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Fourth International statement

Our Solidarity with the Worldwide Anti-Racist Revolt

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The scope and magnitude of what have become worldwide protests and an emerging mass upsurge against racism and police brutality following the murder of Black worker George Floyd by police in Minneapolis, Minnesota in the US, are unprecedented. These mobilizations are marked by the massive multiracial participation of young people in a cross-generational movement. They have also been in many cases the first mobilizations in countries emerging from lockdown and have succeeded in imposing their presence on the streets.

Daily protests throughout the US have continued for more than two weeks in cities big and small. The multiracial, Black-led, largely decentralized, spontaneous nature of most of the protests, some of which take place in multiple parts of cities at the same time, are the unmistakable signs of an authentic mass social movement. Many of the protestors are unemployed. Many will be drawn into protests for unemployment insurance and other social struggles in the coming period.

There has been widespread police repression of anti-racist protests including the use of dangerous chemicals in gas and peppers spray, unprovoked assaults against peaceful protestors, curfews, and mass arrests.

The protests that are taking place outside the US from Europe to Australia, from Japan to Africa, from Mexico to Brazil have combined protests against the killing of Floyd, solidarity with the antiracist protests in the US, and protests against local police brutality against Black majority populations as in Brazil, indigenous peoples as in Australia, ethnic and religious minorities and migrants. Protestors around the world have shouted and carried signs proclaiming “Black Lives Matter” alongside the names of people of color killed by police locally – Adama Traoré, in France in 2016 and several cases in Britain – in ways similar to George Floyd. Demands to remove symbols of racist and imperialist oppression such as statues of Belgian King Leopold II who murderously exploited the Congo as a private capitalist space, or statues of slave traders in Britain, center of the transatlantic slave trade, echo demands to remove Confederate statues and Southern (pro-slavery) flags.

Crisis of Capitalist Legitimacy

The failure of capitalist governments – most notably in Britain, Brazil, and the US – to adequately respond to the Covid-19 crisis, the waves of mass lay-offs that have thrown millions out of work and which affect racialized and immigrant populations much more violently, coupled with mass protests that after two weeks of daily mobilizations are gaining momentum, have put capitalist governments momentarily on the defensive as they strive to reimpose normal capitalist functioning.

In the US, the rebellion has already caused division in the big bourgeoisie and its political representatives. There are signs of crisis of the regime and of the Trump government itself, as top military officers and Trump’s own secretary of the Defense – and all four living former presidents including George W. Bush – have openly disavowed Trump’s threat to use military force against the largely youthful, multiracial demonstrators he labels “thugs” and “terrorists.”

The fact that this division has prevented on occasion brutal repression and that the slogan of defund/demilitarize the police is growing among the demonstrators with some success, represent initial partial victories in the struggle.

The moment has its dangers as well. Trump’s law and order tweets have encouraged white nationalist groups some

of whom have attempted to join the anti-racist protests while displaying coded racist symbols and long guns. Far-right and authoritarian governments in Brazil, the Philippines, India and elsewhere are using the situation to strengthen anti-terrorist and repressive measures which will have a disproportionate impact on Black, migrant and indigenous communities. Migrant communities in Europe have long been terrorized by far-right groups such as Golden Dawn in Greece, and the economic crisis will exacerbate racist and anti-migrant attacks.

A Mass Upsurge

The enormous explosion of antiracist mobilization following Floyd's murder has been seen as the result of the "straw that broke the camel's back." This includes not only a series of police murders against Black people, but the effects of a pandemic that has resulted in mortalities in the Black community at two to three times greater than the population as a whole, and an economic crisis that has also disproportionately harmed Black and ethnic minority workers.

Mass protesting in the streets and the ongoing need for physical distancing at a time when non-white, migrant and marginalized communities are particularly vulnerable to the pandemic is one of this period's great contradictions. Black communities, supported by young people and white workers, are taking to the streets because they consider it is more urgent to stop racism, repressive violence and neo-fascist governments than to respect measures that are impossible to implement in their homes and under conditions of lack of income and employment.

The accumulated tension of racist violence including police murders of Blacks and murderous antisemitic attacks and anti-Muslim terror, and the genocide of indigenous peoples combine with massive unemployment caused by the depression and pandemic that has hit working class communities of color far harder than the population as a whole to explain the willingness to fight and courage in the face of the oppressors.

