

On the Massacre of 17 Revolutionary Leaders and Fighters in Turkey

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On 16 June 2005, the Maoist Communist Party of Turkey and North Kurdistan (MKP) suffered a terrible blow when the armed forces of the Turkish government carried out a surprise attack on an encampment and killed 17 leading members of the Party and fighters of the People's Liberation Army, who were on their way to the MKP's Second Congress. The brutal massacre was carried out by US-made helicopters, which dropped bombs on the revolutionaries and raked the area with rapid-fire machine guns. The Party also strongly believes that a few of the comrades were captured alive, then tortured and executed in cold blood. Revolutionaries around the world are painfully familiar with what such a loss can mean to the vanguard of the people's hopes for liberation. Declarations denouncing the vicious deed and expressing solidarity with the comrades of the MKP poured in from around the world, not only from fraternal parties and organisations in the Revolutionary Internationalist Movement, but also from many other progressive organisations.

The Turkish government immediately boasted to the world's media that it had "finished off the Maoists with a single blow". It declared that there was no way that the MKP would be able to reorganise its forces and reconstitute itself as a revolutionary force.

In an international climate marked by the fierce anti-communist campaign being waged by the imperialists, who have gone all-out to declare that communism is dead, the Turkish rulers hoped to use this terrible blow to destroy any hopes that the masses might have that the MKP could recover, and followed up their military attack with a barrage of propaganda aimed at demoralizing the advanced forces.

The Party struck back, however, and seized on the widespread anger at this brutal massacre. The funerals of the 17 fallen comrades were held in a number of cities, and thousands of people poured out onto the streets to mourn and to declare their determination that while the enemy can kill revolutionaries, it can never kill the hope for revolution. Seven of the revolutionaries were buried in Dersim in a joint funeral attended by thousands. Four were buried in a mass funeral in Istanbul. Three were buried in Ankara, and the three others in other cities. Meetings were held in half a dozen other cities in Europe, with thousands attending. On 25 June, 5,000 people took part in a march in the German city of Duisburg in support of the revolutionary struggle in Turkey, and 3,000 crowded into a memorial meeting. In London, a march of five or six dozen people winding through Turkish neighbourhood of Dalston/Hackney swelled to as many as 500 as people along the route joined in.

Despite the heavy loss, the Party was able to reconstitute a leadership structure and carry on its main activities.

Many revolutionaries and supporters in Turkey and around the world were seriously concerned at how such a massacre could have taken place. The Party itself felt that it needed to investigate to determine whether there might be some serious ideological, political and organisational problems that might have lowered the Party's vigilance. It conducted an in-depth months-long investigation and produced a public report to the masses on the particularities of what happened, in order to sharpen the understanding of the revolutionaries for future battles. Although this initial investigation identified serious mistakes, these were errors made in the course of leading the battle for liberation against a merciless enemy. The blood of the 17 leaders and fighters is on the hands of the class enemy, and shall never be forgotten.

—AWTW