

Protests coast to coast demand: No war on Iran! U.S. out of Iraq!

written by Greg Butterfield

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New York City, Jan. 4. SLL photo: Greg Butterfield

The vicious assassination-by-drone of Iranian Gen. Qassem Soleimani and Iraqi Popular Mobilization Forces deputy leader Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis on Jan. 2 was denounced by Iran, Iraq and people worldwide as an act of war. The murders, ordered by U.S. President Donald Trump, came two days after hundreds of Iraqi protesters besieged the U.S. Embassy in Baghdad in response to a Dec. 29 Pentagon missile attack on Iraqi Hezbollah members and civilians.

Trump and the Big Oil/fracking interests that dominate his administration have been gunning for war with Iran since Day One, first of all by pulling the U.S. out of the so-called Iran nuclear deal, an international agreement that Tehran hoped could shake off U.S.-imposed sanctions. Iran has provided major military, economic and political assistance to Syria in its struggle against U.S.-backed terrorists. Last year, Trump unleashed the Turkish dictatorship on eastern Syria while claiming control of Syria's oil fields on behalf of U.S. monopolies' profits.

In solidarity with the righteous protest at the U.S. Embassy in Baghdad, the Answer Coalition and Code Pink Women for Peace and Popular Resistance called for a day of action on Saturday, Jan. 4. It was fortunate that they did, as it gave organizers across the country and the world an anchor for emergency actions in cities large and small when the U.S. escalated its undeclared war on Iran with the assassinations.

Dozens of national and local organizations, including Struggle-La Lucha newspaper and the Socialist Unity Party/Partido de Socialismo Unido, joined in the emergency mobilization, and the number of cities holding actions on the weekend of Jan. 4-5 swelled to over 80. The days of action took on an international scope as well, with anti-war protests held from fire-ravaged Australia to snowy Canada.

At least a thousand people came out to fog-shrouded Times Square in **New York City** to loudly chant, "No justice! No peace! U.S. out of the Middle East!" and marched down Broadway to the Herald Square shopping district.

Speaking for Struggle-La Lucha, Bill Dores called to “bring all U.S. troops home now.” He talked about Gen. Soleimani’s role in leading the regional fight against ISIS and other ultraright, U.S.-linked forces that have ravaged Syria and other countries. Other speakers represented the Answer Coalition, the International Action Center, The People’s Forum, Refuse Fascism, New York Boricua Resistance, BAYAN USA and the International League of Peoples’ Struggle.

The weather was quite a contrast in **Los Angeles**, but there, too, a thousand people took to the streets to denounce Trump’s provocation and U.S. war, sanctions and occupation.

“We find it really important for us to show solidarity for brothers and sisters in Iran and Iraq fighting for their sovereignty,” said Viva Vargas of BAYAN Southern California. “We see the U.S. war machine also waging war in the Philippines. They have sent over \$193 million U.S. tax dollars to fund the killings, to fund the heightened oppression of all our progressive forces, the drones and bombs that cause the displacement of various Indigenous communities.”

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Money for food, not war

“The people are facing major cuts to food stamps and disability benefits,” declared Lee Patterson of the **Baltimore** Peoples Power Assembly. “In April, Trump plans to drop 700,000 people from the SNAP food program and millions more will have their benefits reduced. Here in Baltimore city, over 22 percent of people already go to bed facing hunger.

“But who’s not facing cuts? The Pentagon, that’s who!” Patterson said. “Both the Republicans and Democrats in Congress voted to give the war machine a \$130-billion increase this year to wage more racist wars and spread more pollution with

its 800 bases around the world.”

Dozens of protesters lined a major thoroughfare in downtown Baltimore. They covered a whole block, holding signs and banners in protest of the Trump regime’s latest acts of war targeting Iran, Iraq and Syria. “No bombs! No war! We need health care for the poor!” they chanted.

Among the groups participating were the Socialist Unity Party, Baltimore Peace Action, Youth Against War & Racism, Women in Black and the Communist Party USA-Baltimore.

Winter chill didn’t stop an impressive turnout against war in **Minneapolis**. As Meredith Aby-Keirstead of the Anti-War Committee told Struggle-La Lucha, “We had over 700 people come out to say no to continued war in Iraq and a new war in Iran. Some people came from as far away as North Dakota.