The links made by protestors between Floyd's killing and local racist police violence throughout the world run deep. The treatment of internally colonized, indigenous people of color in the US, Canada, Australia, South Africa, and Latin America, and migrant communities of color in the imperialist metropolises of Europe reflect centuries of colonial and imperialist domination of the global north over the global south that have been central to capitalism. From the looting of the silver mines of Potosí by Spanish colonists in the 16th century that became part of the capital accumulation that underpinned European capitalist development, the European enslavement of millions of Africans, to the colonization of Africa in the 19th century and today's neo-imperialist domination of the global south people of color have borne the brunt of capitalist development and expansion.

Some of the worst atrocities against human beings in recent decades have been perpetrated against ethnic and religious minorities. Ethnic minorities and socially constructed racial groups have faced repression around the world, from ethnic cleansing in the former Yugoslavia and Rwanda in the 1990s to the current repression of Muslim minorities in China and India and the treatment of Palestinians in Israel and the occupied territories.

Their Anti-Racism and Ours

Reformist capitalist politicians are scrambling to remain relevant and channel the movement's energy into the safe channels of government hearings, commissions, and cosmetic reforms, limited to removing symbols of the slave trade and superficial changes in police practices.

A rush of multinational corporations – including many that are part of the "Fortune Five Hundred" in the US – are now

loudly proclaiming anti-racism, running expensive media ads, pledging donations, revising company handbooks. These are the same companies who practiced racist and sexist hiring practices, and resisted reforms for years. Many have made huge profits on the backs of working people of color.

There is no leadership or voice from the traditional political parties. The lack of political leadership in the US is particularly acute. The domination of the capitalist duopoly of Democrats and Republicans over US politics has meant that the energy in the streets is not finding a nation-wide political expression. During the US Democratic primary campaign, US Senator Bernie Sanders generated enormous enthusiasm and widespread support particularly among young people for his program of social democratic, New Deal style reforms. But the Sanders campaign was ended by the corporate interests that control the DP before the pandemic, mass layoffs, and now antiracist protests in the street began, creating a gap on the left.

The transformation of European social democracy into neo-liberal tools of capital and the electoral collapse of the CPs has left a gap on the European left that presents both challenges and opportunities to connect anti-racist and anti-capitalist demands.

A Time of Opportunity

The global uprising against racism and police repression has enormous potential for the future of the new generations, who are starting workplace and trade union struggles, who are rising up in the struggles against climate change, in feminist resistance, and who are proving themselves in the direct struggle against the police as the armed force of bourgeois democracy, underlining the necessity of organizing self-defense by the movement during demonstrations and other public events as well as the need to build an ongoing movement based on democratic self-organization.

For the moment, the protest movement expresses anger and often radical but unfocused demands for change. This reflects the newness of the movement, the inexperience of the protestors, but also the bankruptcy of many established reformist political leaderships. In the US context the demand to “Defund/demilitarize the police” and even “disband the police” has found a broad popular echo and has considerable potential as an anti-capitalist transitory demand. There is widespread repudiation of the AFL-CIO for still including racist and ultra-right police unions. Other demands are being formulated as the movement develops and arising from the different national situations: against police violence notably against Black, indigenous and ethnic minority populations, against the criminalization of protest, against institutional racism and the perpetuation of colonial and pro-slavery symbols, and for positive action for social and economic justice to right historic inequality.

It is possible today to raise the banner of working-class international solidarity in a way and with an audience that we have not seen for decades and explain as Malcolm X said “You can't have capitalism without racism” and the fight against racism is intrinsic to the fight against capitalism, and that this movement has considerable potential to swell and converge with labor, women's and anti-capitalist movements throughout the world to impose the path to a new, just society.

For all these reasons, the Fourth International commits itself to fighting alongside the women and men who are today insurgent in this anti-racist and anti-neofascist uprising. The battles against state violence and institutional racism under capitalism can only have coherent consequences if we face the implications. We are all at war against the system that destroys the planet, discriminates against human beings by gender, race, sexual orientation and identity, which overexploits us in the name of the survival of corporations, whose sole objective is the permanent increase of profit, to the detriment of our lives and bodies.

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Executive Bureau of the Fourth International

9 June 2020

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