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**COVID-19
PANDEMIC in
TURKEY
IMPLICATIONS ON THE
WORKING CLASS STRUGGLE**

COMMUNIST PARTY OF TURKEY
INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS BUREAU



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1. The Course of the COVID-19 Pandemic in Turkey

The COVID-19 was confirmed to have reached Turkey on **March 11, 2020**, after a person who had returned to Turkey from Europe, tested positive. The following day, March 12, the WHO declared the spread of the virus as a pandemic. The first death due to the disease in the country occurred on March 15, 2020 and by April 1, it was confirmed that it had spread all over Turkey.

On April 14, 2020, the Turkish Ministry of Health announced that the spread of the virus in Turkey reached its peak in the fourth week and started to slow down. As of May 30, 2020, the total number of confirmed cases in the country is over 163,000 of which 126,984 have recovered and 4,515 died. Turkey surpassed China in confirmed total cases on April 20, 2020, in the course of five weeks. The preliminary case-fatality rate remained lower in comparison to many European countries.

The discussions about the course and fatality mainly indicated a few factors: (i) country's relatively young population with a mean age of 29 and the percentage of over 65 being 9% (ii) seasonal advantage, as the virus hit the country in a relatively warmer period (iii) the experience and knowledge from other countries that were affected before (iv) high number of available intensive care units.

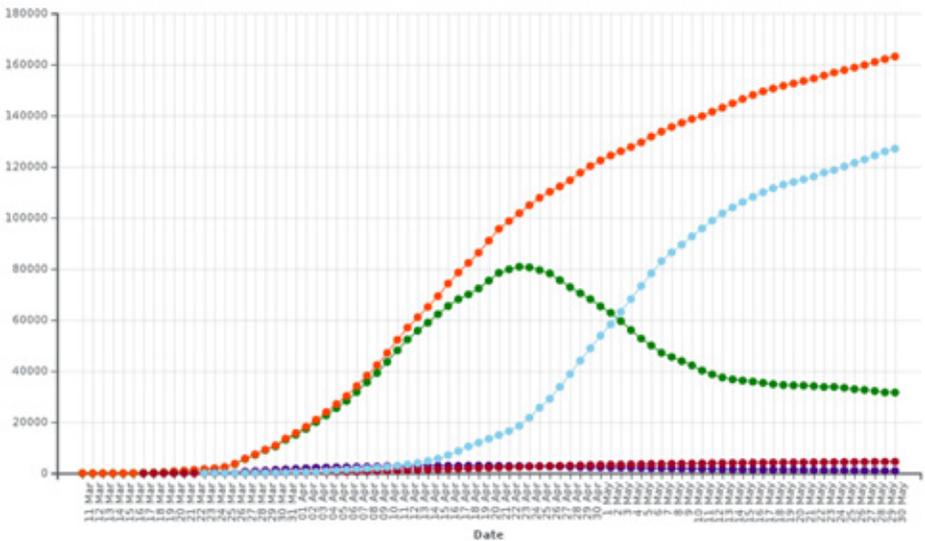
The chronology of the course of the pandemic and of the measures taken by the state is as follows: On January 10, 2020, the **Ministry of Health** set up the **Coronavirus Scientific Advisory Board** which consists of 26 members specialized in fields such as chest diseases, infectious diseases and clinical microbiology. The board was to work out the guidelines for the treatment by medicals and measures to be followed by the public, and to update them on the context of the disease's course in the country.

On March 12, 2020, the government spokesman İbrahim Kalın announced that all preschools, primary and high schools and universities in Turkey will be closed. On March 16, **the Turkish Directorate of Religious Affairs** announced a nationwide ban on prayer gatherings in mosques, including Friday prayers, due to the pandemic. Later that day, the Ministry of the Internal Affairs also sent a

notice on coronavirus precautions to the 81 cities of Turkey, temporarily closing all public gathering places such as cafes, gyms, internet cafés and movie theaters, except shops and restaurants not offering music, starting midnight the following day.

