

Iran: Support for the “Woman, Life, Freedom” Uprising – No to Executions ! (Solidarity statement)

This solidarity appeal and the initial signatories, that include members of the French National Assembly and the European Parliament, was originally published on 20 January 2023, in French, on the independent website [Mediapart](#) (mediapart.fr). This English translation is republished from [‘Europe Solidaire Sans Frontières’ \(ESSF – Europe Solidarity Without Frontiers](#), an association for international solidarity):

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Signatories are still sought – contact info@ecosocialist.scot for how to sign.

Iran: Support for the “Woman, Life, Freedom” Uprising – No to Executions !

Since the murder of Jina-Mahsa Amini on September 16 by the morality police, a popular uprising unprecedented in its scope, depth and duration has shaken the Islamic Republic of Iran. In less than 48 hours, the slogan “Woman, Life, Freedom” spread throughout the country, then around the world.

The fight for the fall of the Islamic Republic is on

Soon other slogans flourished: "Death to the dictator", "Death to the oppressor, be it the Shah or the Supreme Guide", "Bread, Work, Freedom", "Poverty, corruption, high cost of living, we will go until the overthrow".

This radical protest movement brings together women, young people, national minorities, workers with or without jobs, in a total rejection of this theocratic, misogynistic and totally corrupt regime. The uprising is anchored in the long term and affects more than 160 small and large cities. With more than 50% of the population below the poverty line and the absence of elementary democratic and social rights, it is the whole system that the people of Iran want to overthrow.

Calls for strikes are increasing, especially among university teachers, workers in petrochemicals, steelworks in Isfahan, public transport in Tehran and its suburbs, truck drivers... The strikers suffer dismissals, arrests and torture.

Fierce and unlimited repression

To date, the repression has caused more than 500 deaths, including 69 minors, thousands of injuries, more than 19,000 prisoners and missing persons, kidnappings. In Iranian Kurdistan and Sistan Balochistan, the Revolutionary Guards are waging a bloody war against the rebellious population. Kurdish towns are undergoing a state of siege that does not say its name.

The violence of this criminal regime knows no bounds. Numerous testimonies attest to the incredible brutality of the conditions of detention aimed at breaking the determination of the detainees. Of the prisoners are tortured, raped, beaten to death.

In order to create a climate of terror and put an end to protest, the judiciary pronounces increasingly heavy sentences against demonstrators. Despite this, the mobilization does not weaken. With courage and determination, students, young people, women, workers, artists and journalists continue to challenge the regime, and it has decided to take it a step further.

The proliferation of death sentences

For the simple fact of having demonstrated, at least 65 people (including 11 women and five children) have been charged with "enmity with God", "corruption on Earth", insurrection or murder. The judiciary connects parodies of trials, without any right of defense and multiplies death sentences.

After the executions of Mohsen Shekari and Majidreza Rahnavard on December 8 and 12, the Iranian authorities proceeded, on January 7, to hang Seyed Mohammad Hosseini and Mohammad Mehdi Karami. Their crimes: having dared to express their revolt in the face of the death of Jina-Mahsa Amini in Tehran or of Hadis Nadjafi in Karaj. The worst is to be feared for those who wait on the death row of Iran's sordid prisons and more broadly for all prisoners.

The people of Iran must be masters of their destiny

In this context and faced with the spectre of a political and social revolution in Iran, the leaders of the great powers are working, more or less discreetly, for the constitution of a Transitional Council, bringing together all the currents of the opposition of the Iranian right, including the monarchists. These currents, liberal on the economic level and authoritarian on the political level, are the opposite of the dynamics of the mobilizations and the social and democratic aspirations which are expressed in Iran.

From the 1953 coup organized by the CIA and the British secret services against the Mossadegh government and its policy of nationalizing oil, to the Guadeloupe conference in 1979 where the heads of state of France, Germany, of the United Kingdom and the United States accelerated the Shah's departure into exile and decided on his replacement by Khomeini, the great powers have always acted, unsurprisingly, in favor of their own interests against those of the peoples of Iran.

Contrary to the solutions imposed from outside, we defend a real campaign of international solidarity with all those who are mobilizing in Iran to put an end to the Islamic Republic.

To live up to the determination and courage of the Iranian people

The outcome of the current uprising will be decisive for the peoples of the region and the world. It is therefore our responsibility, within our means, to help the "Woman, Life, Freedom" uprising achieve its emancipatory aspirations.

Indeed, the repressive machine that is the Islamic Republic will not be broken without a powerful international campaign and without a strong mobilization of world opinion.

- We demand an immediate end to death sentences, executions and the abolition of capital punishment.
- We demand the immediate release of all imprisoned political and trade union prisoners, teachers, students, doctors, artists, activists and demonstrators, etc.
- We demand the establishment of an international committee made up of jurists, trade unionists, journalists and NGOs to carry out an independent investigation into places of detention in Iran.
- We support women's fight for the right to control their bodies. We demand with them the abolition of all misogynistic

laws as well as gender apartheid.

- We support the fundamental and democratic rights of Iranian men and women, whether they are Kurds, Baluchis, Arabs, Azeris, Lors, or Persians.
- We support the workers of Iran in their struggle for dignity, their rights to defend themselves through strike action and the building of trade unions and political organizations.
- We strongly demand from France and Europe the freezing of the assets of the highest leaders of the Revolutionary Guards and the Islamic Republic, including those of the Guide Ali Khamenei and his entourage, the total amount of which is estimated at \$95 billion. These fortunes acquired through the plunder of resources, the overexploitation of workers, predation and corruption must return to the peoples of Iran.
- Like what was done against the Russian oligarchs, we demand the freezing of the assets of the Iranian oligarchs.
- We demand the lifting of banking and commercial secrecy in France, in Europe and in the world to block the wealth accumulated by the leaders of the Islamic Republic, the Revolutionary Guards and the companies linked to them.
- We demand the cessation of all industrial, economic and diplomatic collaboration with the Islamic Republic.

As signatories to this platform, we reaffirm our full and complete support for all those who fight in Iran for equality, social justice, democracy and against all forms of autocratic and authoritarian power.

We are at their side by all the means at our disposal, and we are committed to multiplying initiatives of solidarity with the peoples of Iran. Until the victory of this irrepressible revolutionary momentum!

Signatures:

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203. Jean ZIEGLER, sociologist, internationalist, politician (Switzerland)

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Outrage as UK Tories attack Trans Rights and Scottish Devolution

Across the British state, *writes Mike Picken*, there is a growing opposition to the Conservative UK government's unprecedented blocking of a Scottish Parliament legislative Bill on transgender rights passed last month – the Gender Recognition Reform (Scotland) Bill.

After weeks of misleading propaganda about what the Bill says and its implications for UK wide legislation, on 17 January the Tory government at Westminster announced they were going for the so-called 'nuclear' option of blocking the Bill using a 'section 35 order'.

The 'section 35' mechanism is part of the 1998 legislation that created the Scottish Parliament and was only ever intended to be used as a last resort, if there was a grave threat of the Scottish Parliament trampling over other rights across the UK. During the passage of the 1998 legislation it was dubbed the 'Governor-General' clause, a reference to the British Empire's colonial controllers, as it gives total discretion to a government minister to overrule democratic decisions. It has never been used before now and the legal basis presented by the UK government has been widely described as completely flimsy.

'Section 35' is being used to overturn the Scottish Bill as a political move by a reactionary government against progressive legislation, not because of an infringement of rights.

The Scottish National Party (SNP) government, based in the

devolved Scottish Parliament have vigorously opposed the Tories' move to overturn law, rightly [describing it as an 'outrage'](#) and a flagrant abuse of the rights of trans people in order to promote the Tory 'culture wars' as well as to attack the current devolution arrangements.

The SNP are strongly supported in this by the [Scottish Green Party](#), who have been championing trans rights and who made a cooperation agreement in 2021 with the SNP explicitly to support the Scottish government moves to introduce this new legislation. Between them these parties have won around half the Scottish electorate in elections in recent years, while the Tories have slumped with [polls](#) showing them currently at around 15%.

Labour leadership equivocates while Labour members protest

The official Labour Party opposition in the UK Westminster parliament, led by Keir Starmer, has been appalling and tacitly gives succour to the Tories' move to block the legislation. This is despite Labour party members in Scotland and across the UK also supporting and championing the legislation and despite Labour's historic support for devolution to Scotland. Starmer made reactionary statements in a BBC TV interview on 15 January against the Bill's extension of support for trans self-ID to 16 and 17 year olds that have been [condemned](#) by leading figures within the Scottish Party.

Labour Members of the Scottish Parliament (MSPs) who voted for the legislation and, so far, a Labour party constituency organisation in Edinburgh have [challenged](#) Starmer's equivocal position and defended both trans rights and the democratic rights of the Scottish Parliament.



Edinburgh Central Constituency Labour Party met tonight and voted to call for a strong response from [@ScottishLabour](#) against the Tory government's outrageous decision to block the Gender Recognition Reform Bill. Solidarity with trans people everywhere 

Edinburgh Central CLP

Notes the Westminster government's decision to block the passage of the Scottish Parliament's Gender Recognition Reform Act using S35 of the Scotland Act.

Believes Scottish Labour should oppose this move, regardless of the position of the party at UK level, both as the party of devolution and as one of the parties that voted for the Act.

Calls on the Scottish Executive Committee and the Labour Group at Holyrood to oppose the blocking of this law, both publicly and within the UK party.

In the UK Westminster Parliament, Labour are the 'Official Opposition', but their solitary Scottish Labour MP there and the rest of Labour's Front Bench leadership **abstained** in the parliamentary vote on the section 35 Order.

But in the devolved Welsh government the Labour Party's First Minister, Mark Drakeford, the only elected leader of a Labour government in any part the UK union state, had welcomed the Scottish legislation and said he wanted the Welsh parliament, Senedd Cymru, to have similar powers to Scotland and to enact the same legislation. Drakeford went further in opposing the overturning of the Scottish Parliament Bill saying that the Welsh Government might back the Scottish Government in court.

Other Labour members across the UK have condemned the Tory attack on the LGBTQ+ community in Britain, with prominent journalist and writer Owen Jones calling Labour 'absolutely

pathetic'.

Owen Jones  @OwenJones84

Absolutely pathetic from Labour.

They can't even defend LGBTQ rights from Tory attack - or stand by their own Scottish wing which overwhelmingly backed gender recognition reform.

Labour has lost its status as friends and allies of the LGBTQ community.

 Glenn Campbell @GlennBBC · Jan 16

Don't think UK Labour will challenge the section 35 order

Shadow Scottish secretary @IanMurrayMP wants the two govts to seek a compromise "to find workable solutions and address legitimate concerns"

[Show this thread](#)

8:27 PM · Jan 16, 2023 · 116.8K Views

Several Labour Members of the Westminster Parliament (MPs) also protested in the chamber at the Tories' attack on trans rights and Scottish democracy. But only 11 Labour MPs had enough principles to defy the leadership and vote against the section 35 Order, while the vast majority including the entire UK leadership abstained. However, Westminster MPs of the Liberal Democrats, Plaid Cymru and the Alliance Party and SDLP in Ireland indicated their strong support for the Scottish Parliament's legislation and voted against the attempt to overturn it.

In wider society, particularly in Scotland, there has been strong opposition. Fifteen prominent and significant organisations supporting women's rights in Scotland issued a joint statement opposing the blocking of the Bill by the Tories.

