

Police Drive Protestors from Taksim Square—Struggle Continues

June 12, 2013

Last night Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan ordered police to drive protesters from Taksim Square in Istanbul and with water cannons, tear gas and clubs they did so. The day before Erdoğan had promised to meet with the dissidents who opposed the transformation of the park into a shopping mall and a military barracks, demanded an end to authoritarianism and called for democracy, but then the president changed his mind and now plans to meet with representatives of the artistic and intellectual community. He may have calculated that with the new democracy movement having spread throughout the country, and two labor federations having called strikes in support of the movement, it was time to remove the demonstrators in Taksim who have been the source of his recent problems.

Erdoğan's attempt to repress the movement over the last two weeks has taken three lives and left 4,947 injured, according to The New York Times. While the protests were initially called by environmentalists to protect the park, others quickly joined the occupiers, seeing the crackdown as another demonstration of the reactionary and authoritarian agenda of Erdoğan. Many Turks have opposed his combination of conservative Islam and neoliberal economics and particularly object to his government's violent repression of Kurds, arrest of journalists, and general suppression of dissent, thereby creating the mass base for social opposition. Erdoğan has also alienated the Alevis by planning to name a third bridge over the Bosphorus after Yavuz Sultan Selim, a ruler who killed thousands of Alevis during his reign.

Erdoğan's political rigidity brought him to the point where he was damned if he made concessions which would only encourage the movement and damned if he repressed the movement only proving that he was the dictator that the opposition claimed he was. We will see now how the country reacts to his violent ejection of the environmental, democratic and leftist activists from the park. We print below their latest statement.

This is our call to the whole world

11 June 2013

Police violence that began at Taksim Gezi Park on the morning of the 14th day continues as of midnight.

After the failure of the inept play of provocation staged in the morning by the police, the gas-bomb attack that the police continues as of now has led to hundreds of injuries -including many head traumas. All the animals and birds around Taksim Square are dying because of intense gas.

Our people, our children in Taksim Square and Gezi Park continue their resistance, risking their lives to protect their dignity.

We invite the whole world to show their reaction to stop the police violence carried out by the direct order of the government, and to support our people.