On March 21, the Ministry of Internal Affairs announced **a curfew for those who are over the age 65 or chronically ill**. On March 26, the President of the Council of Higher Education, Yekta Saraç, stated that there would be no face-to-face teaching at universities in the remainder of the spring semester, and that they would continue with online education only.

Total confirmed cases, ■ Active cases, ■ Active severe (ICU including intubated) cases, Total deaths, ■ Total recovered cases



On May 5, 2020, the Industry and Technology Minister Mustafa Varank stated that **on May 11, all the main automotive factories in the country will start to operate again**. One day later, the Minister of Health Fahrettin Koca spoke about the normalization process in Turkey. Describing the new phase with loosened restrictions as “controlled social life”, Koca stated that the outbreak in Turkey was now under control but the risk continues and that citizens should not avoid taking measures.

2. The government could not manage the health crisis

Since the report of the first case on March 11, and even before, the AKP government has been carrying out an example **of a severe management crisis** and incapacity in public administration, like all other bourgeois governments ruling capitalist countries. A major reason for the mismanagement of the crisis

was the fact that the Scientific Advisory Board acted as a passive organ and the decisions were taken in favor of the capitalist class, in many cases **contradicting with the input of the Board**. The Board was unable to demonstrate a committed attitude towards the health and wellbeing of the country's people and in this way **functioned as a legitimizing body** for the unjust decision of the government.

Below we list a few striking examples of this management crisis, that all resulted in preventable losses.

2.1. Travel bans

Until April, flight bans between Turkey and the countries that were most affected by the pandemic remained futile because flights continued with countries neighboring the latter. A striking case to remember took place in February when the AKP government mobilized **thousands of refugees to the Turkish-Greek border** for the sake of the Turkey-EU negotiations for a common stance on migrant policy. Thousands of people were piled up on the borderlines in the early days of the pandemic and still are remaining there as the most vulnerable ones against the disease.

2.2. Pilgrim visits

Probably the biggest factor that carried the virus in Turkey from abroad and spread it to different cities was (i) the approval of **thousands of pilgrims** to visit Saudi Arabia, when no case was reported in Turkey but was reported in Saudi Arabia, and (ii) the belated implication of quarantine upon their arrival on March 15. The inter-bureaucratic chaos that occurred the night they arrived showed that no preparation was ever made in advance to control and contain them.

2.3. Curfew decisions

While experts urge the need for an initial 14-day quarantine, the government found it sufficient to issue **2- to 4-day curfews covering weekends**. Moreover, because many sectors (industry in the first place) were exempted with special permissions granted by the government, those short containments remained far from efficiency.

2.4. Not enough testing

The government is seriously criticized due to the limited scope and number of tests. All along the crucial first weeks, the Ministry of Health reserved the tests **only for patients with a history of contact with someone coming from abroad**, when indigenous cases were already reported. The algorithms were amended days later. It was as late as on April 14 that coughing and fever entered test criteria. The total test number is still low in comparison to many other countries, which also casts doubts on the officially declared total case numbers.



2.5. Timing of “normalization”

The experts considered the timing of normalization too early, since by May 11, the daily numbers were still above 1000 cases. This decision was taken as the pressure from the capitalists of Turkey prevailed, aiming to stimulate the tourism sector and other sectors to restore their profit-making, as well as to restart the international trade – hence the timing was in parallel to the decision of European countries.

2.6. General amnesty amid pandemic

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Turkish parliament accepted **a highly controversial amnesty bill, which could enable the release of up to 100,000 prisoners**, including people convicted of manslaughter, violence against women and rape, swindle. Soon, the convicts of some catastrophic accidents (2014 Soma mine disaster, 2018 train crashes), where the AKP administration was also responsible, were released. However, this regulation excludes Turkey’s around 50,000 political prisoners, including journalists and human rights defenders, who are being prisoned despite the fact that overcrowding and unsanitary living conditions are already causing severe health threat.