Part of a global development in trans rights – rejected by UK Tories

Across Europe and the rest of the world, other parliaments have introduced similar processes of 'self-ID' for trans people to that legislated in Scotland, including the 26-county Irish state and more recently the Spanish state. The World Health Organisation and the United Nations have welcomed moves in states to remove medical processes and support self-ID. These processes of gender self-ID by other states were

previously recognised by the UK government, but as part of their rapid shift to the right the Tories have not only vetoed the Bill in Scotland but are also threatening to withdraw recognition of international systems of trans self-ID.

This is a significant component of the increasingly toxic direction of the Tory Party advocacy of 'culture wars' against progressive social policies that has followed in the aftermath of the Brexit process. It is a direction that is also being followed by the leadership of the UK Labour Party.

Gender Recognition Reform (Scotland) Bill would advance trans rights

The Gender Recognition Reform (Scotland) Bill was passed by the devolved Scottish Parliament, following six long years of debate, on 22 December 2022 by a two thirds majority of 86 to 39 votes. The Bill simplifies the process whereby a trans person living or born in Scotland could obtain a Gender Recognition Certificate (GRC) to change their gender on official documentation. It would change the process to a system of self-identification for living in their new identity for three months, rather than the current complex process of medical diagnosis of mental ill health and the need to live in a new gender for two years. The legislation would also apply to 16 and 17 year olds enabling them to obtain a GRC for the first time, with some slightly different procedures and safeguards to those of adults. Under Scottish devolved law 16 and 17 year olds already have the right to vote in local and Scottish elections and have long had the right to marry or enter civil partnership without parental approval (none of which apply in Tory-run England). This enabling of rights of young people in Scotland is also part of the divergence between mainstream Scottish opinion and the Tory 'culture wars' against.

Gender recognition processes have been designated in Scotland as part of a devolved system of civil registration. Part of

the Tory argument is that Scotland should not have separate systems. But as the SNP rightly point out Scotland has always had a different legal system and different laws over, for example, marriage/civil partnership and divorce.

In the 2021 Scottish Parliament election, the [manifestos of the SNP](#) and in fact all the parties elected, including [Scottish Labour](#), committed to introducing new legislation for gender self-ID and for the SNP this has been an issue first promised over six years . The SNP did not quite win a majority in Parliament under the system of Proportional Representation used in Scotland, but together with the Greens they have formed a stable majority government that introduced the Bill. The [Bill went through extensive discussion](#) and the largest public consultation process ever held by the Scottish Parliament and was supported by the Labour and Liberal Democrat parties.

Right wing groups opposed to the Bill, fictitiously claimed that it would weaken women's rights and particularly alleged that it would be used by violent men to attack women. The Scottish government led by First Minister Nicola Sturgeon vigorously rejected these arguments, arguing that the Bill would assist trans people in Scotland to live more easily under their new gender, removing the delays and stigma associated with a medical diagnosis of mental illness ('gender dysphoria'). The consultation indicated strong and informed support for the Bill across civil society, including the medical professions, though there was a vocal minority of traditionalists opposed.

A tiny minority of SNP MSPs (and MPs) opposed the legislation, with one minister resigning and several others voting against. But the vast majority of the SNP supported the legislation. Unfortunately, the Alba Party, a pro-independence minor split from the SNP led by former SNP leader Alex Salmond and a party outside the Scottish Parliament, also spoke and campaigned against the Bill destroying any credibility it had as a

progressive organisation and becoming a repository for transphobic elements.

Scottish Greens in trans solidarity

The passage of the legislative Bill received fulsome support from the SNP's government partner the left wing Scottish Green Party, whose spokesperson on Equalities, ecosocialist [Maggie Chapman MSP](#), put forward an exemplary and passionate solidarity with the trans and wider LGBTQ+ community. (The [Scottish Green Party](#) should not be confused with the Green Party in England and Wales, a totally separate party with whom the Scottish Greens have [broken off links](#) due to their failure to tackle transphobia). They have also built strong links with the trans community campaigning for their rights – leading prominent trans women in Scotland include [Ellie Gomersall](#), the President of National Union of Students Scotland, the leader of Rainbow Greens – the Green LGBTQI movement – [Beth Douglas](#), and Glasgow's first trans councillor [Elaine Gallagher](#), all of whom are Scottish Green Party members and have been highly visible in the public defence of trans rights.

The only party in the Scottish Parliament opposed to the principle of the legislation was the Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party (the Tories in Scotland), but even then two MSPs from that party still voted for the legislation, one of whom is the Health spokesperson and a medical doctor whose own professional body and trade union, the British Medical Association, also [support self-ID](#) and the legislation.

All four Liberal Democrat MSPs supported the Bill, as did 18 of the 22 Labour MSPs. Liberal Democrat UK MPs at Westminster also indicated their strong unanimous support for the Bill and opposition to the Tory veto – the complete opposite of UK Labour.

The Bill was carefully worded during its passage through the Scottish Parliament to ensure it complies with UK law and in

particular the Equality Act 2010. An amendment from a Labour MSP was supported by the SNP, Greens and Liberal Democrats to make explicit that the legislation did not affect the UK wide remit of the Equality Act. But the Tories repeatedly attempted to put forward wrecking amendments that would clearly violate UK law, such as dealing with matters 'reserved' for the Westminster parliament such as prisoners and refugees.

The Bill was eventually passed overwhelmingly by two thirds of MSPs and there were celebrations outside the Scottish Parliament in Edinburgh by trans people and their supporters.

Tory 'culture wars' and attack on unions

The Tories are developing a right wing agenda from the Donald Trump playbook over economic and social issues. In the vacuum that has opened up in the Party following the governmental collapse of Boris Johnson's premiership and then the short lived and disastrous Liz Truss period, Rishi Sunak claims to be attempting to 'steady the ship'. But the Tories are facing disastrous poll ratings and a massive strike wave of over a million workers fighting against deteriorating wages in a cost-of-living crisis. School and university teachers, health workers and the biggest nurses' union, civil servants, and other groups of workers are all following in the aftermath of rail worker strikes – a strike movement beginning to focus on the 1st February as a coordinated day of action. So the Tories have decided to launch a full scale onslaught on workers' rights in bringing in even more draconian anti trade union laws.

And now the Tories have chosen to also launch an attack on trans rights and devolution, taking on the Scottish Parliament and the SNP government by overturning devolved legislation.

Movement needed

The Tories could not choose the timing of their attack on the

Scottish Parliament Gender Recognition Reform Bill and may have underestimated the degree of opposition they will face.

Although the Tories expectedly [won their recent case](#) at the UK Supreme Court against the Scottish Parliament's right to call a new Scottish independence referendum, the legal grounds on which they are overturning the Scottish Parliament Bill are a different matter and subject to a 'reasonableness' yardstick. The Scottish government have already announced they will launch a legal challenge starting with a judicial review in the Scottish courts, but then expected to be resolved in the UK Supreme Court. There is a general view that one of the reasons that the Tories have chosen the Section 35 route is because it drags the issue out in the courts for many months longer than other routes available to them (and will cost the Scottish government more). The Scottish government may well succeed in the courts, though this is unlikely to be achieved until at least the autumn of 2023. Opinions among leading lawyers differ on the likelihood of the Tory section 35 order being overturned in the courts – but one of Labour's leading law experts and a former Lord Chancellor and Justice minister, Charlie Falconer, has [argued](#) that the Tory move is fatally flawed legally and wrong; while the LGBT+ Labour group have [welcomed](#) this opinion, the Labour party's leadership has not supported this view.

However, the legal challenge will be decided by conservative judges. Movement in support of trans rights and to defend devolution cannot rely on a rigged legal system, so there is a need for a massive mobilisations.

The SNP will attempt, justifiably, to use the attack on the Bill as a reason for advocating the end of the union and for Scottish independence. But the SNP are a thoroughly constitutional party, when what is increasingly needed to confront the Tory UK state is mass action. Furthermore, the Labour Party as an institution under the Starmer UK leadership is showing its ineffectiveness as a mobilising force, even

bending to the Tory agenda in many respects. UK Labour doesn't support the current strikes and it has refused to oppose the blocking of the Scottish Parliament Bill. Instead Keir Starmer plays to the Tory 'culture wars' agenda by opposing trans rights for under 18s. However, this is bringing the Party leadership increasingly into conflict with the base of the Party, including much of the Scottish Labour Party and its MSPs, and even some of its Westminster MPs who want to stand up for LGBTQ+ rights and devolution. Local organisations of Labour (CLPs/Branches) need to unite with the SNP and Scottish Greens government to defend devolution and trans rights. Labour should be mobilising public opinion to try to build a mass movement to bring down the Tories, but that will be difficult in an environment that has been dominated by members' tribalist loyalties.

The death agony of the UK state?

Polls indicate a majority of Scottish voters and a significant section of Welsh voters are now questioning their country's membership of a dramatically lopsided and reactionary UK 'union' of nations. The Tories' actions on the Scottish Parliament Bill indicate that only independence can guarantee the democratic rights of Scottish and Welsh people. Labour give little encouragement that they will be much better at UK level, and have faced near collapse in Scotland with their lowest vote share in a century in 2021 due to their opposition to an independence referendum. However in Wales the Party has fared better electorally, by being pluralistic over the issue of independence and forging a [governmental alliance](#) with Plaid Cymru.

The Tories botched Brexit has also led to the collapse of devolution to the six counties of Ireland that are part of the UK state. The Tory UK government's concessions to the far right religious 'creationists' of the Democratic Unionist Party over Brexit and other issues is increasingly challenged

there and as the 25th anniversary of the Good Friday Agreement is approached, the question of Irish reunification is increasingly posed.

The toxic Tories face electoral oblivion but will attempt to hold on as long as possible. A full scale mobilisation of the working class and progressive movements is needed to finish them off.

A statement from Scottish civil society organisations on the UK Government's intervention on the Gender Recognition Reform (Scotland) Bill

This week, the UK government announced their intention to block the Gender Recognition Reform (Scotland) Bill, which was recently passed overwhelmingly in the Scottish Parliament, from becoming law. We, the undersigned, wish to make clear our strong opposition to this intervention and to any suggestion that these reforms would have an adverse effect on the Equality Act or women's rights.

Too much of the debate around the Bill has been shaped by misinformation on what the bill will actually mean in practice. The majority of human rights, women's and equalities organisations in Scotland have shown clear, consistent and unified support for this legislation throughout its seven

years in development.

Years of detailed analysis by expert organisations in Scotland has considered the impact of the Bill in detail. This work has shown that the legislation will significantly improve the experiences of trans people, protecting them from the harms of a stigmatising and unnecessarily difficult process to access legal paperwork, while having no impact on women's services, the operation of the Equality Act, or single sex spaces. These findings have been echoed by the Scottish Parliament's Equalities, Human Rights and Civil Justice Committee's own indepth considerations of the Bill.

Specifically, the Equality Act has allowed for protection from discrimination of trans people on the basis of self-identification since its passage into law in 2010. This was the case before the Gender Recognition Reform Bill and will be the case after. Contrary to arguments made during the passage of the Scottish Bill, this legislation makes no changes to whether and when trans women can access women's spaces. If it is legitimate and proportionate, trans women can already be excluded from single sex services irrespective of whether they have a Gender Recognition Certificate (GRC) or not.

The legislation will have no impact on the experience or requirements of rape victims in court.

Violence Against Women (VAW) services in Scotland already operate on the basis of self-ID. Individuals are not required to provide their birth certificates to access services, something that would be hugely harmful. Instead, services have robust safeguarding processes that allow for individuals to be excluded where there are legitimate concerns. Rape crisis services in Scotland have been providing trans inclusive services for 15 years without incident.

It is demoralising to see how trusted and highly experienced experts on equality and providers of services to women – many

of whom have provided world-leading services in Scotland for decades – have been drowned out in this debate and denigrated for standing against misinformation.

