

YES Summer Camp 2013 Statement on the current situation in Turkey

(14-21 July 2013, Foça, Turkey)



In light of the Gezi Park protests which started in Istanbul and spread all around Turkey, it is very meaningful that the YES Summer Camp took place in Turkey in 2013. The Turkish society showed such a strong and clear reaction to their government, which has been imposing a lifestyle on its people via restrictions and through its control over the media and state instruments. The whole world understands the fact that Turkish people would never accept a conservative government acting in an authoritarian manner.

As nature has been systematically destroyed for economic profit in the last years in Turkey, and as every citizen has a right to green public space, the destructive project centered on the Gezi Park which is situated in Taksim- the most important and central square in Istanbul – has become the symbol of the growing unrest in society due to all the anti-democratic actions and violations of fundamental human rights and liberties carried out by the AKP government throughout the years. According to the government, the Gezi Park protests were only about “three or five trees” which were cut down and the reaction was an exaggeration. However, it was actually a protest of a people standing against oppression and raising their voice to demand “to live one and free as a tree, and in brotherhood as a forest”, as the great Turkish poet Nazim Hikmet mentioned in his lines years ago.

These demands were ignored and suppressed by extreme police violence by the government, which caused five people to lose their lives, with dozens more losing their eyes or being heavily injured, and hundreds more taken into custody; nonetheless, the protesters never gave up their peaceful way of protesting, which was at the same time full of humour. In spite of the blindness of the mainstream media, the people created their own communication networks via social media and the few independent TV channels and newspapers.

By raising their voice, the Turkish people underlined that they want to live in a secular, democratic state of law and that they refused to obey a leader who ignores the democratic values. They refused to be part of dirty, imperialist wars in the Middle East. They refused the oppression of protesters of different ideologies and professions. They refused the political processes in which the members of government can easily give directions to prosecutors and judges supposed to be independent. They refused the unlawful methods like the use of evidence fabricated by the police after the arrest of suspects. They refused long detention periods. They refused to live in a country where the journalists, students and protesters from different professions can be sent to jail without being given a chance to present a defense, though they are might be totally innocent. They refused to have a prime minister dictating to them what they should wear or drink, how many children they should have, whether they should have the right of abortion and which lifestyle is correct and appropriate for them. They refused the restrictions in social life. They refused losing the heritage of the Ataturk Revolutions by becoming a theocratic state instead of a secular and democratic one. They refused the destruction of green public space, accessible to all and for the social benefit in livable cities. They refused corruption and the plundering of the national treasury by AKP partisans. They refused the restriction of the rights of speech, association and the rights to demonstrate and resist against pressure. They refused to be slaves of neo-liberal economic politics. In short, they want the rule of law in a democratic society. The lack of democracy in Turkey is not a new phenomenon which we are observing and experiencing just right now. For decades the Turkish government has had the policy of using police violence against any protest, different opinions and different groups such as the Kurds, Armenians and Assyrians.

The Turkish people have been standing up for freedom in spite of extreme police violence, tear gas and they have showed that they will never give up their democratic demands. The resistance will go on until the day of victory.

Young European Socialists (YES) supports their CHP comrades in Turkey in their fight for more democracy. To stay in solidarity with their cause the participants of YES Summer Camp 2013 organized a protest in the center of Foca calling for peaceful development of the required political changes.

Hasta la victoria siempre!