

# Turkey



People remain defiant as police use a water cannon, Taksim Square, Istanbul, June 11.

Photo: flickr/Esar Karadag

## Rising Up Across The Globe

### A Spring Thunder Resonating Far and Wide

*The following is an excerpt from an article, written by a contributor, about the recent upsurge in Turkey. The entire article, in English and in Turkish, is posted online at revcom.us.*

A social uprising on a scale not seen in recent decades has burst into the open like spring thunder, rejecting the way things are and opposing the direction they are heading. It has rapidly spread across Turkey, bringing a massive number of protesters into the streets in more than seventy cities and towns all the way from Istanbul to Diyarbakir. And it has brought forward a whole lively chorus of international solidarity from four corners of the world.

Since the end of May an explosion of a political crisis of tremendous significance has seized the center stage, sharply polarizing the whole society, drawing millions into debate and exposing all the basic rotten and oppressive nature of the existing social order and its fundamental assumptions. One defiant young woman, in the heat of pitched battle with the police, proudly responded, "It is not about a few trees, this struggle is about our souls!", to a journalist inquiring about what motivated the relentless surge of the protests.

On the surface it was the brutal attack by the riot police and the authorities at 5 o'clock in the morning on the 31st of May to evict 50-100 people peacefully protesting the planned demolition of Istanbul's Taksim Gezi Park that sparked the whole social uprising. However from behind the thick fog of c-gas and crippling shots of high pressure water cannons and concussion grenades of the first day engagements, it became clear that a new and fresh and determined force, a young generation of

rebels has emerged, increasingly impatient with and intolerant of the existing political and social reality in Turkey.

The depth and scope of the rebel forces arrayed against the regime of the AKP (the Justice and Development Party), which has been ruling since 2002, reveals the sharp intensification of the contradictions. The young people from universities and the shantytowns, middle class people from all walks of life, artists and intellectuals are united with those who have been recently dislocated from the countryside, demanding the resignation of the prime minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan, along with the people who are outraged with the systematic islamization of the state and the public space and growing imposition of Islamic values and traditions and unrelenting promotion of religion-based morals. At the center and in the front ranks of this rebellion stand women who are furious about the encroachments on their bodies, lives and freedoms and the restrictions of abortion, and the government diktats about how many children a "patriotic," "good mother" should have. People who are outraged about the state sponsored efforts to erode or reject scientific truths like Darwin's theory of evolution are also part of the protests. The sympathizers of revolutionary groups and organizations fight alongside the people who oppose the deterioration of the environment and those who demand real freedom of speech, a stop to internet censorship and the arrests of journalists for even mild truth telling or criticism. Hence the slogan "Tayyip Resign!" loudly echoes between battle lines and barricades in different cities, representing a deep loathing of the AKP regime.

The AKP came to power cultivating an image of the "underdog" and promising a "just economic order" and development. Now the truth of this is clear in all its ugliness: an orgy of speculation,

profiteering, and cronyism, all done with the help of the state: huge construction projects such as Istanbul Canal (a new artificial Bosphorus), the Third Bridge or yet another "the biggest mosque ever" and many others. Not only are these projects aimed at enriching a handful of "pious AKP entrepreneurs," they are also ecological disasters that waste water resources, provoke land erosion and destruction of irreplaceable historic archeological treasures. An out-of-control mosque building program is masquerading as urban planning.

People are fed up with the regime's increasingly bellicose and arrogant swaggering in the region. They are glorifying, whitewashing and instrumentalizing the heritage of the Ottoman Empire. Foreign affairs minister Davutoglu's pseudo academic thesis about the importance of the Turkish state's "strategic depth" for governing the region in cahoots with the real masters of the region—the U.S. and European imperialists—represents their predatory aims and over-sized appetite. The fueling of sectarian reactionary civil war in Syria amply manifests this. And now they are coming to a cynical agreement with some Kurdish nationalist forces in order to chase after the reactionary regional ambitions of the Turkish ruling class and to stomp on the legitimate aspirations of the Kurdish people in the process.

Despite the public posturing of the prime minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan, with his dismissive tone laced with overt threats against the protesters, there are signs within his ruling party that a gnawing sense of being under siege is making itself felt. There is talk of breaking ranks with Erdogan's leadership in order to deal with the developing legitimacy crisis of the reign of the Islam-based traditionalist pro free-market AKP which has been in government for 11 years.



Protesting in front of the Brazilian National Congress in Brasilia, June 17.

Photo: AP

Add Brazil to the growing list of countries where people in their hundreds of thousands are rising up against longstanding inequalities and abuses. The protests in Brazil, Turkey, and elsewhere seemingly "come out of nowhere" but in fact arise out of deep fissures beneath the surface that suddenly burst into the open, shattering the notion that things can never change, that there is permanence to existing conditions under which the great majority of humanity suffers.

In Brazil, a "democratic" capitalist country, the population has long been portrayed as passive and contented. Not anymore. What began as a relatively small movement against increased transportation costs has burgeoned rapidly into a deep political crisis involving protests against high taxes, a deteriorating education system and other infrastructure, corruption in high places, and extravagant expenditures for new soccer stadiums for the World Cup that Brazil will host next year, while so many go hungry.

Many of these uprisings have been met by police batons, rubber bullets, and pepper spray. But the people, further infuriated that these attacks are occurring in a country run by a leftist government that claims to be "for the people," are fighting back, and all this is calling into question for millions in Brazil, as in Turkey and other countries, the legitimacy of the government and, among some protesters, the legitimacy of the economic and social order itself.