There are currently a number of very real threats to women's rights in Scotland and the UK including but not limited to poverty, the cost of living crisis, cuts to services, rape conviction rates and the experiences of immigrant and refugee women. We find it particularly concerning that so much political and media attention has been devoted to the debate around this Bill in place of tackling these genuine barriers to women's equality.

Trans people across Scotland have endured seven years of being dangerously misrepresented in public discourse. We are deeply concerned about the impact of misinformation around what this Bill actually does, and the perception that it creates that women's rights and the rights of trans people are in conflict. They are not.

Our organisations see the paths to equality for women and trans people as being deeply interconnected and dependent on our shared efforts to dismantle patriarchal systems that impose barriers to full equality for us all.

Signed,

Amnesty International

Close the Gap

Engender

Human Rights Consortium

JustRight Scotland

National Union of Students Scotland

One Parent Families Scotland

Rape Crisis Scotland

Scottish Trades Union Congress

Scottish Refugee Council

Scottish Women's Aid

Scottish Women's Convention

Scottish Women's Rights Centre

Young Women's Movement

Zero Tolerance

Reposted from Rape Crisis Scotland:

<https://www.rapecrisisscotland.org.uk/news/news/a-statement-from-scottish-civil-society-organisations-on-the-uk-governments-intervention-0/>

ORIGINALLY POSTED ON JANUARY 17 2023 AT 16:36

**Protestors demand justice for
assassinated Kurdish
activists on streets of Paris
– interview with Sarah Glynn,
Scottish Solidarity with**

Kurdistan

On 7 January 2023, 25,000 marched through the streets of Paris to demand justice for assassinated Kurdish activists, writes Mike Picken. The event was initially to commemorate the anniversary of three murders of Kurdish activists in Paris' 10th arrondissement by a Turkish state agent in 2013 but was overshadowed by the assassination of three more Kurdish activists on 23 December 2022 in front of the Kurdish Democratic Center (CDKF) on rue d'Enghien in the same arrondissement. In both assassinations the French state of President Macron has failed to satisfy Kurdish demands for the links with the Turkish state to be exposed and to classify the recent murders as terrorism.

*The mass demonstration was supported by the left parties in France and there is a report from Mireille Court of the march in [***l'Anticapitaliste***](#), weekly paper of the NPA (Nouvelle Parti Anticapitaliste) issue 644, [*here \(in French\)*](#).*

*Scottish Solidarity with Kurdistan (SSK) activist **Sarah Glynn** was also on the march in Paris, and below we republish an interview with her, taken from the Australian ecosocialist [***Green Left***](#) together with pictures by Sarah. Sarah Glynn also writes a weekly column on the Kurdish struggle on [***Medyanews***](#) that we encourage our readers to follow.*

Events in Scotland in Solidarity with Kurdistan can be found on the Facebook page of SSK here: <https://en-gb.facebook.com/ScottishSolidaritywithKurdistan/> .

*The Centre for Kurdish Progress is hosting Newroz celebrations in **Edinburgh** on **Wednesday 8th March 2023**, with leading figures from the Kurdish Community, joined by Members of the Scottish Parliament from SNP, Labour and Scottish Greens (Tickets available [here](#))*

France: 25,000 march in Paris to demand justice for assassinated activists



Kurdish protest in Paris on January 7. Photo: Sarah Glynn

A [large march](#) took place in Paris, on January 7, to demand justice for three Kurdish female activists – including Sakine Cansız, a co-founders of the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) – were assassinated by a Turkish gunman in that city 10 years ago. The French government has withheld documents that could prove that the Turkish state was responsible by classifying them “top secret”.

Protests have been held every year to mark this atrocity, but this year's action was supercharged with anger at another assassination of three Kurdish activists in Paris on December 23. *Green Left's Peter Boyle* spoke to Kurdish solidarity activist and writer **Sarah Glynn** who participated in the march.

What do you estimate were the numbers at the march and what were the main groups participating?

The organisers estimated an attendance of 25,000. Most were Kurds, and Kurdish organisations had organised buses from different parts of Europe. There were also trade unionists, and representatives from the different left parties, and sympathetic organisations and individuals.

The march started from opposite the Gard du Nord, near 147 rue la Fayette where the three Kurdish women were assassinated ten years ago, and many people took the opportunity, before it set

off, to visit the community centre where the three Kurds were assassinated in December. Both places, in Paris's 10th Arrondissement, were marked by portraits and flowers.

Among the sea of Kurdish flags and placards, there was a sprinkling of trade union flags, and the Union Syndicale Solidaires marched behind their own banner supporting the Kurdish struggle. All the French left parties were represented, with elected members standing out from the crowd with their blue, white and red sashes.

The final demonstration, in Place de la Republique, was addressed by the families of those killed and by leaders of the Kurdish community in Europe, and also by speakers from various organisations (including a representative from France's Armenian community) and from the mayor of the 10th Arrondissement and political parties.

The politicians not only stressed the importance of a full investigation of both triple murders, but also the need to delist the PKK and stop criminalising Kurdish politics.

Sylvie Jan, co-president of l'Association France Kurdistan observed how public support for the Kurds has grown over the ten years since the first assassination.

We heard some important and strong words, but full the weight of the demonstration was summed up in the [final lament](#), composed and sung by Diyar Mehrovi, a friend of the murdered musician Mîr Perwer.



Mathilde Panot, La France Insoumise MP addressing the protest in Paris. Photo: Sarah Glynn

French authorities have arrested the person who is alleged to

have carried out the latest massacre and suggested that racism was his motive but Kurds and their supporters are not satisfied with this. Can you explain why?

The Kurds have no faith in the French authorities because of their deliberate blocking of the investigation into the 2013 assassinations. The man accused of that earlier attack conveniently died of a brain tumour in December 2016, a few weeks before he was due to go on trial, and the case was closed.

However, there is a wealth of evidence that he was working for the Turkish National Intelligence Organisation and that the French state impeded the investigation, and they have closed access to crucial defence documents. The families of the murdered women began a civil action and managed to get the case reopened in 2019, but the state has refused the request of the judges to declassify the documents.

After the assassinations on December 23, the French Interior Minister, Gerald Darmanin, was very quick to declare that this was the action of a lone gunman – to dismiss any wider conspiracy and so rule out a terrorism investigation. The man who fired the gun was a Frenchman who has also been accused of an earlier racist attack on Somalis, but he was just out of prison, and could have been recruited to direct his violence against the Kurds by someone he met inside. The Kurds argue that there are several circumstances that suggest a planned and targeted attack.

With the approaching tenth anniversary of the first assassinations, this was a significant period, and at the time of the recent assassination there was supposed to be a large meeting at the community centre to plan for last Saturday's demonstration – thankfully, delayed an hour due to transport problems. An attack at this time could have been an even worse disaster for the Kurdish community.

After shooting into the community centre – and making sure that Evîn Goyî was dead with a second shot – the gunman shot at the Kurdish restaurant opposite the centre, and then went down the road and entered the Kurdish hairdresser where he was eventually caught by the workers as he reloaded his gun. The community centre is an important place for the French Kurdish community and all three places are Kurdish. Shops of other nationalities between the restaurant and the hairdresser were not attacked.

The day after the recent assassinations, Turkey's Home Minister, Süleyman Soylu, stated: "Tayyip Erdoğan will not only purge the terrorists in Turkey, but also the terrorists in the world."

The Turkish government appears to want Kurds to believe that Turkey is behind this assassination, and to be confident that the French authorities will not investigate this.

In a [live broadcast](#) on CNN-Türk in February 2021, the former head of the Turkish General Staff's Intelligence Department not only admitted that the 2013 assassinations were an operation by the Turkish state, but also called for more of the same, telling viewers, "They also have their elements in Europe. We have to do something in this direction in Europe. I mean, it was already done once in Paris ..."

No action was taken then either.



Kurdish protest in Paris.

Photo: Sarah Glynn

What are the barriers to a proper public investigation of the latest and the 2013 atrocities?

It is widely understood that, for political reasons, the French government will avoid any investigation that could implicate the Turkish state.

As in so many other areas, Turkey is allowed to spread their terror with impunity.

Interview originally published by Green Left (Australia)
<https://www.greenleft.org.au/content/france-25000-march-paris-demand-justice-assassinated-kurdish-activists>

Top photo: l'Anticapitaliste, credited to DR

Razem: Building a left alternative in Poland

It is not often realised that among Scotland's population at the time of the 2011 census Poland was the largest non-UK country of birth, writes Mike Picken in this introduction for ecosocialist.scot.

This was because of significant migration into Scotland during the period, now closed by the Tory Brexit, when Scotland as part of the EU was a member of the single market and free movement between EU states was possible. More recent data from 2021 in England & Wales indicates that Poland is the second largest country of birth there, after India. It should also be remembered that the xenophobic-fuelled Brexit referendum produced not only [the assassination of a Labour MP by a racist extremist opposed to EU migration](#), but the [murder of a Polish-born man in Essex](#) and the [tragic suicide of a Polish-born young woman in Cornwall following racist taunts](#).

Poland transitioned to EU membership in 2004 and was by far the largest of the former-soviet bloc eastern european states to do so (it is currently the fifth largest EU member state – after the western european states of Germany, France, Italy

and the Spanish state).

But the transition from totalitarian stalinism to free market capitalism was fraught with contradictions. Despite the government of the right wing 'Law and Justice Party' and the rise of far right movements in Poland, there has also been the growth of a small but significant new broad left wing party – Razem ("Together" – also known as "Lewica Razem" – "Left Together"), formed in 2015 and now holding six seats in the Polish parliament, the Sejm (elected in 2019 as part of a left of centre coalition). As a left wing party, Razem has had to walk a difficult path between being critical of the capitalist and western imperialist basis of the EU and NATO institutions, while being understanding of the impact of stalinist totalitarianism on Polish society and the threat posed by Russian imperialism following the invasion of Ukraine. Razem champions the Kurdish struggle in Poland and is opposed to NATO's military interventions (see below). But Razem is also highly critical of many western leftist organisations who have abandoned the Ukrainian people in order to promote what has been called 'the anti-imperialism of idiots' by Ukraine 'Social Movement' left wing activist Taras Bilous. Razem has terminated its association with both the Progressive International and DIEM25 movements because of their refusal to defend unequivocally the Ukrainian people.

ecosocialist.scot is republishing below a wide ranging interview with a leading representative of Razem's international office, Zofia Malisz. There is much to learn for us in Scotland from this interview, particularly about the need to puncture the sometimes uncritical enthusiasm for the EU that exists in Scotland with an ecosocialist and left wing message, but also how to put across a consistent anti-imperialist message that has real resonance with the populations of Eastern Europe.

The interview was first published by the Australian ecosocialist Green Left – this version is as republished by

Razem: Building a left alternative in Poland

Polish left-wing party Razem ([Together](#)) International Office member Zofia Malisz spoke to Green Left's Federico Fuentes about the party's history, Polish politics and Razem's views on Russia's invasion of Ukraine. ([Green Left, 10 January 2023](#).)

Could you tell us about Razem's history and politics?

Razem was formed in 2015 by a group of leftist activists with years of experience in the Polish green and feminist movements, along with members of the Young Socialists.

The impetus for creating a new party was two-fold.

One was the frustration that emerged under the liberal Donald Tusk government (2007–14). Whenever voices started to demand the government focus on social spending instead of cuts and privatisations, Tusk's response was to say Poland was still in its transformation stage [towards a market economy] and that now was not the time to build up a welfare state.

Frustration grew as neoliberal policies were implemented at breakneck speed to indulge business elites, while people were denied even modest social benefits and public services were being dismantled.