3. The state of Turkey’s working class in the “pre-COVID-19 crisis” period

The capitalist classes in Turkey, have been experiencing delicate times in terms of securing their businesses for some time before the pandemic hit Turkey. The Turkish economy has been suffering an economic crisis since the



plunge of the value of Turkish lira and the surge in foreign currency debt in August 2018; and the AKP government has been regulating the markets and the economic institutions on a regular basis in order to provide incentives for the capitalists and facilitate their profits.

Those incentives and the measures to secure the capitalists have been reflected directly onto the labouring classes. The conditions of the working class in Turkey have been in a trend of deterioration both in terms of labour market indicators and the working conditions.

According to the labour statistics released on May 11, which is covering the first 13-weeks period including January, February and March 2020, by the Turkish Statistical Institute (TURKSTAT):

- *The unemployment rate realized as 13.6%*
- *The labour force participation rate realized as 49.9%*
- *The rate of unregistered employment realized as 30.0%*
- *The youth unemployment rate between aged 15-24 years realized as 24.4%*

These figures give an idea about the situation of the working class just before the COVID-19 pandemic. The main problem for the working class in Turkey has been **high levels of unemployment**, even if we take the restricted official figures, whose **methodology and accuracy is criticized for being biased and inadequate** by many. In order for us to reach the actual data for unemployment, we should add the persons defined as **“outside the labour force”** for they are not actively looking for a job; and the number of women who are kept at home as “housewives”. The sum of the unemployed people including these two categories had already reached **more than 18 million people** when the pandemic broke out.

Another significant issue emerging from the figures is **the deteriorating working conditions in the services sector**, which has become the dominant economic sector in term of employment for more than a decade. The **precarious and flexible work conditions, deunionization and poor wages** are some of the conditions that working people have been facing in all the sectors including the small-scale services sector.

Below you can find information about the general profile of the labour market regarding the key labour market indicators as supporting figures of the situation of the working class in Turkey just before the pandemic hit the country:

General Profile of Labour Force, February 2020						
Indicators	Number (Thousand)	(%)	Compared with the same period of the previous year			
			Difference (Thousand)	Change (%)		
Population (15+ age)	Population	62 110	100.0	1 018	1.7	
	Labour force	50 982	49.9	-1 102	-3.4	
	Employed	28 753	45.1	-902	-2.2	
	Unemployed	4 228	6.8	-502	-10.6	
	Not in labour force	31 137	50.1	2 120	7.3	
Sector	28 753	100.0	-902	-2.2		
	Agriculture	4 157	15.5	-530	-11.3	
	Industry	5 580	20.9	205	3.8	
	Construction	1 385	5.2	-83	-6.3	
	Services	15 609	58.3	-183	-1.2	
	Employment status	28 753	100.0	-902	-2.2	
		Regular or casual employee	19 700	70.2	30	0.2
		Employer	1 233	4.6	-8	-0.6
		Self employed	4 513	16.9	-236	-5.0
		Unpaid family worker	2 224	8.3	-395	-15.0
		Occupation	28 753	100.0	-902	-2.2
	Managers		1 526	5.7	52	4.2
	Professionals		3 331	12.5	225	7.2
	Technicians and associate professionals		1 582	5.9	-132	-7.7
	Clerical support workers		1 949	7.3	-41	-2.1
Service and sales workers	6 532		20.7	-48	-0.9	
Skilled agricultural, forestry and fishery workers	3 403		12.7	-413	-10.8	
Craft and related trades workers	3 433		12.9	-87	-2.5	
Plant and machine operators and assemblers	2 473		9.2	-83	-3.2	
Elementary occupations	3 525		13.2	-85	-2.4	
Duration of unemployment	4 228		100.0	-502	-10.6	
	1-2 months		1 381	32.7	-214	-13.4
	3-5 months	1 062	25.1	-294	-21.7	
	6-8 months	562	13.3	-101	-15.2	
	9-11 months	153	3.6	-36	-19.0	
	1 year and more	1 070	25.3	143	15.4	
	Status before seeking a job	4 228	100.0	-902	-10.6	
		Job was temporarily	1 723	40.8	-178	-9.3
		Dismissed	556	14.2	-33	-5.2
		Quit the job by own initiative	940	15.1	-83	-9.0
		Liquidated/retirap	221	5.2	-3	-1.3
Was working as unpaid family worker		15	0.4	5	50.0	
Retired		102	2.4	-30	-22.7	
Was in education or training		420	9.9	-70	-14.3	
Just completed his military service		95	2.2	-5	-5.0	
Rusty with household chores		335	7.9	-134	-28.6	
Other	77	1.8	8	8.5		
Previous economic activity	4 228	100.0	-902	-10.6		
	Agriculture	281	6.6	-38	-11.9	
	Industry	695	16.4	-111	-13.8	
	Construction	640	15.1	-198	-22.5	
	Services	2 156	52.0	-115	-5.0	
	Those who quitted job before the last 8 years	181	4.5	-8	-4.0	
	First time job seekers	222	5.3	-48	-17.2	
	The reason for not in labour force	31 137	100.0	2 120	7.3	
Not seeking a job but available to start		3 207	10.3	832	35.0	
Discouraged		1 107	3.6	488	78.3	
Other		2 100	6.7	348	19.7	
Seasonal worker		541	0.5	-1	-0.7	
Household chores		11 222	36.0	95	0.9	
Education/training		4 706	15.1	115	2.5	
Retired		6 056	18.2	222	4.6	
Disabled, older ill		4 332	13.9	359	8.5	
Other		2 473	7.9	520	26.6	

