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Iran-Iraq-Lebanon

# The popular demonstrations continue!

- IV Online magazine - 2020 - IV540 - January 2020 -

Publication date: Friday 31 January 2020

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**In retaliation for the assassination of Qassem Soleimani, Iran launched ballistic missiles at US bases in Iraq, provoking Iraqi and non-US casualties. However, efforts by the Iranian regime and its allies in Iraq and Lebanon to derail or stop the demonstrations have failed to achieve their objectives.**

## **In Iran new massive mobilizations**

In Iran, new mass demonstrations have taken place since the Iranian government acknowledged and initially denied responsibility for the crash of a Ukrainian plane over Tehran. An Iranian missile mistakenly shot down the civilian plane a few hours after Iranian missile attacks on US bases in Iraq. The vast majority of the 176 passengers on the Ukrainian plane were Iranian dual nationals, visiting family over the winter holidays and returning to Canada or Britain.

While maintaining pressure on Iran, Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau blamed the U.S., saying Monday that without the recent escalation of regional tensions, the 176 passengers on the Ukrainian Boeing would still be alive.

Demonstrators in Tehran and many cities across the country expressed solidarity with the grieving families of the passengers and crew, and also launched hostile slogans against the leaders of the Islamic Republic of Iran and the Revolutionary Guard Corps (Pasdaran), including Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei, to the cries of "Death to the Dictator". Soleimani's portraits were also torn, broken and abducted by the demonstrators, while the demand for the fall of Khamenei and the regime resounded in the streets. The repression was violent with the arrest of more than 30 people and videos on social networks showing police cracking down on demonstrators with truncheons and gunshots, leaving many injured.

Artists and intellectuals joined the protest by cancelling their participation in the Fajr festivals (music, film, theatre and visual arts) that take place every year in February, on the anniversary of the Islamic Revolution.

Faced with the demonstrations against the regime, Ali Khamenei, Supreme Leader of the Islamic Republic of Iran, responded with a strong speech against the United States and European states, and against the popular protest, while praising the role of the Iranian Revolutionary Guards and General Soleimani in maintaining security in the region and the country. For his part, Rohani, President of the Islamic Republic of Iran, delivered a more moderate speech, pleading for better governance and more pluralism and transparency.

## **Popular resistance continues in Iraq and Lebanon**

In Lebanon and Iraq, popular demonstrations are also continuing, although repression is increasing.

In Iraq, Iran and its allies in the country are still trying to hijack the popular protest movement by limiting their demand to the departure of US troops, without any change in the Iraqi confessional and neo-liberal political system. In particular, the Shiite Islamic fundamentalist leader Moqtada Sadr has called for a massive demonstration to

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denounce the US presence in Iraq and asked his supporters (who took part in the protests and set up tents in Baghdad's main square) to leave the area to join his movement.

Despite pressure and threats, demonstrations and civil disobedience actions continue in Baghdad and in many southern cities, while denouncing the actions of the United States and Iran which seek to turn the country into a zone of settling scores to the detriment of the country's working classes and their struggles.

In Lebanon, the popular revolt against the confessional and neo-liberal ruling class has entered its fourth month of struggle, with a clear tendency towards radicalization, as evidenced by the almost daily attacks against the headquarters of the Bank of Lebanon and other private banks, and the increasingly violent altercations with the forces of law and order. The repression against the demonstrators was considerably reinforced, with several hundred people injured during the weekend of January 18-19. At the same time, the working classes in Lebanon are facing a deepening economic crisis, including draconian banking restrictions and a loss of more than 60% of the value of the national currency.

In the face of geopolitical tensions instrumentalized by the imperialist power of the US and regional powers such as Iran, the struggling popular classes remain the lodestar of progressives and internationalists around the world.

*23 January 2020*

*PS:*

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