All this occurred as anti-austerity protests were taking place in Greece, something we supported and that inspired Razem.

The other major factor was the protests against the Iraq war

and against Poland's participation in the occupation of Afghanistan. Several activists who went on to build Razem came from these protest movements.

The revelations of alleged illegal US prisons in Poland used to torture al-Qaeda members created huge outrage. Seeing the Polish government bow down to US imperialism unchallenged – and in fact encouraged by the mainstream, including former Solidarność activists – fuelled frustration on the left.



Razem was formed as an expression of this anger and frustration that had built up during the transformation process.

This particularly still concerns the young. Unlike the old Communist establishment or the new liberal elites aligned with business, they did not get the opportunity to enrich themselves during the transformation period.

Entering professional life, let alone starting a family, has become – and still is – a very difficult thing if you are living precariously.

Our co-leaders Magda Biejat and Adrian Zandberg have been highlighting the housing situation, particularly as rent and real estate prices have risen dramatically.

Poland is also facing depopulation, with the abortion ban discouraging women from getting pregnant and high cost of living pressures, which prevent young people from starting an independent life.

In terms of Razem's politics, I would say one difference between Razem and much of the Western left is that we do not use ideologised language and instead communicate left values organically.

This is because, after the 1990s [with the fall of the Communist regime], even using the word “socialism” became problematic. There was a backlash that the right wing and neoliberals gladly exploited to discredit any ideas of a social state.

This happened despite the fact that Poland’s socialist tradition is much older than the Eastern Bloc’s existence and played a hugely significant and positive role in the building of the Polish independent state. Not to mention that, contrary to what conservative ideologues want you to believe, the ideals of Solidarność were socialist.

Razem was [also] inspired by the modern left approach adopted by Podemos, who demonstrated how to communicate socialist ideas in a different way.

[Podemos] showed that it was very important to find new ways to break up right-wing duopolies. In the case of Polish politics, we have a duopoly between the liberal and conservative right that dominates the scene.

We had to first bring back the left and insert left issues into the centre of Polish political debate. We had to bring back social protest and unionising into everyday Polish political practice – and we succeeded. These were our motivations.

Since then we have engaged in an, at times dramatic, fight for space on the terrain of this duopoly. The duopoly manifests itself as a war of right-wing tribes that is a source of sustenance to their elites. So it was vital for us to avoid the trap of engaging in empty arguments.

Polish liberals reduce every social-political question to whether this helps defeat the conservatives, and vice versa, while never considering any problems on its merit. The Polish people are tired of this ritualistic fighting.

They appreciate the fact that our six MPs instead focus on talking about the issues. Parliamentary speeches by Adrian Zandberg, are something of a hotly anticipated public event because they give a rare sense of getting real among all this ruckus. They resonate because there is anger and people want solutions and real action. And they know they can depend on us for those.

People value Razem MPs showing up early at a strike to support workers' demands and to facilitate bringing the entitled bosses to the table. This is where we were able to make a difference in several industrial actions in recent years.

Poland is often grouped as part of a conglomerate of far-right authoritarian countries in Eastern Europe. How accurate is this? What can you tell us about the current government?

The same year Razem was formed, a conservative Christian government was elected. They found that the key to winning was to offer something that people wanted, some kind of social benefit – in this case a child allowance – but which the liberals had been refusing to give.

The conservative government only secured a majority because it incorporated social elements into their agenda.

Polish society, when asked about the policies they prefer, most often point to a form of social democracy with solid public services. The conservatives have exploited this need to their political benefit – but have clearly failed to deliver any comprehensive social agenda.

In any case, it is clear that to grab power they did not campaign on banning abortion or dismantling the judicial branch of the state. But right after they came to power, they attacked human rights and the state's institutions. They started stirring up culture wars in later campaigns, for

example, scapegoating and harassing LGBT people.

Yes, these policies are supported by the Catholic Church. The conservative majority owes the Church huge favours – a lot of this stuff happens as a form of a clientelist exchange between the Church and the government. But these are not policies that have majority support.

Polls show the majority of the Polish people want legalisation of abortion and civil unions for same-sex couples. Polish society has been secularising dramatically in recent years. The conservatives have been losing this battle and the rabid reaction of fundamentalist groups embedded in the government's environment reflects this.

Unlike in Hungary, the Polish government has not been able to undermine the electoral system, and while attempts to take over the judiciary have been largely successful, they faced popular protest.

Moreover, due to the European Union's resistance to accepting these illegal reforms, the government has hit a wall of Polish EU-enthusiasm.

This is a major difference with Hungary: the government here was not able to find an easy way around the fact that people won't support any hint of "Polexit".

Neither will Razem, by the way, as we believe the EU badly needs social and democratic reform, but that Poland should stay and contribute to fostering integration and partnership on the continent.

This fact about Poland being pro-European integration helped defeat the government's attacks on our checks and balances.

The result was that all the Orbanite moves the government did, including the persecution of women and LGBT people, sparked a wave of unprecedented protest. The protests against the

abortion ban were huge and spanned all levels of society.

This caused a dramatic dip in the polls and the conservatives are unlikely to win a parliamentary majority in this year's elections.

As to the idea of Eastern Europe as essentially authoritarian and full of far-right nationalists, I would say this is the result of decades of dismissing Eastern Europe agency. It is often the default, convenient portrayal in the media that flatters egos in the West.

We all know what trouble Western European countries are in regarding right-wing threats, look at Italy or France with [Giorgia] Meloni and [Marine] Le Pen, or the recent plot by German extremists to overthrow the system.

But somehow the global media and Russian propaganda manage to draw exclusive attention to right-wing authoritarian tendencies in Eastern Europe, obscuring the fact that there are left movements and a progressive civil society, and disregarding the emancipatory and democratising impulse that is well alive in the people. This contributes to the image of Eastern Europe as an especially conservative backwater, hostile to progressive ideas, which is not really the case and certainly is not a constant.

Of course, there are elements of this, but it is being incredibly exaggerated in the West, including within the Western left. Look at Slovenia with Levica, Croatia with Mozemo, Latvia with Progresivie or Poland with Razem, and you will discover inspiring left movements implementing progressive change in their country and municipal politics – and there will be more surprises like that in the future which should be acknowledged.

Particularly regarding Ukraine, it is vital movements such as Social Movement are supported in the context of resistance and rebuilding after Russian aggression is defeated.

How did Razem respond to Putin's invasion of Ukraine? Why does Razem insist on the need to come to grips with Russian imperialism?

Razem had no doubts about how to react given our countries' common historic experience with Russian imperialism. We had absolutely no doubts that this invasion represented an existential threat to Ukraine, that there could be no compromise, and that our party's reaction was crucial.

Unfortunately, we were very disappointed with progressive organisations, including ones that at the time we belonged to, that kept silent right up to and after the invasion, and even after the Bucha massacre.

This was disappointing but also, I admit, we may have been a bit blind to an obvious tendency that exists within part of the left to overemphasise US imperialism while letting Russian imperialism off the hook. It quickly became clear a big part of that left is not able to accept what for us are two existential issues: that Ukraine is a sovereign state and that there is such a thing as Russian imperialism.

In contrast, representatives of the left in Poland (Razem), Finland (Left Alliance), Lithuania (Left Alliance), Czech Republic (Alliance For The Future; The Left) and Romania (Democracy and Solidarity Party) met in Warsaw on March 8 with representatives of Ukrainian left organisation Social Movement to listen to them and ask them what they needed. The Danish left (Red-Green Alliance) was not present at the meeting but later indicated their support.

It became clear that we should campaign, first, to support the left and Ukraine's armed resistance. This was done against considerable pushback from the so-called anti-war movement in imperial or post-imperial Western societies.

We often found that Ukrainian leftists had to fight even for their right to speak at events organised by the Western left.

So this was a struggle and remains a vital point: to assert the existence and amplify the voice of the Ukrainian left. Their voice, once heard, inevitably cuts through all propaganda smokescreens – they lead a righteous fight for self-determination against an imperialist aggressor, no doubt about it.

Since then, the unity initiated in Warsaw has extended to other Nordic and Central European left parties, and more recently to left groups in the Balkans. We are building a network to share information not only about our common experience with regards to Russian imperialism but also regarding the process of harsh neoliberal transformation in states of the former Eastern Bloc.

Together with Social Movement and other allies such as the Portuguese Left Bloc or the Swedish Left Party we also launched a campaign to cancel Ukraine's debt, which is restricting Ukraine's war efforts and the ability to maintain its economy afloat. We have had some successes: a bill has been passed in the US House of Representatives calling on the US government to influence lenders on behalf of Ukraine, and the issue has also been raised in the UK and European parliament.

This is a campaign we hope to build on as an example of concrete solidarity and outward campaigning. We prefer to offer concrete solidarity, work with parties, trade unions and movements that are accountable to voters, members and the public.

Debates on realist geopolitics regarding multipolarity perhaps drive book sales, Twitter likes and invitations to panel debates, but they do not help the Ukrainian people who fight off genocidal aggression of a neighbour who wagering on neocolonialism in the 21st century.

How do you view the issue of NATO expansionism?

We are clear that the influence of Western militarism is not welcome in Poland. But we recognise that we are in a complex situation. Unlike the left that operates in the heart of an empire, the left in our part of Europe cannot afford to take a purely ideological stance that is divorced from the security realities of the peoples of our region.

On the one hand, given the lack of a proper European security architecture, NATO currently represents the only guarantee of protection for Polish citizens. The vast majority of Poles want this protection, because they know the threat Russian imperialism poses. That is why I do not think that we can honestly talk about NATO expansionism in our region. Instead, what we had was countries desperately applying to join NATO in the 1990s, while the US was initially not so favourable to us joining.

For people in our region, Russian expansionism is the existential threat. And it is Russia that is expanding towards and across our region – by invading Ukraine.

If you look honestly at the history of NATO-Russia relations regarding Europe, you will see it was Russia who regularly step forward first with the will to escalate.

Politically, you can speak of appeasement regarding Western European policy towards Russia in recent decades. Militarily, regarding troop and weapon deployments, you cannot speak of provocation.

On the other hand, Razem has actively opposed any Polish participation in NATO's contemptuous, hardly legal, interventions, such as in Afghanistan, Libya, Iraq, etc. Any arbitrary action that is motivated by primitive extractionism or forced upon the alliance members via political pressure from the US is for us the true meaning of "NATO expansionism". And we oppose it.

We are also clear that such actions have only emboldened

Russia, and provided it with precedents to carry out its own brazen imperialist actions.

Razem is aware that there are several imperialisms at play in our part of Europe and that we cannot afford to take sides supporting one imperialism over another.

10 January 2023

*Original Source [Green Left, 10 January 2023](#), this version from International Viewpoint:
<https://internationalviewpoint.org/spip.php?article7948>*

Call for solidarity actions with anti-war activists in Russia: To remember is to fight! Against imperial aggression in Ukraine and political terror in Russia!

Statement of the Russian Socialist Movement.

For over a decade, Russian antifascists have commemorated January 19 as their day of solidarity. This is the date when in 2009, in the center of Moscow, the human rights and leftist activist Stanislav Markelov and the journalist and anarchist Anastasia Baburova were gunned down by neo-Nazis.

The murder of Markelov and Baburova became the culmination of the ultra-right terror of the 2000s, which killed hundreds of

migrants and dozens of anti-fascists. For many years, while it was still possible, Russian activists held antifascist demonstrations and rallies on January 19 under the slogan “To remember is to fight!”