Source: Turkish Statistical Institute News Bulletin May 2020 covering 1st-13th weeks period including January, February and March 2020.

4. The COVID-19 pandemic reflections on the labour-capital conflict

4.1. Crisis opportunism

It is no mystery that throughout the history of capitalism, the bourgeoisie has always aspired to turn times of crises into opportunities. The global pandemic was no exception to this. In general terms, the COVID-19 pandemic and the following measures for safety had two main effects: Strengthening the already-existing tendencies of increasing the rates of exploitation and utilising the extraordinary situation as a means of legitimization for these attacks against the working class.

At the beginning, for the Turkish bourgeoisie, this **“crisis opportunism”** was far from a mystery—it was outspoken, blatant, and had an underlying dream of cross-border intentions. While the virus was spreading in China and officially—though retrospectively we have numerous signs that the virus had already arrived in Turkey back then—Turkey was still virus-free, Turkish business people were talking about how the **situation in China would open up new opportunities for the Turkish companies to increase their share in the global market** in various sectors. This inhumane cheering continued even until the virus hit Turkey and people started to die.

Since the confirmation of the first COVID-19 case, the AKP government followed a policy totally in favour of bosses. During the months when the pandemic has been escalating, all the measures and the precautions have become attempts to the detriment of the working class; government’s priority was minimizing the losses of company profits.

The outcome of this is disastrous: On the one hand, workers were forced to work under deteriorating conditions, crowded workplaces with inadequate COVID prevention measures. On the other, many people lost their jobs and income.

4.2. Deterioration of working conditions

Workers in the most vulnerable sectors like health, delivery services and transportation **could not receive protective and preventive material** against the COVID-19 infection. In many cases, they had to pay for masks and gloves or worked without any sufficient protection.

The production in the factories and workshops has almost never stopped during the lockdown days via **special warrants, privileges or overlooked illegal practices**. The office workers have been suffering long and intense working days through working online from home.

Governmental regulations for the economic sectors fully cover **incentives and facilitative rules for the bosses**. The total amount of the stimulation package of the government was announced as 522 billion Turkish liras. For a com-

parison, one can refer to about 5 billion Turkish liras distributed as compensation (1000 liras per month per family, provided only once, for about 5 million families up to now). According to the data announced by the Ministry of Family, Labour and Social Services, the total amount of aid provided by the Turkish government under the name of “unpaid leave”, “short-time work allowance” and “social relief” is only above 11 billion Turkish Liras (-\$1.6 billion).

