleum Workers' Trade Union.

The congress was attended by the leadership of the Workers' Party, presidents of progressive trade unions affiliated both with Turk-Is (Confederation of Trade Unions of Turkey) and DISK (Confederation of Progressive Trade Unions of Turkey) and hundreds of veterans of the labour movement as well.

Participant trade unions and the names of their representatives are as blow:

- **Atilay Aycin, President of Hava-Is (Trade Union of Civil Aviation Workers)**
- **Mustafa Oztaskin, President of Petrol-Is (Petroleum Workers' Trade Union)**
- **Adnan Serdaroglu, President of United Metal Workers' Union**
- **Metin Ebeturk, President of Sosyal-Is (Trade Union of Social Insurance, Education, Bureau, Commerce and Fine Arts Workers')**
- **Kenan Ozturk, President of TUMTIS (Transport Workers' Trade Union)**
- **Mustafa Turkel, President of Tek Gida-Is (Trade Union of Tobacco and Beverage Workers')**
- **Nihat Yurdakul, President of Belediye-Is (Trade Union of Municipality Workers')**

At the three sessions held on 23rd November, presidents of 6 trade unions and 6 eminent experts of the labour movement took the floor. All of the speakers criticized the policies of current government with respect to labour and opposed the imperialist plans to disintegrate Turkey. During the discussions after each session, many participants took the floor and made brief interventions.

Dr.Serhan Bolluk, General Secretary of the Workers' Party, had discussions with the trade union leaders during the Congress.

Yildirim Koc, Deputy-President of the Workers' Party and chairperson of the Workers and Trade Unions Bureau, presented the Party's views on the anticipated developments. He focused on the economic and political situation, emphasising the impoverishment of the masses and the increasing weakness both of the government and of imperialism in the Middle East. He said that, the simultaneous existence of absolute impoverishment of the masses and weakness of the ruling classes is the harbinger of the development of mass struggles in Turkey. He added that the legitimate mass struggles organized by the Workers' Party during 2012 and 2013 had important contributions on overcoming the fear created by the ruling classes. According to him, the uprising of the masses in millions in June and July this year had further reinforced that trend. He drew the attention of the participants to attempts of the government to repeal the severance pay of workers and to extend labour leasing and elaborated on the problems of workers employed by subcontractors. He concluded his speech by reiterating his well-grounded hopes concerning the mass struggles on the horizon.

A declaration was adopted by the Congress unanimously. The declaration urged the working class and trade unions to organize general strike in case the planned attacks of the government began to take concrete steps.

Following is the full text of the declaration:

Declaration of the 1st Aydinlik Labour Congress

As the government expresses openly in the National Employment Strategy and the 2014 government program, a huge and systematic attack against the basic rights of the working class is on the agenda.

The system of severance payments, a right introduced in 1936 by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk and developed further in the following years, is threatened to be limited or abolished totally.

Subcontracted labour is getting more and more common due to government's policies. The government is keeping these workers from using their legal rights and trying to limit them even more.

Temporary employment has been introduced into the labour legislation in 2003. Now the government tries to enslave workers even more by giving private employment agencies the right to hire and fire employees.

Public employees are under heavy pressure by government policies as well. In the collective labour agreement for 2014, no inflation difference is foreseen. This will lead to serious impoverishment of the more than 2.5 million public employees.

The numbers of the unemployed are rising every day. Families sacrificing everything to send their children to universities, see these children unemployed and in depression when finishing their studies.

Privatization condemns our workers to poverty and weakens our country.

The deepening economic crisis and the rising inflation puts in danger the future of the whole country and

the whole working class, including workers, public employees, retired persons.

Without an alternative, people stick to credit cards and consumer credits, but the debts collected here are getting to be unpayable.

Protests of workers that are waiting for their payment are getting more and more common.

The privatization of health care leads to more expenses for the working population. The negative consequences of the general health security system are becoming visible day by day.

A lot of persons are now dependent on alms by certain institutions and associations.

We have to say “STOP” to this development. And the Turkish working class will say “STOP” to all this.