Today, when the Putin regime has invaded Ukraine and unleashed unprecedented repression against its own citizens who oppose the war, the date of January 19 takes on a new meaning. Back then the danger was posed by neo-Nazi groups, often acting with the connivance of the authorities.

Today, the ideology and practice of right-wing radicals have become the ideology and practice of the Russian regime itself, which is rapidly turning fascist over the course of its invasion of Ukraine.

Vladimir Putin is waging war not only against the Ukrainian people, but also against the Russian civil society resisting aggression. The brutal repressions hit, among other things, the left-wing movement: socialists, anarchists, feminists, labor unionists.

Before the New Year, the most famous left-wing politician in Russia, the democratic socialist Mikhail Lobanov, was arrested and beaten. The platform “Nomination” he created united the anti-war opposition in the municipal elections in Moscow in September 2022.

Kirill Ukrantsev, the leader of the Courier labor union and a well-known left-wing video blogger, has been in custody since April. The reason for the arrest were the protests and strikes the couriers organized as they sought to improve their working conditions.

A feminist, artist and anti-war activist Alexandra Skochilenko, who distributed anti-war symbols, faces a long prison term.

Six Anarchists – Kirill Brik, Deniz Aydin, Yuri Neznamov,

Nikita Oleinik, Roman Paklin, Daniil Chertykov – were arrested in the so-called “Tyumen case.” They were brutally tortured, seeking confessions in the preparation of sabotage.

Daria Polyudova, an activist of the Left Resistance group, was recently sentenced to nine (!) years in prison for “calls to extremism.” Leftist journalist Igor Kuznetsov has been in prison for a year now, accused of “extremism” for his anti-war and anti-Putin views.

This is a far from exhaustive list of Russian leftists recently imprisoned or persecuted for their beliefs. As Russian activists forced to leave Russia for political reasons, we ask our foreign comrades and all those who care to support the antifascist action on January 19 under the slogans:

No to Putin's war, fascism and dictatorship!

Freedom to all Russian political prisoners!

Solidarity with to Russian antifascists!

To remember is to fight!

We ask you to send us information about any solidarity actions during the week of January 19-24 – pickets, open meetings, online discussions, and even personal photos with posters – by e-mail at: rsdzoom@proton....

The Russian Socialist Movement

This appeal is also available in [French](#), [Spanish](#), [Dutch](#) and [Turkish](#).

Originally published at:
<https://fourth.international/en/europe/495>

Solidarity with the Peruvian people

A statement by the Executive Bureau of the [Fourth International](#)

Against the murderous government of Dina Boluarte!

New immediate elections and National Constituent Assembly!

In mid-December, large and combative mobilizations took to the streets and squares of the main cities of Peru, in an uprising motivated by the coup perpetrated on 7 December by the right-wing majority Congress, which first dismissed and then had the elected President Pedro Castillo arrested – through the mechanism of the “decree of vacancy”, a sort of impeachment. The Congress replaced Castillo with his vice-president, Dina Boluarte. Popular mobilizations raised the slogans of new general elections, Constituent Assembly and Castillo’s release. Since then, the coup government of Boluarte, supported by all the bourgeois and reactionary sectors of the country, has strongly repressed those who oppose the institutional coup, with a bloody result blood of 30 dead and 700 wounded, including 300 police. [The numbers are from the Peruvian Ombudsman’s Office].

The Boluarte government, puppet of the illegitimate Congress, has played to stabilize itself by combining harsh repression with a strong media campaign of “pacification” of the country, through which it is criminalizing opponents, justifying

arrests and confrontations. Thus, it has reinforced state repression: it has declared a state of emergency at national level since 15 December, resorting to the Armed Forces to contain the demonstrations. On that date, a military massacre took place in Ayacucho, with the use of bullet projectiles, and eight demonstrators were killed. Boluarte is resorting to the political police (Dircone) and the mass media to stigmatize and criminalize the popular fighters and organizes mobilizations for “peace” in some regions, with the social bases of the ultra-right in his crude objective of legitimizing the repressive forces. Thus, in these days, in order to confront a day of struggles and strikes called by the opposition for Wednesday, 4 January 4, the government called for a “demonstration for peace” in Lima.

The crisis of the Fujimori political system

The coup and the popular reaction against Congress and the new president are the violent culmination of the political-institutional crisis deepened five years ago, a period during which four former presidents were convicted of corruption (one of whom went into exile, another committed suicide in house arrest) and three, elected by Congress, resigned between 2020 and 2021. The Peruvian tragedy has much of its origin in the current Constitution, promulgated by dictator Alberto Fujimori in 1993, which instituted corporate financing of parties and candidates – which guarantees an almost perpetual majority to the most conservative and pro-business forces – in addition to allowing the Executive to be constantly under the threat of impeachment by Congress.

Elected in an extremely polarized process and with ultra-fragmented political options (31 candidacies in the first round), the rural teacher and union leader Pedro Castillo – candidate of Peru Libre – came to power in June 2021. He

governed harassed by a racist Lima elite, the populist ultra-right of Keiko Fujimori (the daughter of the dictator, who confronted him in the second round), a parliament and a coupist press, which have never digested having a trade unionist of peasant origin and from the interior as president. The mass media, the parliamentary ultra-right and the Attorney General's Office have permanently besieged him, with a systematic blocking of the Executive's bills, the opening of six fiscal trials in record time against the president and successive motions of vacancies and interpellations. At the same time, the right-wing and ultra-right-wing parliamentary groups prevented a possible Constitutional Referendum and altered the balance of power with constitutional reforms that limited the mechanisms that would allow closing the Congress so hated by the popular majorities. It was absolutely clear that the reactionary majority in Congress sought to overthrow Castillo and regain total control of the Executive.

But, instead of relying on the popular organizations to fulfill the promises of change for which the people voted, Castillo was giving in to the ruling classes, removing progressive or leftist ministers, and incorporating neo-liberal technocrats in his cabinet. In less than a year and a half, he lost the political initiative and tried to decree a frustrated "state of exception", without any basis or the balance of forces for that. The response to this manoeuvre was the coup of the Congress, which was approved in nine minutes, without the right to defence and ignoring the procedures established in the same regulation of the parliamentary institution. In this way, Peru joins Honduras (2009), Paraguay and Brazil in a history of institutional coups (parliamentary, judicial and media) through which important fractions of the Latin American neoliberal bourgeoisies manage to get rid of governments that bother them or no longer serve them.

Illegitimate government and Congress

Agent of the coup, the current Peruvian Congress has proven that it does not have the democratic legitimacy to continue its administration, besides never having had constituent power. After the vacancy irregularly approved against Castillo on 7 December and the brutal repression of popular demonstrations by the illegitimate government, the removal of Boluarte from office, with a call for new elections for president and a new Congress, is urgently needed.

The profound popular erosion of the Peruvian political system born of Fujimorism requires – as wisely and courageously demanded by those who are rising up against the Congress and the coup President – a new democratic and sovereign constituent process, which will rewrite the rules of the game in favor of the majorities.

The Fourth International expresses its solidarity with the popular mobilizations in Peru and our active support for their demands, beginning with an immediate end to the repression of the protests, the release of all prisoners and a thorough investigation, with international observers, into the deaths, injuries and imprisonment perpetrated by the Armed Forces and police. We call on all revolutionary and progressive organizations of the world to denounce the coup that has overthrown Castillo, the authoritarian government of Dina Boluarte and the Congress coup, in view of the brutal repression they are deploying in the Andean country.

AGAINST THE PARLIAMENTARY COUP: OUT WITH DINA BOLUARTE!

END THE STATE OF EMERGENCY NOW!

RELEASE OF ALL PRISONERS! INVESTIGATION OF THE DEATHS AND PUNISHMENT OF THE ASSASSINS!

FOR A CONSTITUENT NATIONAL ASSEMBLY!

Executive Bureau of the Fourth International

4 January 2023

Originally published on the Fourth International website:
<https://fourth.international/en/566/latin-america/494>

Scottish nurses to strike for fair pay and the future of the NHS

Nursing workers across the whole of Scotland, *writes Connor Beaton at [Heckle](#)*, are set to join postal workers, teachers, railway workers, university and college workers and others next year [2023] in striking for increased pay – a historic move which reveals the extent of popular discontent over wage cuts and austerity imposed from above. With thousands of unfilled vacancies for nursing roles, the looming strike also forms a front in the struggle to defend the free, universal provision of quality healthcare in Scotland in the long-term.

Against the backdrop of consumer price inflation in the UK reaching 11% in November and being set to remain at historically high levels for at least months to come, the Scottish government has offered NHS workers a one-year deal providing for pay increases ranging from 11.32% for the lowest-paid workers to 2% for the highest-paid workers. The average pay increase on offer is 7.5%, translating to a real-terms pay cut of 3.5% for the average NHS worker in Scotland.

“When you take a decade of real-terms pay cuts and then you

add such a significant one at a time when there's a cost of living crisis in the country – people are really worried about their energy bills, especially with Scottish weather and the recent cold snap that we've had, it's really prominent in people's minds – and I think there's been a perfect storm really, between that and the pandemic," Siobhan Aston, a rehabilitation nurse and grassroots activist with [NHS Workers Say NO](#), tells *Heckle*. "I think that's why Scottish workers have decided no, enough is enough."

Aston, who qualified as a nurse in 2014, is a rank-and-file member of the Royal College of Nursing (RCN), the largest nursing union which represents over 40,000 nurses, midwives and support workers in Scotland and has taken centre stage in this dispute. Members of unions Unite and Unison, who between them represent most NHS workers in Scotland including a minority of nursing workers, have already accepted the Scottish government's latest pay offer. GMB and the Royal College of Midwives (RCM), which represent smaller numbers of NHS workers, have joined the RCN in rejecting it.

This month's decision by RCN Scotland members to strike for a better pay deal, with [a massive 82% in support](#), is historic for a number of reasons. An important one is that the planned strikes will mark the first time nursing workers have taken industrial action across all of Scotland's 14 regional health boards, rather than taking part in localised action. It is also, however, a dramatic move for the RCN, which for decades rejected the prospect of strike action.