4.3. Ban of union activities

During the pandemic, the government imposed a temporary suspension of union activities. Accordingly, the basic union rights of workers were confiscated. Unionization and collective agreement procedures were stopped. The **right to strike was also suspended**, which is until now not relieved. This functioned as a measure favoring the bosses and suppressing the organization of workers against worsening conditions or threats of unemployment.

4.4. Unemployment and poverty

The government **failed to announce a total lockdown**, mainly to ensure that the factories would continue to run.

Despite the production continued, the bosses took this opportunity to cut down labour costs: **Massive layoffs started**, with many companies taking advantage of the pandemic as an excuse to dismiss workers—in some cases, the layoffs were already planned beforehand. Large number of workers, especially those who have been employed **temporarily in the services sector** have lost jobs during pandemic.

Another aspect of this phase of attack against the working class was to compel the workers to take an “unpaid leave”, or, in cases of workplaces where that step would create trouble, their “paid leave”. This practice was promoted in a very populist way as being **“the ban for layoffs”**. However, both of these are illegal, according to Turkish laws. On other places forced annual leaves without the workers’ discretion and **forced resignation** have been applied as other sorts of relief for the bosses. Such practices were nation-wide, and the government did not do anything to stop it.

AKP passed a new legislation, which grants permission to the companies to **dismiss their workers for a period of time**, during which the government undertook paying the newly unemployed workers and it is unclear what happens after “the period” is over. This is called the **“short-time work allowance”**, only 39 liras (-\$5.7) per day, which is **half of** the already miserable **minimum wage**.

While the government sold this as if they were banning layoffs, the other parties in the parliament, including the social democratic opposition party, were saluting the decision as a favorable one. Under the pre-existing laws of labour, the companies had no right to dismiss workers without a reason. AKP government has used crisis conditions to legalise the right for the companies to dismiss their workers at will. Meanwhile, privatizations continued during the pandemic, which are mere attacks against labour through diminishing public ownership and deepening the foreign dependency of the country.

According to a report by the Turkish Union of Architects and Engineers (TM-MOB) in May 2020, the **unemployment arguably reached 16 million**, including the unemployed as well as those who are on unpaid leave, who are above 65 or between 15-17 and those who are employed in the informal sector.

4.5. Remote working, normalization and future

Recently, since the country has been proceeding into a “normalisation” period, more attacks are being announced by the AKP government, such as digital applications in order to monitor the workers’ daily activities under the guise of health measures amid the coronavirus pandemic and **exempting the COVID-19 infection that workers caught at workplaces from the list of occupational illnesses**. The Independent Industrialists’ and Businessmen’s Association (MÜSİAD), Turkey’s pro-government Islamic capitalist organization, received permission from the Ministries of Industry and Technology and of Environment and Urbanization for the establishment of **‘isolated production bases’** throughout the country, to avoid halting the production amid the COVID-19 pandemic, which are practically equal to labour camps.

While the vast majority of the working class was forced to go to work as if their lives did not matter, some sectors of the working class have **switched to home-office working**, which also ultimately resulted in increased exploitation. The companies ceased to assume the responsibility of paying for the transportation and meal of the employees, cutting down various cost items of the workplace and **transferring these costs to the workers** who have to heat their homes or spend electricity out of their own pockets. The alienating effect of this atomization of work for the employees, whose power comes from their ability to organise in their workplaces and fight for their rights in solidarity, will be seen in the near future. The romanticization of home-office workstyle is ongoing, as **many companies have declared their intention to continue this trend** after the outbreak is over.

The abovementioned attacks towards the working class and the direct impact of the COVID-19 has not yet been reflected in the figures. But sooner or later some concrete data will come up to figure out the dramatic impact of the crisis on the working class in Turkey. It is expected that the high unemployment rate will result in greater poverty. **The economic situation is unlikely to improve** in the short run.



5. The influence of reaction on the (mis)management of pandemic

5.1. The reactionary transformation of the health system

As AKP tried to recur its power in face of the management crisis, it appealed to religiosity. The Ministry of Health had turned into a base of the religious sect Menzil, loyal to Erdoğan, in replacing the members of the Gülen sect, the culprit of the 2016 coup attempt. The **commodification of the public health system was accompanied by the intensification of religious networks** and the impact of religious ideology in the system for several years. The promotion of pseudo-science in the form of traditional and complementary medicine, the opening up of spiritual consulting units in hospitals were some of its manifestations. In the same vein, reaction determined the management of the pandemic.