“It was impressive to see so many people fired up to protest when the mainstream media have been beating the drums of war for days, assuring all of us that this was a legitimate attack and not an assassination,” she added.

In **San Diego**, a spontaneous march followed a rally that featured speakers from Anakbayan San Diego, Unión del Barrio, the Party for Socialism and Liberation, the Democratic Socialists of America and the Peace & Freedom Party. “We marched up several blocks and onto the I-5 Freeway overpass, where we hung the lead banner over a railing, making it visible to passing motorists,” said Carl Muhammad of the Socialist Unity Party. “We received a lot of support from the motorists passing below.”

A demonstration in **Detroit’s** Campus Martius Park, organized by the Michigan Emergency Committee Against War and Injustice (MECAWI), swelled to hundreds before marching. Representatives of Al Awda, the Palestine Right of Return

Coalition, traveled from Cleveland to attend. Other speakers represented Geopolitics Alert and the Communist Workers League.

Palestinian American Congressperson Rashida Tlaib also spoke, condemning Trump's act of war in violation of the War Powers Act. "Congress should have been consulted," Tlaib said. "More importantly, we want to emphasize, there are more people out here that want peace, that do not support war."

New faces join the struggle

Everywhere organizers and police alike were surprised at the strong turnout after many years of small anti-war actions. Activists noted many new faces, especially young people, who came out to their first protests to say "No war on Iran."

In **St. Louis**, 150 protesters marched through downtown and held a "Rally Against War With Iran" at the Thomas F. Eagleton Federal Courthouse. Local media reported that "Anti-war protesters swarmed downtown **Iowa City**" at an event organized by Veterans for Peace. Speakers exposed the fact that the U.S. has already spent tens of billions of dollars on "endless wars" in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Anti-war protesters clashed with right-wing goons in **Pittsburgh** and **Boise**. One hundred demonstrators in **Atlanta** chanted, "Trump says more war! We say no more!" declaring that the government needs to focus on helping people struggle against homelessness and exorbitant hospital bills, not more war in the Middle East.

Hadi Jawad, executive director of the **Dallas** Peace and Justice Center, reminded a local protest there that "we opposed the Iraq War back in 2003. We opposed the war in the early '90s during Iraq One. We also opposed the bombing of Iraq in the 1980s. This is the freaking fifth decade — the fifth decade — of bombing the people of Iraq. Not only did we destroy Iraq, but the fires that we set in Iraq inflamed the entire Middle East."

Activists erupted in chants of “Never again!”

More than fifty people participated in an anti-war protest in **Norfolk, Va.**, reported jubilant activist John Long. “We caught the cops by surprise and took Granby Street!”

Up to 1,000 marched on the Trump Towers in **Chicago**, while even larger numbers—perhaps up to 2,000—took to the streets of **San Francisco** and **Washington, D.C.**, where they rallied outside the White House.

One hundred people came out to march and rally in **New Orleans**. “We in the New Orleans Workers Group called the demonstration in solidarity with Iranians, Iraqis and others attacked by U.S. imperialism,” Gregory Williamson told SLL. “I was impressed by the broad agreement that imperialist war is bad for the people of the world, including workers here. The crowd was made up of many races, nationalities and age groups.” The Peoples Defense League of South Louisiana and the Democratic Socialists of America were among the groups that came out.

At the rally, Gavrielle Gemma, a leader of the national movement against the first Gulf War in 1990-1991, said, “We cannot stop imperialist war unless we organize the workers to be against it. We cannot be afraid to say that we are for the workers, that it is the bosses who are for war, and this is a rich white man’s war that doesn’t benefit the workers of any nationality.”

From **New Haven, Conn.**—where Norm Clement denounced the assassination of Soleimani as “an act of war and a war crime”—to Sasscer Park in Southern California’s **Orange County**, and everywhere inbetween, a new movement is taking shape for the hard fight to stop Trump’s war against Iran — and shut down U.S. imperialism everywhere!

Jefferson Azevedo, David Card, Cheryl LaBash and Carl Muhammad contributed to

this report.