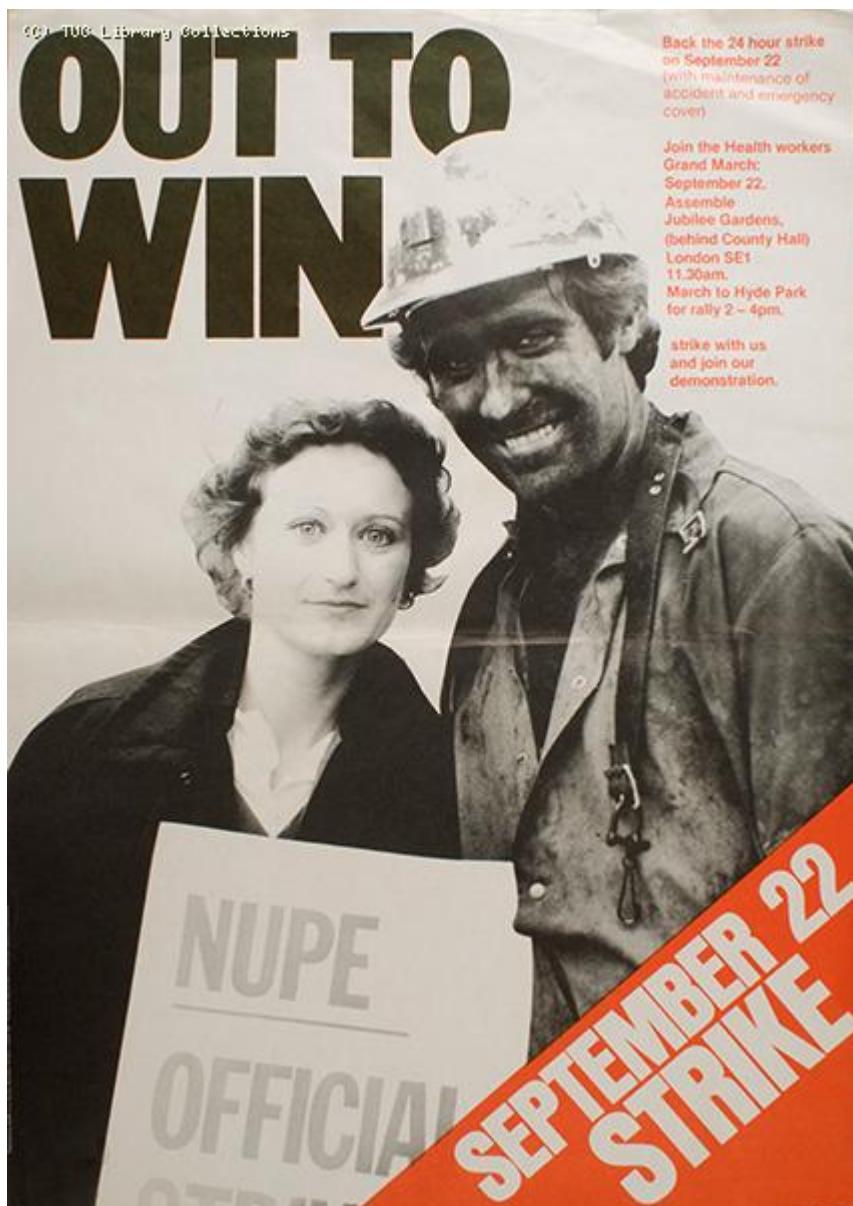


Nursing workers on the march in London. (Photo: [Guy Smallman via NHS Workers Say NO](#))

For most of its 106-year history, the RCN was not a trade union but a professional association aimed primarily at improving standards in nursing. In the 1970s – a tumultuous decade in which the NHS was [rocked by a wave of strikes](#) – the RCN registered as a trade union, but maintained in its constitution an outright ban on its members taking part in strike action and refused to affiliate to the Trades Union Congress (TUC) alongside the other unions representing NHS workers.

When the biggest strike in NHS history took place in 1982, with workers across the UK walking out for a 12% pay increase, RCN members joined mass demonstrations but stopped short of striking; a [critical account from Dale Evans](#) recalls how the “split between TUC-affiliated bodies and non-affiliated unions such as the RCN was to prove crucial in the conduct of the dispute, and its final resolution”. Though unions NUPE and COHSE (both now part of Unison) wanted to continue the dispute, it came to an end when the RCN accepted a government

offer including pay rises and the establishment of a pay review board for nurses. Thatcher's policy was that pay review boards were on offer only to workers who did not strike; the RCN's stance was rewarded.



A poster issued by NUPE during the 1982 pay dispute.

Since the professionalisation of nursing in the 19th century, generally credited to aristocratic social reformer Florence Nightingale, nursing work has been identified as "women's work", best suited to women because of their supposed natural inclination towards care and empathy. This diminishing label has been leveraged by patriarchal capitalism to undervalue and undercompensate nursing workers, who continue to be overwhelmingly women. Tory minister Nadine Dorries, herself a

former nurse, last year invoked that vision of nursing as an extension of women's natural instincts [when she insisted](#) that nurses did not require a significant post-pandemic pay increase because they "do their job because they love their job".

This perception of nursing has also found expression in the trade union and socialist movements. Evans' article argues that the 1982 dispute, the largest pay dispute during Thatcher's premiership, has been written out of trade union history because most of the workers involved were women, who fit less comfortably into narrow, masculine visions of working class struggle. Socialist newspapers of the day derisively attributed the RCN's no-strike policy to the "Florence Nightingale mentality" of its members. This was challenged by the likes of the feminist-influenced [Radical Nurses Group](#) (RNG) of the 1980s, whose members criticised their union branches as dominated by men and/or managers and reproducing the oppressive hierarchies of their workplaces.

Forty years later, the picture has changed dramatically. For starters, it is now the RCN – having abolished its no-strike rule in 1995 – whose members have refused to buckle under pressure and have diverged from the TUC-affiliated Unison and Unite unions in voting to strike. This has cut short a period of triumphalism from Scottish ministers after nurses walked out in England, Wales and the north of Ireland. Humza Yousaf, the Scottish health secretary, [said in November](#) that his "constructive engagement with [trade unions] is one of reasons why Scotland is only part of the UK where we are not seeing nurses go on strike today". Only weeks later, he [faced condemnation](#) from the RCN for planning to impose a pay deal rejected by its members.

Siobhan Aston, despite having voted to strike, is still sympathetic to the position in which the Scottish government finds itself. "I do believe that they are more left-leaning [than the UK government] and are trying to accommodate us,"

she tells us. “Their response to this has been that the money’s not there through the Barnett consequentials, and I do understand that argument. But realistically, we’re at an impasse. We can’t afford not to settle this and not to find a compromise.” The UK government “does need to allocate more funding to the devolved nations”, she concedes, while at the same time rejecting some of the more passionate defences of Scottish ministers from SNP supporters. Aston points out: “I’m pro-indy, but it’s very possible to be pro-independence but not agree with the government on absolutely everything. I think that’s widely misunderstood.”

“We’re at an impasse. We can’t afford not to settle this and not to find a compromise.”

That Unite and Unison members voted to accept the pay offer is particularly disappointing to Aston. “There’s division, frankly,” she admits. Though acknowledging that the other unions represent a higher proportion of workers on lower bands, for many of whom the pay offer was “close to inflation”, she notes the narrowness of the margin in some of the ballots. Just 57% of voters in Unison’s last ballot accepted the pay deal, with many of the union’s own members incensed at the outcome. “The word that I’m hearing is that a lot of people are leaving, registered staff are leaving, and moving to a trade union that they feel represents them better,” Aston says. “That’s not my personal opinion, that’s out there for people to see – it’s all over Facebook groups.”

Heckle spoke with Stevie, an NHS mental health worker in Clydebank who resigned from Unison after 18 years’ membership and joined the RCN. “I’ve been speaking to a lot of nursing colleagues over the last few weeks as pay negotiations continue with the Scottish government and I have to say that I’ve never known such unity of opinion and determination among them with regard to rejecting real-terms pay cuts and standing up for the NHS,” he says. “I know several long-term members of Unison who resigned in disgust at the union’s cheerleading for

a real-terms pay cut. People support the RCN position of demanding fair pay and support for our NHS.”

Aston is confident that public opinion is firmly behind the nurses, paying tribute to the work of other unions, including the RMT and the CWU, in forcefully making the case for inflation-busting pay rises in recent months, including among NHS workers. The other driving factor, she believes, is the strength of public feeling around the NHS. “Staff feel – and I’ve been a patient too in the last year – that standards are declining,” she explains. “There’s not enough of us to do the job. That’s the reality.” There were over 6,300 nursing and midwifery vacancies in Scotland at the end of September, according to [NHS Scotland figures](#), and the number is growing. “We need more people in order to do the work well, but the problem is people are leaving,” Aston says. “Realistically, if we don’t look at the wages, we’re never going to solve those staffing issues, those retention issues and those recruitment issues.”

Her work with NHS Workers Say NO, a grassroots organisation established at the height of the pandemic in summer 2020, has helped Aston to build a formidable online following which she has used to further the campaign for better pay and conditions for NHS workers. She has nearly 47,000 followers [on Twitter](#) and her [TikTok videos](#) about the pay dispute have collectively racked up tens of thousands of views.

Although new to the RCN, Aston is looking forward to getting more involved and joining her colleagues on the picket line. She has already visited striking nurses in Belfast as well as picket lines with other striking workers, and is effusive about the work of [StrikeMap](#), a worker-led project helping people find out where and when pickets are taking place locally so they can show their support. “It’s really, really important because it’s tough going,” she says. “It’s tough going, campaigning, and it’s hard work. I’ve seen it from my colleagues across the UK setting up strike committees. When

people go to their picket line, it really provides an important psychological boost to the people that are standing there.”

RCN Scotland has said it will announce its strike dates early in the new year. The RCM and GMB unions have indicated that they could follow suit if the Scottish government refuses to return to negotiations. In the spirit of working class solidarity and in defence of the NHS, the full strength of the trade union and socialist movements should be prepared to come out in their support.

Originally published on 30 December 2022 by Heckle, online publication of the [Republican Socialist Platform](#) – <https://heckle.scot/2022/12/scottish-nurses-strike-for-fair-pay-and-the-future-of-the-nhs/>. You can join RSP here: <https://join.republicansocialists.scot/>

“The Other Davos” – Swiss counter summit to the World Economic Forum, watch on YouTube 13/14 January

The “World Economic Forum” of big business interests kicks off in Davos, Switzerland on 16 January 2023. For a number of years, ecosocialist.scot’s friends and allies in the Swiss “[Movement for Socialism](#)” have organised a counter-summit called “The Other Davos” that focusses on the economic and ecological crises as they affect working class people around the world and presenting ecosocialist alternatives to the global establishment.

The motto of The Other Davos 2023 is "***In solidarity against inflation, climate catastrophe & war***".

Guests include Ukrainian-born sociologist Yuliya Yurchenko, Ukrainian activist Tasha Lomonosova (Sotsialnyi Rukh) and Lausanne-based Ukrainian socialist Hanna Perekhoda (solidaritéS); Russian journalist Ilya Matveev (Posle Magazine); economic geographer Christian Zeller (author of Revolution for the Climate); Simon Pirani (author of Burning Up: A Global History of Fossil Fuel Consumption"); the Iranian journalist Mina Khani; activists from RWE & Co. Simon Hannah (Anticapitalist Resistance), Charlotte Powell (rs21) and Taisie Tsikas (rs21) from Great Britain; the Italian trade unionist Eliana Como (Sinistra Anticapitalista); Christoph Wälz (Trade Union for Education and Science, Berlin); the anti-racist activists Simin Jawabreh and Mark Akkerman; as well as the journalists Anna Jikhareva (WOZ), Nelli Tügel and Jan Ole Arps (ak – analyse&kritik).

The event takes place in Zurich and starts on **Friday 13 January at 6pm British time, and runs until 7pm on Saturday 14 January**.

Some of the sessions will be livestreamed on YouTube and many presenters will be speaking in English, one of three official languages of The Other Davos (the others being German and French).

The full programme is available here:

[The Other Davos 2023 > sozialismus.ch](https://www.sozialismus.ch/the-other-davos-2023)

But you can join the YouTube livestreams as follows:

Friday 13 January at 6pm-8.30pm (British time)

Plenary session: "**Perspectives of Solidarity in a burning World**"

We are currently experiencing a dramatic escalation of the contradictions of capitalist society. War, ecological crisis, inflation and poverty are raising the stakes of the challenges the left is facing. Our answers must inevitably question capitalist power and property relations.

[\(1452\) Plenum: Solidarische Perspektiven in einer brennenden Welt \(Das Andere Davos 2023\) – YouTube](#)

Saturday 14 January at 9.30am -12 noon (British time)

Workshop: The Iranian Revolution and International Solidarity

With: Mina Khani, Iranian journalist (e.g. at ak – analyse&kritik) and queer feminist in Berlin, and Elisa Moros, feminist activist of the European Network in Solidarity with Ukraine and the Nouveau Parti Anticapitaliste (NPA) in Paris.