5.2. The role of Diyanet (The Directorate of Religious Affairs)

The first wave of cases came when the government let the pilgrims coming from Saudi Arabia return to their homes without supervision (see above). So it was not only an underestimation of the pandemic, but also the inviolability of a religious service that caused the first spread of the virus. When the entrance of the pandemic in the country was officially recognized and the human cost of the initial neglect became apparent, a religious discourse was assumed. The Directorate of Religious Affairs (Diyanet), which is known for its vast budget, extravagant expenses and powerful position in state affairs, declared that the **health care workers who lost their lives would be “martyrs”** (in terms of Islam) by default. It was an attempt to cover the inadequacy of the measures needed to protect health care workers.

5.3. The subservience of the Scientific Advisory Board

Even though the Scientific Advisory Board of the Ministry of Health seemed to have competence regarding the credentials of its participants, **it bore the big-otry penetrated in the health care system**: One of its members, the president of

the Association of Infections Diseases, stated that the virus had been “created by God to prevent people from overcrowding”. After this scandalous statement the legitimacy of the Committee was seriously questioned by the public opinion. On the other hand, this reactionary approach was supported by the Diyanet, which declared the virus as “a godly warning”. In total, the Scientific Advisory Board could not defend the implications of science and functioned with a passive advisory role with almost no weight in the decision-making.

5.4. Normalization and propagation of religious practice in public areas

The so-called normalization measures against the pandemic also served as a power play for AKP. The starting date of the extensive loosening of prohibitions would be June 1. It was directly linked with the need to revive the market economy, especially the service sector and tourism, but Erdoğan managed to make a nationalistic-religious demonstration out of this too. The first Friday prayer after the declaration of normalization was congregated in Hagia Sophia with an allusion to the conquest of Istanbul by the Ottoman Sultan Mehmet. **Public places such as school yards etc., which are not normally used for worshipping were used** for the Friday prayer as a part of this demonstration.

6. AKP government at an impasse : Increasing authoritarianism

AKP government has been losing ground since last year, due to the failure in domestic and foreign political policies, economic turbulence, as well as internal conflicts. AKP especially strove to use the pandemic to **restore the prestige it had lost over years**. Ungrounded populist discourses, political operations against the opposition, and provocatively fundamentalist statements from public figures are gaining pace and all serve to distract people’s concerns about the ongoing health and economic crisis.

One of the means that AKP used in order to regain control was a **national donation campaign**. On March 30, Erdoğan announced the campaign’s motto “We are self-sufficient” as an allusion to the incompetence of European countries and the US regarding the pandemic. Phone messages were repeatedly sent to citizens calling for donation and the amounts donated by corporations, banks, NGO’s, state departments were declared as a demonstration of loyalty to Erdoğan. On the other hand, the right of municipalities to collect donations was disrupted by the **government to curb the efforts of metropolitan cities where the municipalities** had passed from AKP to opposition parties in last year’s local elections. As the month of Ramadan coincided with the pandemic, the Directorate of Religious Affairs directed the traditional alms collection to the national donation campaign as an alternative to the efforts of oppositional municipality administrations.

AKP used the pandemic measures to suppress social solidarity, spread fear among people and to create submission to its authority. The **1st May demonstrations were banned with a curfew** on that day and a group of trade unionist, which intended to realize a symbolic ceremony in Taksim Square were attacked and arrested. During the partial curfews, there were many incidents where the police and AKP's new generation of officers "the watchmen" used **violence against innocent people** to generate intimidation. The amnesty law can also be interpreted as AKP's quest for support from the lumpen strata of the society in troublesome days.

The government tried to continue its foreign policy, such as the military and financial support for the Sarraj government in Libya, claims on Eastern Mediterranean and the operations in the northern Syria continued amid the situation of health emergency.

