

Protests in Indonesia fight to stop further exploitation of workers

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Workers in Tangerang, Indonesia.

In the second week of October, the Indonesian Parliament approved the Job Creation Law. This law amended 79 previous laws and is nominally intended to help President Joko Widodo's efforts to attract more foreign investment into Indonesia. The law is clearly intended to pave the way for foreign corporations and monopolies to open operations in Indonesia at the cost of the Indonesian workers. It increases limits on overtime, cuts severance pay amounts and removes key worker protections like mandatory paid leave for childbirth.

Led by the Confederation of Indonesian Workers Unions, workers, students and what the bourgeois media are claiming are "conservative Muslims" in the thousands have taken to the streets of not only the capital city Jakarta, but also in over 35 districts and cities total.

ABC News quoted Shobri Lubis, a protest organizer, from a speech he gave to a large crowd: "It's undeniable that the Job Creation Law is more intended for foreign economic domination in Indonesia and not to side with local workers." One of the chants at the protest was "We stand with workers!"

The International League of People's Struggle Indonesia released a statement analyzing the situation. In part, it reads: "Taking advantages from the people's fear to COVID-19, 'self-isolation' in homes, hoping that they will not face a significant resistance, President Jokowi discusses the Jobs Creation Law, which explicitly deprives basic economic rights such as wages, elimination of the compensation of employment termination (layoffs), shortening time to obtain permits for imperialists and their accomplice[s] to do business in Indonesia, accelerating land grabbing in the name of infrastructure development and development projects, and facilitating the free acceptance of foreign workers to work in Indonesia."

Further, ILPS Indonesia released five demands:

- Stop all forms of violence, intimidation, arrest and criminalization of the

people. Free all the arrested people unconditionally!

- Provide compensation and guarantee the safety of the people due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic with free and quality health and education services and access!
- Abolish rural usury! Fix commodity prices and the living necessities of the Indonesian peasants and people!
- Fair profit sharing for tenant farmers and better wages for agricultural workers in large plantations of timber, oil palm, rubber, sugar and other export commodities belonging to the Imperialists and the big landlords at the national level!
- Implement a genuine land reform and build an independent national industry as an economic solution for the Indonesian people!

Despite the Indonesian government's pretend concern that the protests will spread COVID-19, the Indonesian police have brutally repressed the protests with tear gas.