[\(1452\) Der Aufstand im Iran und die internationale feministische Solidarität \(Das Andere Davos 2023\) – YouTube](#)

Saturday 14 January at 1.30pm -4pm (British time)

Workshop: Resistance Against War and Neoliberalism in Ukraine

With: Yuliya Yurchenko, lecturer in political economy at the University of Greenwich (UK), author of the book “Ukraine and the Empire of Capital: From Marketisation to Armed Conflict”, Tasha Lomonosova, activist of the Ukrainian socialist organization Sotsialnyi Rukh (SR); fled from Kyiv to Berlin in March 2022, and Hanna Perekhoda, from Donetsk, political scientist at the University of Lausanne, activist of solidaritéS and the Ukraine-Switzerland Committee.

[\(1452\) Der ukrainische Widerstand gegen Krieg und Neoliberalismus \(Das Andere Davos 2023\) – YouTube](#)

Saturday 14 January at 5pm -8pm (British time)

Workshop: **For an Internationalist Antifascism!**

With Mark Akkerman, active with abolishfrontex/stopthewaronmigrants, Mina Khani, Iranian publicist (at ak-analyse&kritik, among others) and queer feminist, Tatjana Söding, activist of the Zetkin collective (research group on right-wing extremism and climate justice), and activists of the Movement for Socialism (BFS).

[\(1452\) Plenum: Für einen internationalistischen Antifaschismus! \(Das Andere Davos 2023\) – YouTube](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JyfJyfJyfJy)

Please note that times on the programme on the official website are in Central European Time (CET) which is one hour ahead of British Time.

Yet another UN COP Summit last minute deal, but was it worth it ... XR Gairloch

Extinction Rebellion (XR) Gairloch latest Climate Crisis Newsletter had a review of the COP 15 Biodiversity summit held in Montreal in December 2022, which we are republishing below. It is available on the [XR Scotland](https://xr-scotland.org/cop15-biodiversity-summit/) website. We hope to publish more material on the COP15 Biodiversity event on the ecosocialist.scot website in the near future, and welcome comments and debate.

XR Gairloch Climate Crisis Newsletter No 126 – Editorial

Yet another UN COP Summit last minute deal, but was it worth it.....

As is usual with UN COP summits it goes down to the wire and the COP15 Biodiversity summit was no different. A deal was eventually done at 3.30 am on Monday morning, but was it? The Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), who are one of the biodiverse countries in the world, said it didn't agree with the document but the COP president just overruled them and declared the deal was done anyway. The DRC were later persuaded by Brazil and Indonesia (another two major biodiverse countries) to back down and sign the agreement.

So did that mean the deal done at COP15 was a major success? No unfortunately not.

Since the Biodiversity COP summit was first established some 30 years ago, they have failed to accomplish any meaningful gains in its mission. In fact a recent U.N. report showed that not a single target from the summit's previous 2010 agreement has been met.

This year nearly 5,000 delegates from 196 countries around the world gathered during the December 7-19 summit aiming to secure a new deal: a 10-year framework aimed at saving Earth's forests, oceans and species before it's too late.

A last minute deal was agreed which featured 23 action-oriented targets to be delivered by 2030 of which the most important was probably the target of protecting 30% of land and sea, but unfortunately the agreement was thought by many environmentalists to be weak and flawed, some of these being:

- The targets and actions are not legally binding
- Weak on how it is implemented and monitored. The

agreement is doomed without clear mechanisms for implementing targets. Similar factors were widely blamed for the failure of the last 10-year biodiversity deal, adopted in 2010 in Aichi, Japan, which was unable to achieve nearly any of its objectives.

- It is said to be the biodiversity equivalent to the Paris 2015 agreement for Climate Change and that has been a failure.
- The use of weak wording like -“eliminate, **phase out or reform incentives**, including subsidies harmful for biodiversity” and “progressively reducing” these subsidies
- Weakened language regarding corporate and non-state disclosure. During COP15, almost 500 companies voiced support for mandatory disclosure of nature-related impacts through the Business for Nature group’s “Make it Mandatory” campaign. However, the final text does not require mandatory disclosure, meaning many corporates will need to involve themselves with voluntary disclosure initiatives.
- Vague, unambitious language on halting species extinctions at some point before 2050, instead of 2030.

‘Flawed but a turning point for humanity’: Green groups react to COP15’s global biodiversity agreement. [Read article.](#)

The fact is human civilisation depends on a healthy and diverse natural environment to survive and flourish. It’s a tragedy that we’re living in one of the most nature-depleted countries in the world—and a travesty that the impetus to turn this around just isn’t there. Those with the power to make change are moving too slowly and are pushing the disaster down a road that’s rapidly running out.

UK accused of hypocrisy over environment protection targets.
[Read Article.](#)

Scotland’s rarest animals face being wiped out warns expert.

[Read article.](#)

Is “Nature Positive” the new “Carbon Neutral” of biodiversity greenwash, and why were fossil fuel delegates at COP15?..... What does ‘nature positive’ mean – and can it rally support to stop biodiversity loss? [Read article.](#)

Humanity has become a weapon of mass extinction.....

The UN biodiversity talks, held every two years, have never garnered the same attention as the world's main environmental focus – the annual UN talks on climate change.

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres has slammed multinational corporations for turning the world's ecosystems into “playthings of profit” and warned failure to correct course would lead to catastrophic results. “We are treating nature like a toilet,” Guterres said. “And ultimately, we are committing suicide by proxy,” with the effects felt on jobs, hunger, disease and death.

As the human population tops 8 billion, the rest of life is being decimated. We've destroyed two-thirds of the rainforests, half the coral reefs, and a million species are now facing oblivion, one-third of all land is severely degraded and fertile soil is being lost, while pollution and climate change are accelerating the degradation of the oceans.

Species are vanishing at a rate not seen in 10 million years. As much as 40 percent of Earth's land surfaces are considered degraded, according to a 2022 UN Global Land Outlook assessment.

196 governments signed the agreement to protect 30% of the planet by 2030 – but scientists say it isn't enough. For nature to regenerate, and to save our planet's life-support systems, we have to protect half the Earth, inspired by EO

Wilson's Half-Earth project – and we need a global treaty to enforce action. Currently, 17% of terrestrial and 10% of marine areas are protected so 30% will be a significant increase if it is achieved.

Half Earth Project. [See site.](#)

Ultimately, this is about our survival. Even as the planet withers, the chainsaws, diggers, and polluters are charging ahead, pulverising the planet into a barren, lifeless tundra. All in the name of economic growth .

Scientists have warned that with forests and grasslands being lost at unprecedented rates and oceans under pressure from pollution and over-fishing, humans are pushing the Earth beyond safe limits. This includes increasing the risk of diseases, like SARs CoV-2, Ebola and HIV, spilling over from wild animals into human populations.

What happens to the natural world, happens to us all. We are not separate from nature; we are part of it, connected to the very trees, rivers, and oceans that are being decimated.

The COP15 summit in Montreal was regarded as a “last chance” to put nature on a path to recovery. Let us hope that the human race stands by what it agreed at the summit and improves on it to ensure we are not putting a death sentence on nature and ourselves.

Reprinted from XR Gairloch Climate Crisis Newsletter No 126
[Climate-Crisis-News-Letter-No-126-xr-gairloch.pdf](https://xrscotland.org/Climate-Crisis-News-Letter-No-126-xr-gairloch.pdf)
[\(xrscotland.org\)](https://xrscotland.org)

Refuse to be slaves: defend the right to strike!

With Scotland's teachers holding a one day strike on 10/11 January followed by a rolling series of one day strikes thereafter, and Scotland's NHS workers discussing launching strike action following rejection of the inadequate Scottish government-backed pay offer, the strike wave in Scotland and across the UK state shows no signs of abating.

Ongoing disputes and further strikes across the UK are still affecting the rail industry, Royal Mail, civil servants, the university sector and many other industries. The Tory UK government response to the cost-of-living crisis afflicting workers is to publish a Bill at Westminster this week to restrict trade union rights even further.

ecosocialist.scot is republishing below an important analysis and call for action across Scotland from the [Scottish Socialist Party](#)'s Workplace Organiser, Richie Venton, as a contribution to the sort of fightback we urgently need in Scotland.

Refuse to be slaves: defend the right to strike!

By Richie Venton, Scottish Socialist Party Workplace Organiser

The Tories are hellbent on turning workers into slaves. They are rushing through legislation on so-called Minimum Service Levels that would effectively ban the right to strike for countless workers, and drastically undermine the effectiveness of any attempts by any workers to stand up for themselves against pay cuts, job losses, slashed working conditions, dangerous safety levels, and decimation of public services.

Under their long-trumpeted new laws, the Tories would empower

employers with the weapon of naming workers who must go to work during any strike action, even after their union has gone through the entire rigmarole of postal ballots, outrageous voting thresholds and 14 days' notice of strike action to make the strike legal. Any named worker would face potential dismissal from their job if they declined to come into work on strike days, after being handpicked by the employer – with no legal protection from unfair dismissal, which workers currently enjoy for the first 12 weeks of a strike. And unions could be sued unless they obeyed the employer-imposed minimum staffing levels on strike days.

A Human Right

The right to strike is a fundamental human right, one that separates the wage-slaves of capitalism from the literal slaves of the ancient slave empires of Rome, Greece and others. It's a right enshrined in the European Human Rights Commission, ILO and other international bodies. The human right to withdraw your labour, rather than being chained to the demands of profiteering employers.

It's the difference between being able to take collective, agreed industrial action to stop the relentless assaults on jobs, pay, workplace health and safety, and indeed the quality of services provided to the public – or abject capitulation to the profit-crazed attacks by big business and austerity-driven governments.

The British government has been quick to condemn SOME regimes abroad as dictatorships when they outlaw the right to strike – unless they happen to be their allies in world exploitation! They are now poised to imitate the actions of the worst dictatorships.



Tories Threaten Minimum Safety – not Strikers!

When the smiling snake Grant Shapps – Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy – appears on TV reassuring viewers this is all about protecting ‘Minimum Safety Levels’, he is indulging in his customary, deceitful, barefaced lies. The same creature cried crocodile tears and muttered faux outrage at the on-the-spot sacking and replacement of 800 ferry workers by the gangster capitalists of P&O Ferries last March – and then helped his Tory government rush through emergency legislation that now allows any employer to do fundamentally the same thing: replace strikers with agency workers.

Back in his days as Tory Mayor of London, Boris Johnson pioneered the call for a ban on strikes in transport – because workers on London Underground dared defend themselves and the vital service to the city’s economy they provide.

Last year, when railway workers were (and are) to the fore in

fighting back against over a decade of pay cuts and vicious assaults on safety standards for the travelling public, the chorus of demands for de facto strike bans on transport grew louder in the Tory ranks and their hired assassins in the right-wing media. We repeatedly warned at the time that if they got away with this against railway workers – under the guise of Minimum Service Levels legislation – they would inevitably extend their assault on the right to strike to other sectors. It didn't take long for that warning to be totally vindicated. As ambulance workers, NHS staff, border security civil service staff and teachers strike in defence of themselves and their services – and firefighters ballot to follow suit – the Tories' legislation proposes to include all of the above, plus workers in nuclear decommissioning.



Unions Already Provide 'Life-and-Limb' Cover

The Tories' claim that these laws are to protect Minimum Safety Levels is rampant hypocrisy and downright lies. Unions

in key sectors have for years agreed and organised 'life-and-limb cover' when they plan strike action. Over recent decades, I've discussed with umpteen groups of workers in the likes of council services and the NHS who are taking or preparing strike action, who not only explain they are busy organising, through their unions, for 'emergency cover' or 'life-and-limb cover', but add that in many instances the slaughter of staffing levels actually means they are putting more staff on duty during this exercise than would be there on a normal working day!