The attacks against our trade unions as the most organized and popular organizations are continuing. The strikes of Hava-İş (civil aviation trade union) at Turkish Airlines, the resistance of Gıda-İş (beverages and food producing sectors trade union) at tee producing Çaykur, the resistance of Türkiye Maden-İş (mine workers trade union) in Yatağan, the resistance of the population in Çatalağzı in Zonguldak province, all these resistances show that the working class has not given up.

The working class constitutes two third of our population.

The working class has been the backbone and the main body of the June Uprising.

Of those 1 million 89 thousand people who marched to the Mausoleum of Atatürk on 29th of October, of all those who marched in all the cities of our country, the vast majority are workers, public employees, unemployed and retired persons.

The historical heritage of our working class, the decisiveness of the millions who descended to the streets to defend our secular republic will win over these attacks.

Our working class is decided to defy the government's policies, to defeat the imperialist attempt to divide Turkey ethnically and to resist the attacks on the secular republic. The working class is decided to use the weapon of general strike if necessary.

This 1st Labour Congress states the attacks, underlines the working classes, our trade union's and our nation's decisiveness to resist. We declare that we deeply believe in the power of our people, led by our working class, to found the free, independent and democratic future of Turkey.

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MUGLA PROVINCE: WORKERS AGAINST PRIMEMINISTER ERDOGAN

Meanwhile, the fight of the Yatagan workers in Mugla Province against privatization continues – on an ever more politicized current. Our last news bulletin had reported about this conflict in the last number.

Recently, on Monday, the 25th of November, hundreds of workers gathered in the city centre of Mugla in front of the Ataturk monument and began to march first to the governorate and afterwards to the provincial office of the governing AKP (Justice and Development Party). The workers blocked the streets during the march and faced polices barricades, which were overrun, chanting “We are the soldiers of Mustafa Kemal”.



Police attack with tear gas and batons

The first barricade was established in front of the governorate. The police intervened with tear gas, water cannons and batons to the workers, who razed the first barricade. After passing the barricade, the workers came to the provincial office building of the JDP. During the police intervention, entire street and buildings on the street blacked out. The workers began a sit-in act over there. Slogans like “Government resign”, “State-owned enterprises are homeland, homeland can't be sold” were chanted during the protest.

Afterwards, the workers raised their fists and made an oath “Let us see if you can sell our power plant and mines. Do not make us killers of politicians. Your prisons cannot frighten us. Your tanks, riot control vehicles, batons and tear gas cannot discourage us. The power plant and mine workers of Yatagan, Yenikoy and Kemerkooy are the symbol of resistance”.

Several political parties, including the Workers' Party (Turkey), democratic mass organizations and the Mayor of Mugla supported the demonstration.

On the 26th of November, Yatagan workers carried out a demonstration in the town Milas near Mugla.

The workers of Yatagan, Yenikoy and Kemerkooy thermal power plants made a sit-in act in front of the AKP building in the town.

The police intervened with tear gas and water cannons.



A great number of workers were injured during the intervention. 60 injured demonstrators were treated in a hospital in Milas.

There, the workers made a press statement. In the press statement they said “We, as the power plant and mine workers are trying to make our voice heard by the government by using our democratic rights without demolishing anything. However the police is establishing barricades on the March routes and is intervening with tear gas and riot control vehicles without warning.”

And Erdogan comes to town

On the 30th of November, Primeminister Erdogan visited the province of Mugla for two days. The preparations for his visit reflected the governments fright of the people.

- Before Erdogan's arrival, around 50 members of the Turkish Youth Union (TGB) were put under preventive arrest, claiming they were preparing protest action.
- By order of the governorate, all kinds of meetings, demonstrations and press declarations were forbidden during four days.
- On the route of Erdogan's arrival, barricades were built to keep of protesting workers. Paramilitary forces were placed along the road. Still, his arrival was accompanied by several protests along the road.
- During Erdogan's stay, several roads were closed. The Primeminister spoke in Mugla in front of some 3 thousand people, meanwhile billboards publicity of an epilation firm was censored by prolonging the skirt of the displayed woman.

Contact:

Workers' Party (Turkey)

Address: Toros Sokak No: 9 Sıhhiye - Ankara / Turkey

Phone: +90312 231 81 11 * Fax: +90312 229 29 94

<http://inter.ip.org.tr> * <http://www.ip.org.tr>

E-mail: int@ip.org.tr