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Collective Position of Comrades
Notes on the struggle against the extradition of Kenan Ayaz
23/07/2023

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The text below is a slightly supplemented version of the collective positioning of comrades that took place at the event “Open evaluation of the 2022-23 Struggles” at the ”Aeriko” social space on 23/7/2023, in Cyprus. It is critically commenting on the anarchist solidarity campaign in support of Kurdish activist Kenan Ayaz, who was arrested by Cypriot authorities and was eventually extradited to Germany to be tried there for his political activities. The original version of the text was in Greek, the text below is a translation made available on the Cyprus Movements Archive.

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The text below is a slightly supplemented version of the collective positioning of comrades that took place at the event “Open evaluation of the 2022-23 Struggles” at the ”Aeriko” social space on 23/7/2023. It was supplemented with some introductory comments and some clarifications on points 1 and 2 which were not read at the event due to time constraints. We are publishing it as we thought it was worth reading and worthwhile, without necessarily expressing our view on the subject.

The case of Kenan was first made public by the Kurds’ own struggles and by reports in some media. During its course it was framed by various political parties, and especially after Kenan’s hunger strike the case gained a lot of traction in Cyprus. All major media had reports and the government was prompted to make statements. This turn of events was not at all a foregone course and we believe that the mobilisations, not only from the anti-authoritarian and extra-parliamentary left - i.e. the political space where we operate - but from the people in solidarity with

Kenan as a whole, was an important reason why the "Kenan case" took such a big dimension.

As for our "space" in these mobilisations, we believe that it played an important role, both in propaganda and in supporting the Kurdish community. It was a struggle that had reflexes, managed to gain significant massiveness, to the extent that, without becoming a "tail" of other political spaces and parties, it carried out marches and actions with its own forces. It actively supported the hunger strike and from the beginning it came into contact with the organised Kurdish community (Theophilos Georgiades Cultural Centre), co-organising various protests and actions. In today's report, we want to say a few things about the general political significance of the "Kenan case" and make some observations about the struggle that was fought.

1) The first thing to note about the "Kenan case" is that **the essence of Kenan's extradition to Germany is not, as presented by the Cypriot government,[1] a criminal issue but a political issue.** This can be easily understood by the public because he did not commit a crime and therefore the public can easily understand the political nature of the law in this particular case. It goes without saying that the mobilisations, despite the negative outcome of the struggle, succeeded in registering in our collective memory that the Republic of Cyprus backed the extradition of a man with political asylum because he was accused of being a terrorist, with the mobilisations contributing to overcoming the depoliticisation and neutrality of the case.

2) The second important point about the "Kenan case" is that **it is not only a Cypriot/local political case but has global dimensions.** There is a "from-above" internationalisation of the issue that places the "Kenan case" beyond the borders of "our country", as it involves other states (Germany, Turkey), transnational alliances (EU, NATO) but also the Kurdish people and their movements. Therefore, this struggle should not only be judged by the limits and weaknesses of the local mobilizations towards the gov-

ernment, but other factors and shortcomings that led us to the negative event of extradition should also be taken into account.

We should clarify here that when we say that it is an issue beyond the borders of "our country", we do not mean that it is simply an issue between imperialist countries and therefore that any mobilisation is pointless. Nor do we mean that the Republic of Cyprus is not complicit because it is a small state and cannot play a role, and is therefore not responsible. The Republic of Cyprus, like any state, is forced first and foremost to legitimise itself in the minds of its citizens and to maintain internal capitalist peace. The external pressures of powerful states play a role, but they are secondary to the social and class antagonism within each state. However, since the ideological identifications and interests of the majority of the Greek Cypriots cannot lead to such a degree of conflict with the state that the issue can be prevented, and since the issue takes on international dimensions in itself, we must at least in retrospect identify the objective difficulties of this struggle that was fought.