And that's before the eruption of the current, life-threatening levels of understaffing in the NHS, social care, fire and rescue and other vital services. That's before the Tories succeed in driving train companies into imposing Driver Only Operated trains across the board, or slash rail maintenance by at least 43%, as they want to do right now in return for below-inflation pay offers. It's the Tories and their pals in the boardrooms who threaten 'minimum safety levels', not strikers. In fact, many of the strikes, such as on the railways and NHS, are precisely in defence of safety levels.



Tories' NHS Cuts Threaten Lives

When Schapps et all trot out the lie that their new anti-strike laws are to prevent people having to wait for an ambulance, which planet does he think we all live on? Before any strikes by ambulance workers – or other NHS staff – people have been suffering life-threatening delays, due to decades of conscious refusal to invest in the NHS, with bed cuts, staffing level crises, exacerbated by drastic pay cuts and crucifying overwork and burnout. In fact, one of the main drivers behind strike action by ambulance workers is the daily crisis of understaffing and chaos caused by the impact of austerity on our hospitals – well before Covid added a further twist to the spiralling NHS crisis, of which the government themselves are the chief architects.

No doubt Grant Schapps has – like his boss, Rishi Sunak – a gold-plated private health scheme, so he won't be worried about the delays in treatment of the sick, made daily worse by his regime.

Their new, even more vicious anti-strike laws will do nothing to avert that crisis, and by undermining workers' ability to resist their austerity cuts will actually make things worse in the frontline services the Tories want to spearhead their de facto strike ban within.



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Class War on Democracy

Britain already has the most repressive anti-union, anti-working-class legislation in the entire western world. Laws that were especially ushered in by the hated Maggie Thatcher Tories in the 1980s but retained absolutely by 13 years of New Labour governments; made even worse since by Tory and Tory-LibDem regimes; now being drastically added to by the current, unelected Tory government, presided over by the 222nd richest person in Britain, Rishi Sunak.

In their mission to crush workers' pay and conditions to turbocharge profits, the Tories want to destroy the collective power of organised workers by breaking the unions. They must not succeed.

The Tories have embarked on their escalated war on the working class because they've had a fright, with currently a million workers either taking strike action or having already balloted to do so.

For decades, the employers and their political puppets got away with murder, with the help of defeatist union leaders who told us there was nothing we could do to resist. Now workers have begun to rise off their knees and fight back, the British ruling class are unleashing their customary class brutality. They must not succeed in their war on democracy, workers' rights, pay, jobs and services.

Defeat Divide-and-Conquer Tactics

The employers and government are desperate to divide and conquer workers. They hope – in vain – to whip up ‘the public’ against strikers, to paint themselves as the saviours of public safety through these laws. But who are the public? It’s the railway workers, posties, teachers, university staff, civil service staff, coffin makers and a host of others who have had enough and are striking back.

That widespread solidarity across multiple sectors of the working class is the chief weapon of defence against the attempt to convert workers into slaves. The TUC has threatened legal action against the government’s plans. Fine, explore any avenues of self-defence. But it’s a dangerous myth to think legal action is the main, let alone only form of resistance. Legal challenges have sometimes been useful, but the most fundamental means of defence of the right to strike is... to strike back, together!



Bring Out a Million Strikers – Together!

One million workers are already either striking on (mostly) separate dates or have live ballots to do so. Alongside the appropriate tactics in each union or industry – with full input to decisions by shop stewards and conveners – the unions embracing these million members should urgently name the day for at least a partial general strike of one million workers, around their common demands on pay, jobs, conditions, services – and in opposition to this attempt to ban strikes. Better still, and simultaneously, the union leaderships – starting with those already engaged in action, putting relentless pressure on the timid TUC – should name the date for a full-scale 24-hour general strike of the entire seven million trade unionists in the UK, including over 600,000 in Scotland.

With proper preparation in workplaces and communities – mass meetings, public meetings, rallies, street activity, media, etc – this could win massive support, including amongst people currently not in a union, not in a job.

Defending basic democratic rights, opposing measures that amount to modern slavery, would find powerful resonance amongst millions of working-class and young people.

Call Mass Scottish Demo and 24-hour General Strike

That is perhaps even more so in Scotland. We never voted in this Tory government – and never have given the Tories a majority since 1955.

The STUC and individual union Scottish leaderships should urgently draw up plans, including a mass Demo at the Scottish parliament, welcoming the SNP government's stated opposition to these new Tory laws, but calling on the Holyrood government to declare its outright refusal – in advance – of ever implementing these anti-strike laws in Scotland, in either the sectors they directly or indirectly employ workers, and outlawing them in contracts they hold with private employers.

Such a Demo – with such an aim – would also add pressure on the Scottish government to end its public sector pay cap and cough up the funds for decent pay for teachers, NHS staff and others currently in dispute. It could pound the Holyrood politicians with demands to defy Tory cuts and instead demand back some of the £5billion stolen off Scotland by Westminster since 2010, to avert the looming carnage in areas like local government.

Combining union demands on pay and conditions with defence of the basic democratic right to strike – through determined action – is the best and only guarantee of success.

Time is short. Prolonged legal wrangling in mostly hostile Courts is not the means to defend the working class. A mass Scottish Demo, and proper preparations for combined strike action – on the same day by all those currently striking and

on an urgently named date for a complete 24-hour general strike – are the routes we need to travel.

Refuse to be slaves! Strike together, march together, win together!



[Republished from Scottish Socialist Party 6 January 2023](#)

Corrected 9 January 2023 to indicate *ONE* million workers across the UK with strike mandates, not two; and that EIS strikes are 10/11 January (10 primary, 11 secondary)

Towards a global week of action for solidarity with

Ukraine

ecosocialist.scot members have endorsed the following statement calling for the week of 24 February to be made a global week of action against the Russian invasion and for solidarity with Ukraine and added our name to the appeal. The statement was prepared by the European Network for Solidarity with Ukraine which represents a wide range of socialist, labour movement and international solidarity organisations across Europe.

We urge the widest possible support for the statement in Scotland, across the rest of the UK state and internationally.

Stop the Russian war of aggression! Peace for Ukraine!

Friday February 24 will mark one year since the Russian army invaded Ukraine on the orders of Putin and his regime. A year of indescribable suffering and bloodshed for the Ukrainian people.

The completely unjustified invasion has already cost the lives of many tens of thousands of Ukrainian civilians and military personnel. Every day the Ukrainian people face brutality and violence. Millions of civilians have been forced to flee abroad, millions are internally displaced.

Entire towns and villages have been reduced to rubble by Russian bombing and airstrikes. Civilian infrastructure (electricity and heating networks, schools, hospitals, railroads, ports, etc.) is being systematically destroyed, making the country unlivable.

Putin wants to make an independent and livable Ukraine impossible:

- *The Russian army has committed mass murders of civilians and Ukrainian soldiers in many places. The*

fate of many thousands is still unknown. Mass rape campaigns and killings by rape, are established attack strategies. With every liberation of a Ukrainian village or town, new crimes come to light.

- A great many Ukrainian citizens (including many hundreds of thousands of children/ over 700 thousand children) have been deported, without permission and often by force, to the territory of Russia.*

The Ukrainian people rightly refuse to be passive victims of this war of aggression and actively and massively resists the invasion, with or without arms in hand. Very widespread mutual solidarity and self-organization of the population plays a crucial role in enabling this resistance to continue, as does international support in many different forms.

The killing of the Ukrainian people before the eyes of the world and the destruction of independent Ukraine must stop! The loudest possible international protest against the Russian invasion and the widest possible solidarity with the Ukrainian people is more necessary than ever

We, organizations and individuals from all over the world, launch a call to make the week of February 24 a global week of action against the Russian invasion and for solidarity with Ukraine.

- Peace for Ukraine, no to the Russian war! Immediate cessation of bombing by the Russian military and withdrawal of all Russian troops from Ukraine.***
- The widest possible support for and solidarity with the Ukrainian people in their justified resistance to the Russian invasion.***

To add your organisation's name to this appeal, please write to us at info@ukraine-solidarity.eu

Edinburgh Ukraine Solidarity Book Launch – Sat 21 January 7pm-8pm

[Ukraine Solidarity Campaign Scotland](#) are holding an important launch of a book in solidarity with the resistance of Ukraine to the Russian invasion. The meeting will be hosted by [Lighthouse Books, Edinburgh's radical bookshop](#), on **Saturday 21 January from 7pm-8pm**.

Register to attend and buy the book here:
<https://lighthousebookshop.com/events/ukraine-voices-of-resistance-and-solidarity>

The book is “Ukraine: Voices of Resistance and Solidarity” and is a collection of recent writings by Ukrainians and socialists around the world.

ABOUT THE BOOK

This is an extremely important book published at this tragic moment when our country has been invaded. It builds a bridge of solidarity between the people of Ukraine and the working class around the world. The contributions make it easier to imagine a better future without imperialism and injustice.

Vitalii Dudin, President of Sotsialnyi Rukh/Social Movement.

Ukraine: Voices of Resistance and Solidarity is a contribution to understanding what Ukrainians think, feel and need. Their voices are a call for solidarity, peace and progress. Above all, it is about the Ukrainian people deciding their future and an end to Russian imperialism.

Mick Antoniw, Member of Senedd Cymru.

There is an independent review of the book republished on the Ukraine Solidarity Campaign website – [here](#).

The book is published by [Resistance Books](#), with whom [ecosocialist.scot](#) is proud to be associated.

The Facebook event is [here](#) and the details and text of the leaflet for the meeting are below.

We urge all our readers to support this important meeting and to buy the book, which in Scotland can be bought or [ordered from Lighthouse Books](#) (Opening hours: Mon – Sat 10am – 8pm Sun 11.30am – 5pm) directions below or ordered by mail order from Resistance Books [here](#)

UKRAINE: VOICES OF RESISTANCE AND SOLIDARITY

Lighthouse Books, 43-5 West Nicolson Street, Edinburgh, EH8 9DB – [directions](#)

Saturday, 21st January, 7.00 – 8.00 pm.

Speakers:

Chris Ford, [Ukraine Solidarity Campaign](#) and co-editor of the book

Taras Fedirko, [Ukraine Solidarity Campaign](#), Edinburgh

The world is becoming an ever more violent and oppressive place. Competing imperialisms, some growing in influence, others declining, are jockeying for place in an increasingly unstable global order. Whole nations and peoples have been repressed or invaded, either directly by imperial powers or by their local allies. We have seen this in Iraq, Syria, Kurdistan, Palestine, Yemen and Xinjiang. Most recently, we have witnessed the bloody invasion of Ukraine, launched by Putin's Russian empire on February 24th, 2022.

Putin thought that this invasion would be walkover, and the USA and leading European powers initially thought so too. However, Putin's invasion was met by the resistance of ordinary Ukrainians. Initially they were often unarmed, or only lightly armed. This in the face of Russian heavy artillery, air strikes and then tank-led troops. Women have been to the forefront of these communities of resistance and have been some of the main victims of the continuing occupation. The Donbass miners, with their history of opposition to exploitation and oppression by Ukrainian oligarchs, are also now in the front line of resistance against Putin and his kleptocrat backers. They have already won widespread international solidarity.

This meeting, organised by the Ukraine Solidarity Campaign (Scotland), invites people to hear the arguments presented in the book, Ukraine: Voices of Resistance and Solidarity. USC(S)'s New Year resolution is to help organise the solidarity necessary to support the people of Ukraine and end the Russian occupation. Self-determination whether, national, social or individual, needs to be defended wherever it is threatened. Please come to this meeting and bring others along too.

[Ukraine Solidarity Campaign Scotland](#)