Despite these efforts, the national and international **support behind AKP is declining**. AKP was only able to provide fiscal support from Qatar to help bolster **depleted Turkish Central Bank reserves**, after being denied from many other countries including the US, the so-called "strategic partner" of AKP government.

7. COVID-19 and TKP

7.1. Political activities

Despite the lockdown, we were able to continue our political activities mainly through the local networks. "This social order must change" manifesto formed the political backbone of our statement and views throughout the pandemic. The main aim of the party was to address the frustration, neglect and exploitation of workers, to denounce the populist-nationalist rhetoric of the government concealing the conflicts that arose, to counter interclassist, reformist policies of the bourgeois opposition and to organize the working class to the ranks of socialist struggle. The Party continued to recruit members during the pandemic.

This social order must change, Turkey should become an example!

The epidemic has been the last straw. The existing social order entirely serves the interests of a small minority, and the basic needs, rights, and freedoms of the vast majority of society are neglected. Economic crises, wars have become part of everyday life, and problems such as unemployment and hunger have turned into a nightmare affecting hundreds of millions of people.

There is no good or bad version of this order; it cannot be cured. It is obvious that the US, defined as a superpower, and, France, Germany, England, Italy, which are blessed as European civilizations, have fallen during the last epidemic.

Turkey is also paying the price of not overthrowing this system of exploitation that produces reactionism, darkness, misogyny, and anti-scientism.



No time left. We should take the steps to get rid of this order that threatens humanity as a whole. We should make Turkey an example. TKP aspires to power to establish an egalitarian, fair, free social order. And in this order;

- 1. Nobody will exploit anyone.*
- 2. Unemployment will disappear.*
- 3. Health and education will be equal and free for all.*
- 4. The basic needs of the citizens, accommodation, water, heating, lighting, communication, and public transportation will be free of charge.*
- 5. The society will be organized, politics will cease to be an interest of a minority, and all citizens will participate in decision-making.*
- 6. Religion and state will be separated from each other.*
- 7. Thanks to the planned economy, the resources of the country will be used for the needs and development of the society; the country's industry will be strong and self-sufficient in agriculture, medicine, defense; foreign dependency in energy will be reduced.*
- 8. Turkey will be an independent, sovereign, peaceful, anti-imperialist country.*
- 9. All discrimination against women will come to an end, and equality of all citizens will be ensured.*
- 10. All kinds of support will be provided for scientific work, cultural activities and artistic creativity.*

When we throw parasitic exploitative classes off our shoulders, when we use the richness of our beautiful country for the whole society, not for personal interests, we easily realize these ten items. If you want such a country, join the ranks of the Communist Party of Turkey.

7.2. Solidarity actions

The Party has also raised **solidarity campaigns, in three levels**. A central financial solidarity campaign was launched to compensate for the expenses of the Party and also as a means of support for the party professionals. On a second level, regional and district organizations have run their local solidarity campaigns, in kind and cash, aiming to help and support comrades and friends who have lost their jobs or income. Finally, party members have also organized **solidarity actions in their neighbourhoods**, such as doing the shopping and covering the needs for the overaged, providing hygienic materials, producing masks in local tailors, etc. The **District Houses of TKP** were the centers of solidarity in all levels.

7.3. Consultation Bureau

Once it was confirmed that the virus is spreading and in our neighbor countries cases were reported, the **Central Committee decided to appoint a special Consultation Bureau**, which is formed by expert comrades and has worked throughout the pandemic period closely with the CC, providing regular information, evaluations and projections on the course of the pandemic in Turkey, and its impact on the working class and our ranks. The Consultation Bureau has also produced the **8 internal COVID-19 Bulletins**, informing party members about the infection, the personal hygiene rules, the precautions that should be taken at home, at workplaces and outer locations and other health issues, including when to go to a hospital and protection of mental health during lockdown. The **priority in the bulletins was given to the protection of the members' health**. The role of capitalism in the pandemic, other catastrophes caused by the pandemic, the progress of the pandemic in Turkey and the world, current information on research for treatment and vaccines were also provided in the bulletins.