3) The third point we want to add is that **Kenan's case is a political case, but it has multiple ideological dimensions.** In Kenan's case, apart from the injustice done to him since he is accused without evidence of terrorism, the "Kurdish issue" and the international "policy of repression and security" on Cypriot territory are involved at the same time.

a. Kenan Ayaz and the Kurdish issue

The involvement of the Kurdish question in the Kenan case was one of the reasons that mobilized people from different political spheres to join the struggle. It involved ordinary human rights supporters, communists and anarchists who felt political and ideological identification with the PKK or the Democratic Confederation in Rojava, or even saw in Kenan the attack of imperialist states (Turkey, Germany, even NATO) against the Kurdish people themselves. It also mobilized "alternative rightists", conservatives and ordinary people who identified with Kenan's struggle as a struggle

against “evil Turkey” or even from a specific form of logic: “Kurds have no homeland and are wronged”.

In our opinion, Kenan’s support from across the political spectrum shows that all parts of the spectrum have something in common: the homeland. Multiethnic or Kurdish, centralized or decentralized, in cooperation or in conflict with the other four states in which Kurds reside, all these versions of the homeland were the ones that mobilized this ideologically unconnected world to see in Kenan’s face, beyond political injustice, a national injustice - a connection to the national imaginary of the people of Kurdistan.

Combined with the fact that anti-Turkism is the dominant ideology of the Greek Cypriot state, the issue has often become confused and instead of expressing a “solidarity among the oppressed” against oppressors everywhere, a common struggle against evil Turkey has been expressed. Kenan’s own interview with Philelefheros **[2]** contributed to this confusion, and at least for the political space in which we move, there was a confusion about the political context in which we were fighting.

While our own space put specific content into the struggle, (Kenan = criticism of the state, women’s liberation, ecology, etc.), the references that *“any decision against Kenan can be turned against all Kurds and Kurdish people”* and that *“the extradition of Kenan Ayaz is a real international conspiracy in the context of the 1999 extradition of Ocalan by the Greek state to the Turkish [state]”* **[3]** could not help but indirectly go along with the dominant national discourse that sees the evil Turkey behind all the evils of our nation. When, along with various other things, you go out to society and invite it to take a stand with slogans like “either with the Kurds or with Turkey and its partners”, in the final analysis, references to the social and resistance characteristics of the Kurdish struggle are masked in the face of the national opposition of the Kurds vs. Turkey.

Of course, not to be unfair, the slogan “Kenan Ayaz is one of us”, which was the central banner of the *Solidarity Assembly for Kenan*

It can be found through scrolling here: https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100092262262720

[5] *"Terrorism knows no borders, is not limited to local or national contexts, but is a universal, multifaceted and multiform phenomenon, with socio-political and religious implications, directly and catalytically affecting the healthy foundations of any liberal democratic society.* ***Terrorism is not a phenomenon of the last fifteen years. However, the terrorist attacks, culminating in the 11 September 2001 attacks in the USA, have radically changed the criteria for tolerance and led to decisive action against terrorism. Its subsequent rapid expansion in many countries of the world suggests the development of a new kind of "war" based on the concept of "asymmetric threat", i.e. conflict without rules, with one of the two "camps" being invisible, omnipresent, striking blindly, uncontrollably, unannounced and destructively."***

Excerpt from the *"Address by Chief of Police Mr. Zacharias Chrysostomou at the Cyprus International Police Conference "Anti-Terrorism Policy for Law Enforcement Authorities: International and Comparative Approaches", "Filoxenia" Conference Centre, 16-17 June, 2016.*

Source: https://www.police.gov.cy/police/policearchive.nsf/All/516FAE315BCD0D10C2258522003D8BA4?OpenDocument

Ayaz when we were on the street, did not focus on opposition to Turkey but on the fact that Kenan is one of us who is hostile to capitalism and the state. The slogan itself, of course, focused on the fact that we identify ideologically with Kenan **[4]** and not on the fact that he is one of us oppressed people who is criminalized because of his political activity. It is one thing to ideologically identify with someone in order to support them, and another to be satisfied with the fact that their situatuon is one that you can find yourself in, if you dare to challenge the monopoly of violence, i.e. the state apparatus.

