INTRODUCTION

Since the failed coup-attempt in July 2016, the Turkish Government has become increasingly authoritarian. It has waged a crackdown against political activists and public sector workers.

According to Amnesty International, 50,000 individuals were in pre-trial detention in 2017 on charges linked to Gulen membership. Nine parliamentarians of the opposition HDP party were in jail, including its two leaders. 100 journalists were also in pre-trial detention. Numerous human rights defenders were prosecuted on trumped-up charges, including the Chair and the Director of Amnesty International Turkey. Detainees have reported the use of torture and sexual violence in Turkish prisons.

Turkey is involved in a conflict with Kurdish PKK fighters and other Kurdish armed groups in the south-east of the country, which has at various times spilled over into neighboring Syria and Iraq. Turkey launched a military operation, “Olive Branch” in the Afrin region in northern Syria in January 2018. Up to 500 civilians were killed in the operation, and 150-300,000 mostly Kurdish civilians were displaced. Conflict between the SDF and Turkish and allied forces has continued despite the capture of Afrin.

UK ARMS TRADE WITH TURKEY

Over recent years, Turkey has been among the largest buyers of UK arms, with almost £750 million worth of military equipment having been licensed to the regime. UK government information shows that these licences include components for military helicopters, missiles and military vehicles.

In 2017 Theresa May became the first Western leader to visit President Erdogan since the crackdown began. She left having negotiated an agreement for the UK's biggest arms company, BAE Systems, to support a £100 million fighter jet deal.

These arms sales have given a great degree of political and military support to the Turkish authorities. The F-16 fighter planes used by Turkey to bomb Afrin include laser targeting systems produced by Leonardo in Edinburgh.

The UK Government's arms sales department, the Defence & Security Organisation (DSO), has identified Turkey as a “core market” for arms exports, despite the regime's increasingly authoritarian human rights record.

PROFILE: SOLIDARITY WITH THE PEOPLE OF TURKEY

Solidarity with People of Turkey (SPOT) is an umbrella group made up of activists, campaign groups and trade unions in the UK. SPOT aims to support those struggling for democracy and fundamental freedoms in Turkey, whilst also contributing to working people’s struggle in the UK.

Cover pic: Kurdish activists at Stop DSEI 2017, London / Credit: Paige Ofuso/CAAT
DELEGATIONS AT DSEI

A delegation from Turkey was invited to the last arms fair in 2017 and, as in most years including 2013 and 2015, attended as guests of Department for International Trade Defence & Security Organisation. As in previous years, Turkey also had its own pavilion space inside DSEI. This means that Turkish companies can exhibit their weapons and seek buyers. The Turkish Defence and Aerospace Industry Exporters’ Association (SSI), was the sole “International Partner” for DSEI 2015.

Turkish military delegations have also been invited to other major defence and security exhibitions in the UK. Most recently, Turkey was invited to Farnborough 2018 (which focuses on aircraft), and Security & Policing 2017 (which promotes weapons that can be used for internal repression).

WHAT YOU CAN DO

- Sign the petition to Stop DSEI at www.caat.org.uk/stop-dsei
- Join and share the Stop DSEI 2019 Facebook event
- Share our Stop DSEI 2019 video: find it on Youtube, Facebook and Twitter

stopthearmsfair.org.uk
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