

Support the Iranian People's Movement against the Repressive Regime!

US Marxist-Humanists

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The following statement by the US Marxist-Humanists, London Corresponding Committee and international Marxist-Humanists from Canada, India, and West Africa is a contribution for the events in solidarity with the democracy movement in Iran in September and the fall.

On June 15, up to 3 million protestors filled Tehran's Azadi Square. Since then, very large gatherings have been harder due to the beatings and murder of demonstrators. This became evident after the mass confrontations of June 20, which pitted protestors, many of them from the working classes, and Basijmilitia brought in from the countryside in large numbers.

Nonetheless, very large public demonstrations have been taking place at regular intervals. Hundreds of thousands turned out on July 17 during Friday Prayers at Tehran University, taking advantage of the fact that the sermon on that day was being given by the influential Hashemi Rafsanjani, who has become increasingly critical of the regime and its repression. Another extremely large gathering took place at Behesht-e Zahra Cemetery on July 30, as demonstrators carried out the Shia ritual of mourning the dead after 40 days. Most notable here was the student Neda Agha-Soltan, murdered by a Basiji on June 20. Although the regime has tried to avoid large opposition rallies through the cancellation of big public events, on September 18, a day of support rallies for Palestine, huge numbers of pro-democracy demonstrators took over the streets in parts of Tehran.

The Islamist oligarchy that has run Iran since 1979 is itself divided as never before. On the one side stand the most reactionary fundamentalists like Ahmadinejad, as well as the more powerful Supreme Religious Leader Ali Khamenei, hardcore elements of the repressive apparatus (Revolutionary Guards and Basiji), and the judiciary. On the other side are ranged several important Islamic Reformist figures, especially presidential candidate Mir

Hussein Moussavi, the feminist academic Zahra Rahnavard, the immensely popular former president Muhammad Khatami (1997-2005), and presidential candidate Mehdi Karroubi, as well as pragmatic conservative Hashemi Rafsanjani, and a number of other prominent clerics, most notably Grand Ayatollah Hussein Montazeri. These divisions have only deepened since June, with the elite opposition showing no signs of backing down.

Not only does this constitute a gaping contradiction at the top of the regime, but it has also, in dialectical fashion, created in turn an equally contradictory situation for the mass democratic opposition movement. On the one hand, this split at the top has strengthened the hand of the mass movement, giving it a certain protection and a greater chance to manifest itself publicly. On the other hand, the Islamic Reformist leadership of the movement has also served to restrict its development.

Take the example of Karroubi, in some ways the most intransigent and courageous of the Islamic Reformist leaders, a man who has publicly exposed torture and rape within the prisons. Yet Karroubi has also made it clear that he wishes to reform those structures, not overthrow them. Thus, even as his office was raided and closed in September, Karroubi expressed not only his opposition to a revolution, but also to a general strike. As result of their history, their social position, and their mindset, people like Karroubi are incapable of breaking with the regime that produced them.

While the Reformist leadership may want to preserve the Islamic Republic in some form, the logic of events may be moving in a different direction, toward a fully revolutionary upheaval. A lot will depend on whether the working classes – whose legitimate struggles to form independent trade unions have met with severe repression, and who are also experiencing starvation wages, nonpayment of wages, and unemployment — come out in greater numbers and in an organized fashion.

The presence of huge numbers of women in the anti-regime demonstrations, and the way in which the martyred Neda Agha-Soltan has come to symbolize the entire movement, show that the rebellion is fueled by a striving for new human relations with gender relations as the flashpoint of the struggle.

As Marxist-Humanists, we solidarize with the Iranian people in their hour of struggle, but we do so on an independent basis, sometimes in conflict with the positions taken by other socialists and Marxists. Many members of the global Left – intellectuals, feminists, trade unionists, and socialists – have given principled support to the Iranian movement. They have also made clear their firm opposition to any imperialist intervention in Iran, whether by the US or Israel. Unfortunately, some parts of the global Left have betrayed the Iranian

people in their hour of need by supporting Ahmadinejad, among them Venezuela's Hugo Chavez and the Marxist journal *Monthly Review*. These leftists claim that since the regime is resisting Western imperialism, it is deserving of our support. They have also dismissed the mass actions of Iran's youth, women, workers, and intellectuals as an isolated middle class movement. We condemn these falsehoods that serve to mask the oppressive and exploitative reality of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Within the Iranian left, no important tendency has excused the regime or failed to support the democratic movement. A few have done so in a sectarian fashion, however, to the point where they portray the Islamic Reformist leadership as nearly indistinguishable from the most reactionary elements of the regime like Khamenei or Ahmadinejad.

A larger group on the Iranian left has limited its solidarity to human rights and democracy without delving into the question of social revolution. This is connected to the frequently expressed sentiment in Iran that after the experience of the 1979 revolution, "We don't want another revolution." Because of the oppressive reality that came in the wake of 1979, the gnawing question of what happens after the revolution has become so concrete that it is a social fact weighing on the present. At the same time, since the overall situation – repression, authoritarianism, and severe unemployment for youth, women, and the working class – has become intolerable, what then? As Asef Bayat, the author of studies of the Iranian working class, has noted: "For now, the movement is decidedly against a revolution. But revolutions do not announce their arrival in advance. . . . The future will tell if the regime will not turn these reformers into revolutionaries."

To the global left, we urge support for the Iranian youth, women, workers, and other citizens in their freedom struggles, at the same time as we combat imperialism. Do not be taken in by the reactionary form of anti-imperialism of Ahmadinejad and Khamenei!

To the Iranian people, we pledge our opposition to US or Israeli intervention and our firmest solidarity. To our Iranian comrades on the Left, we express the hope that they will neither isolate themselves from the masses nor stop short at the mere reform of the reactionary regime.

- US Marxist-Humanists, <http://usmarxisthumanists.org>
- London Corresponding Committee, publishers of *The Hobgoblin*, <http://www.thehobgoblin.co.uk>
- Other international Marxist-Humanists from Canada, India, and West Africa