The Consultation Bureau also controlled a special email account, specially created for the questions and consultation requests of the party members. The experts in the Bureau have provided information and **given advice to 130 applications**, including referrals to appropriate medical centers. These activities had a significant impact, fostering the sense of trust and respect and strengthening the internal bonds within the party.

7.4. Communication strategy

During the pandemic and lockdown, the publications were brought onto online channels. TKP's weekly newspaper **"Boyun Eğme" was published** and distributed online. We focused more on the production of audio and video publications to reach wide masses and to share our views on the management of the pandemic. Thousands of people joined our interactive video interviews and programs on special days, such as the May Day and the **Victory Day. Internal communication was continued** by means of bulletins and circulars, informing

the party members about the course of developments and the actions that the Party would take.

7.5. Labour Center

TKP Labour Center analyzed the economic and social developments before and during the pandemic, providing a Marxist analysis of the economic measures taken by Turkish government and other governments. The **falsification of labour and employment statistics** and the unconstitutional actions taken by the government were uncovered by the work of Labour Center. It published a comprehensive document about the legislation on workers's rights during the pandemic and provided them with the necessary information to defend their rights.

7.6. Youth

Following the closure of schools and universities, many students had to go back to their hometowns. TKG has enrolled in weekly **online educational activities and discussions** to keep the communication between members and friends. The broadcasts of online Socialism Classes helped TKG in meeting numerous youngsters and in organizing the enthusiasm towards TKG. Demands for proper education and exams were prominent, as the education system of Turkey failed to cover the needs of students on a remote basis.

7.7. The Academy of Science and Enlightenment

The Academy of Science and Enlightenment, which is initiated by the Communist Party of Turkey, functioned to inform the public and make the necessary warnings for public health. It issued **several reports between January and April of 2020**. These reports served to inform the public correctly against the infollution, especially during the initial phase of the pandemic. Activities of the Academy focused on pointing at capitalism's despair against the pandemic and that certain decisions of the government served the interests of the capitalist class. The Academy demanded that necessary measures should be taken to protect the public health.

The reports covered information on the characteristics of the novel coronavirus and research on potential treatment alternatives, shared evaluations on the pandemic management of the WHO, the example of China and other countries and discussed the shortcomings of Turkey's pandemic management from a public health perspective.

Apart from the reports, the Academy issued **statements on necessary urgent public health implementations**, needs of health workers etc. In one important statement, **it demanded the resignation of the scientific advisory board** appointed by the President, as it turned into an apparatus of the government, while it should function as an autonomous committee.



8. PE Network

The PE Network that was founded after our 2018 Conference has now reached many sectors. Workplace committees and sectoral solidarity networks were built in different sectors; namely **education, textile, retail, banking, construction, tourism and so forth**.

PE Network was able to address the problems of workers, the salaries that are not paid on time, the poor conditions they are forced to, etc. by means of reports from the actual workplaces. Especially in highly privatized sectors where the exploitation is much deeper, workers are sending notices, photos, news to the channels of PE Network. These are displayed and denounced on the website of PE Network, on social media, on local and national news outlets. Workplace committees would then bring the organized struggle forward, receiving full or partial concessions from the bosses.

During the pandemic, the **PE Network** received hundreds of notices from all around the country and worked almost as **a hub of labour news**. One example is the situation of the underground construction workers in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, which is run by Doğuş Group, one of the largest conglomerates in Turkey that has been receiving large support and subsidies from Erdoğan. The workers in the construction site couldn't receive their salaries for the past 4 months, and the company tried to negotiate with the workers, so as to grant them the tickets back to Turkey if they would refrain from their rights. When they reached PE Network complaining about this unfair deal, PE Construction Workers Committee contacted their families back in Turkey and released their video messages. This action resulted in the company to take a step back and grant the return tickets to the workers. PE Committees were also established among **delivery, private school and shopping mall workers** where bosses abused the pandemic conditions.

**COMMUNIST PARTY OF TURKEY
INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS BUREAU**