At this point we should also mention a concern regarding our ideological identification and relationship with the organised Kurds. As we know, there is an ongoing connection and cooperation with fascist groups based around EFEN, EFAEFP and until recently DRASIS, a traditional pole of the extreme right. The cultural centre in Limassol has been named in honour of the nationalist Theophilos Georgiades. This relationship has been dubbed opportunistic or strategic, but it is a reality that we can in no way ignore or overlook, nor can we accept, without this negating our political support for the struggle of Kenan. At the same time, we have seen anti-Turkism accepted somewhat uncritically through certain slogans such as 'fascist Turkey'. Our problem is not the Turkish state in particular, but the states in general and the system they maintain. Especially in a society like Cyprus where anti-Turkism and nationalism are part of our normality, we have to be careful.

b. Kenan Ayaz and the politics of repression and security

Returning to the struggle of Kenan, we want to put into context the other ideological connection to the Kenan case, that of the politics of repression and security. By this we mean the gradual permanence of the regimes of exclusion, all those exceptions to the democratic and constitutional rights granted by the state-father and which are increasingly being taken away in the name of security.

This policy, whose starting point, we can mention as the attack on the twin towers **[5]**, takes roughly two directions: On the one hand, harsh anti-terrorist laws, policies to manage migrant populations, police policies to save the economy and health; in other words, in the name of security, a warlike management of the masses by the state, taking away the freedoms and constitutional rights it grants us. On the other hand, a biopolitics of registration, surveillance and control of our bodies is applied with biometric ID cards, cameras in public spaces, certificates of legitimacy (see Safe pass), in order to prevent any possible refusal to the imposition of capitalist order and security.

In this context, we support Kenan as a political activist who is arbitrarily accused of terrorism by the German state, without identifying with his political views or with the Kurdish movement. The criminalization of political speech and action, (inter)state authoritarianism and situations of deviation (or exception) from pseudo-democratic rights are becoming more and more frequent and in this context we participated in the actions for Kenan's release. That is, apart from the obvious injustice done against Kenan himself, we believe that the struggle against his extradition has great political significance in Cyprus and globally as a struggle against the "laws against terrorism", against the imposition of the international capitalist doctrine of "order and security" that tells you that if you challenge it, you will be hunted down wherever you are in the world.

We do not want to overlook the fact that certain states like Germany or Turkey are practicing this policy of terror that we mentioned, but we think that we should not see "evil Turkey", or even "evil NATO", behind it, because all states (even the Cypriot state) have as a priority the protection of capitalist peace, regardless of whether this policy is currently expressed more directly by the Turkish state. **In short, the problem is not the Turkish state but the state form in general.** But the Kurds themselves do not have to see the problem in the same way for us to support them. From this point of view, "Kenan is one of us" regardless of whether

or not he sees EOKA in a positive light and regardless of whether the "Theophilos" Cultural Center has some connections with parties and individuals that we do not like very much.

Collective Position of Comrades, 23/7/2023

References

[1] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s8GhjuzBI8g

[2] https://www.philenews.com/kipros/koinonia/article/1315919/kenan-agias-ston-f-perno-dinami-apo-eoka-ke-theofilo-2/

[3] Excerpt from the announcement of the Assembly of Solidarity with Kenan Ayaz on 12 May entitled: *"REPUBLIC OF CYPRUS AGAINST KENAN AYAZ:*

A moment of fascist war against the Kurdish people and the international movement" reads as follows:

"In Kenan Ayaz, the Kurdish Freedom Movement is on trial, because any decision against Kenan can be turned against all Kurds, since the least a people facing genocide can do is to speak their language, observe their customs and become politically conscious. This particular decision can be turned against everyone especially due to the fact that there is not a single piece of evidence of Kenan's involvement in armed action."

It can be found through scrolling here: https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100092262262720

[4] Excerpt from the announcement of the *Assembly of solidarity with Kenan Ayaz* on 12 May entitled: *""REPUBLIC OF CYPRUS AGAINST KENAN AYAZ:*

A moment of fascist war against the Kurdish people and the international movement" reads as follows:

"In Kenan Ayaz, however, socialism, communism, anti-capitalism, criticism of the nation-state, the promotion of social self-defence, women's liberation and ecology are also on trial, so we are all on trial."