

On 10th October 2015, KESK (Confederation of Public Workers' Unions), DİSK (Confederation of Progressive Trade Unions of Turkey), TTB (Turkish Medical Association) and TMMOB (Union of Chambers of Turkish Engineers and Architects) have called upon numerous NGOs, civil society organisations, political parties and citizens to join in the rally for Labour, Democracy and Peace. The organisation committee for the rally applied to the Ankara Governorship, obtained the necessary permissions and informed the governorship of how the demonstration would be held. Accordingly, the demonstrators from Ankara and other cities would gather in front of the Ankara central train station and participate in a procession towards Sıhhiye Square around 10:00 o'clock. The meeting would start once all demonstrators reached Sıhhiye Square. The organisation committee was given no information whatsoever by the Security Forces of an imminent threat of an attack before blasts.

As the crime scene investigation was being performed, it was understood from the statements of various eyewitnesses that intelligence had been communicated in the morning hours to the military guest-houses and that the guests were not allowed to enter the military guest-houses. It was also understood from talks with the police at the scene that there had been general intelligence and that various operations had been conducted in the morning hours. According to the information from those gathered at the scene, no security measures had been taken whatsoever in or around the area of the rally and the traffic had continued to flow until the procession started. While more than 30.000 people were expected to participate meeting, the number of ambulances was just four in the area.

Twin bombs ripped through protesters just before the beginning of the Labor, Peace and Democracy Rally at 10:04 in front of Ankara's Train Station, killing at least 106 people and wounding hundreds more. Eyewitnesses have stated that both blasts occurred in the middle of the crowd and that neither of the bombs was attached to any fixed structure. Eyewitnesses have also stated that the blasts were caused by two suicide bombers. Indeed, during the investigation along the street, it was observed that the ground on which the blasts took place had not been destroyed and that the device had been detonated approximately one meter above the ground, attached to a body. The information given by the expert police as the crime scene investigation was continuing show that there are similarities to the blast that occurred in Sıruç in terms of the way the bomb was detonated and its mechanism.

Those killed included members of the Democratic Regions Party (DBP), the Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP), the Republican People's Party (CHP), the People's Houses (Halkevleri), the Party of Labor (EMEP) and the Socialist Party of Refoundation (SYKP), KESK members, newly builded Building Workers Union, among others.

Police were absent before the explosion, but appeared immediately after the blasts with a water cannon, indiscriminately firing tear gas at the dead and dying. The health employees and workers from SES (The Trade Union of Public Employees in Health and Social Services), TTB (Turkish Doctors Association), and Dev Sağlık-İş (Trade Union of Health Workers) were able to treat victims before the arrival of ambulances thanks to the quick thinking of the crowd, which avoided a possible stampede. As medical intervention was being offered to the injured, a crowd of riot police approaching from the direction of Sıhhiye intervened with tear

gas and water cannon thereby preventing the health workers from delivering first aid (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Uo6U1GUEqw4&list=PLCtnTTaKnWdyLHMI-pxI5zxAWoOrd-UbM&index=5>).

As the crime scene investigation was ongoing, it was found out from the Chief Public Prosecutor himself that many of the people admitted to the hospital were critically wounded and that 17 people had died on the way or immediately after they had been admitted to the hospital. The police attack both created difficulties for those who were injured in the blast and destroyed evidence. A large majority of the injured wrapped in banners were carried to hospitals in private vehicles. The group of people trying to move away from the scene were attacked with truncheons by the police positioned along the street, giving rise to commotion. The scene of the crime was surrounded and contained by the surviving demonstrators themselves who stood along the lines and refused to leave their friends who were lying on the ground.

At the time when more ambulances started to arrive at the scene (around 10:30), a group of riot police approaching from the direction of Tandoğan ran towards the area where the bodies were lying and delayed the arrival of the ambulances by blocking the only road that allowed access to the scene. The demonstrators reacted and had the police move back and ensured that the road was opened to access (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iHoRkX92r2Q&list=PLCtnTTaKnWdyLHMI-pxI5zxAWoOrd-UbM&index=4>).

Ambulances and police raced toward the scene in the wake of the bombings, with officers twice firing gas at the crowd when they arrived with a TOMA, prompting a chorus of boos and chants of “Murderer Erdoğan.” The organizing committee soon canceled the remainder of the rally, with demonstrators from outside Ankara being ushered to their buses with a security cordon established by other activists.

After the injured had been removed, police began to wander about the area, despite the absence of the prosecutor and while still refusing to permit the entrance of lawyers, leading the latter to accuse officers of hampering the effective collection of evidence. The bodies of the dead were removed at 15.15 following an examination by Ankara’s CSI team.

Right to Live and Right to Peaceful Assembly:

The right to life and the right to peaceful assembly were severely violated during the ‘Ankara Labour Democracy and Peace Rally on 10 October 2015’. According to the ECtHR, States have two kinds of obligations, namely negative and positive obligations. The negative obligation of the state is to refrain from violating rights. Its positive obligation is to take measures and protect the people. The State has failed to perform its obligation to prevent the grave violation of the right to life. The State has failed to adopt the intelligence measures that it should have adopted. Even if the state has obtained intelligence and notified the units responsible for prevention, these units have failed to perform their duties. Similarly, even

though it was known days ago that thousands of people from across Turkey would travel to Ankara and gather at the Ankara train station to start a procession at 10:00 o'clock, the state has taken no measures whatsoever in the area where people would gather and start the procession (in front of the train station and along the roads leading to the train station). The Minister for Interior has stated that security measures (e.g. body searches) had been taken for the area in which the rally would take place and that no measure had therefore been taken in the front of the train station.

Similar violations occurred during the public meeting in Diyarbakır at which the HDP President Selahattin Demirtaş planned to give a speech and during the press statement in Suruç which ended in a massacre. The attitude of the state in these events, where dozens of people were killed, was similar to its attitude towards the October 10th massacre. This attitude of the state is unacceptable with regard to the right to life. The public authorities have failed to take the adequate and necessary measures in terms of protecting the right to life.

The same attitude is observed with respect to the freedom of peaceful assembly. The Ministries of Interior and Justice, the Governor and Directorate for Security are of the opinion that the freedom of peaceful assembly is restricted to the location in which the rally was planned to take place. The responsibilities of public officials cannot be limited to only the rally area in terms of both general principles and the characteristics of the freedom of peaceful assembly. The positive obligations with respect to the freedom of peaceful assembly have not been met. Forces outside of the public authorities have violently prevented the freedom of citizens to take part in a peaceful assembly. The public authorities have failed to take the adequate, necessary and effective measures to prevent the acts aiming to violate the right to life and to obstruct the freedom of peaceful assembly.

The Trade Union of Public Employees in Health and Social Services