

International demonstrations support Egyptian revolution

By Robert Stevens
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Up to 2,000 people demonstrated in London on Saturday in solidarity with the Egyptian revolution. The demonstration assembled at the US Embassy in Grosvenor Square and marched for about an hour to the Egyptian Embassy. The protest was part of a day of international solidarity actions in support of the Egyptian masses.

On Friday, demonstrations were held in a number of other European cities, including Berlin, Paris and Madrid. In the French capital, the Reporters Without Borders organisation gathered at the Egyptian embassy to demand an end to attacks on journalists by plainclothes police and thugs.

On Saturday, protests were held in Paris and Vienna in Europe; New York, Washington, Los Angeles, New Orleans, Seattle, Atlanta and Calgary in North America; and Tokyo in Japan. Up to 4,000 people marched in Paris from the Republique Square to La Madeleine in support of the Egyptian masses. Among the slogans chanted were “Down with Mubarak” and “The people want the fall of the regime”.

In Vienna, around 300 protested in the main city square, the Stephansplatz. According to the Demotix web site, they were joined by protesters who had also demanded the fall of the Ben Ali Tunisian government in January.

In New York, demonstrators protested outside the United Nations building. In Los Angeles, protesters rallied outside the Federal Building, with some carrying banners demanding an end of US aid to the Mubarak regime. Several hundred demonstrated in Tokyo.

In Australia, up to 200 people, mostly of Egyptian and Arabic backgrounds, gathered outside the US embassy in Sydney on Sunday to demonstrate their support for the protestors in Egypt. Demonstrations

have also taken place in Canberra and other Australian cities over the past two weeks.

In the West Bank city of Ramallah, an afternoon rally was forcibly disbanded by Palestinian Authority (PA) forces, which have banned anti-Mubarak demonstrations in the name of blocking “illegal and unlicensed gatherings that could create a state of chaos.” Meanwhile, the PA has organised pro-Mubarak demonstrations.

The London demonstration was called by the Stop the War Coalition (STWC) and the Palestinian Solidarity Campaign. Marchers were met at the Egyptian Embassy by a group of several hundred mainly Egyptian protesters already demonstrating to demand the end of the Mubarak regime. Protests outside the embassy have been ongoing during the last week.

In what can only be described as deliberate provocation, the police guided what was a nearby, separate protest by Hizb ut-Tahrir—a right-wing Islamist organisation—to the front of the main demonstration as it arrived at the Embassy. This was clearly an attempt to falsely associate the anti-Mubarak march with the theocratic organisation’s call for an Islamic empire throughout the Middle East. This effort provoked protests from those on the STWC march.

While workers and young people came to the protest to express their solidarity with the Egyptian struggle, they were given no lead by the political organisations that called the demonstration. Called under the slogan, “Solidarity with the Egyptian People—Freedom for the Middle East”, the STWC rally was addressed by the long-time political opportunist and adviser to the Pakistani ruling elite, Tariq Ali. Also speaking was John Rees, an STWC officer and a former leader of the Socialist Workers Party (SWP) until his resignation last year, and Judith Orr, the editor of the SWP’s

newspaper. The latter two recently spent time in Cairo.

Whilst formally declaring their support for the millions protesting in Egypt, the STWC put forward a purely pro-capitalist programme centred on appeals to the British and other Western governments to help unseat Mubarak. The protest, the STWC stated, would send “a message to our own government that it needs to call for Hosni Mubarak to leave office immediately”.

Established in the aftermath of the 9/11 terrorist attacks in the US, the STWC, comprised largely of the SWP, the Muslim Association of Britain and the Stalinist Communist Party of Britain, has opposed any independent mobilisation of the working class against the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. None of these organisations have any independence from the political establishment.

In a filmed interview prior to the demonstration, Rees cited approvingly the comments of Prime Minister David Cameron, saying, “I don’t think I’ve ever heard a British Prime Minister make so direct an undisguised attack on another head of state as David Cameron did. So I think the international community are now saying look we have vital interests in this part of the world. We cannot have a full-blown revolutionary process taking place. We want the lid put back on this as soon as a possible and we think that means you’ve got to go. So the pressure is definitely building up both domestically and internationally on Mubarak.”

Rees made no critique of the pro-capitalist opposition leader Mohamed ElBaradei or the Muslim Brotherhood, claiming the latter, which has played no role in the mobilisation of mass opposition, had a “base predominantly among poor people”.

Explicitly ruling out any suggestion that the working class should seize the initiative and advance its own socialist solution to the crisis, Rees said, “it’s too early to say who will benefit most from the fall of Mubarak at the moment. Once Mubarak, goes I think there will be process of political sorting and debate and argument characteristic of revolutions where people will try to sort out which currents they want to back, who they trust, who they would like to see represent them.”

The STWC speakers put forward nothing more than a glorification of Arab nationalism, which has completely failed to free the Arab people from imperialist oppression. Tariq Ali was profuse in his praise for an “Arab renaissance” and praised the “Arab

nation that has come alive again”. He sought to sow illusions in the bourgeois opposition movement in Egypt, claiming it could carry out progressive measures if it came to power. Ali said the “first thing a post-Mubarak government will have to do is end the siege of Gaza.”

Another speaker, Bernard Regan, from the Palestine Solidarity Campaign, said he was bringing greetings from the southeast region of the Trades Union Congress representing some 3 million workers. Regan said the revolution in Egypt showed the “capacity of people to organise themselves and take control of their own country. In that the trade unions are playing a key role,” he claimed.

This is a bald-faced lie. The official Egyptian trade unions have been and remain steadfast supporters of the hated Mubarak regime. As the mass movement began, the chairman of the Egyptian Trade Union Federation, Hussein Mogawer, called on all trade union presidents “to prevent workers from participating in all demonstrations at this time.” According to the *Al Masry Al Youm* web site, Mogawer instructed officials to inform him round the clock of any moves or attempts by workers to join the protests.

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