

Antiwar protests across Britain

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Demonstrations and rallies to protest the war against Iraq and Britain's involvement in it were held across the UK on Saturday, March 29.

Amongst the largest protest was held in the Scottish capital, Edinburgh, where some 10, 000 marched through the city centre, including large numbers of students and school pupils.

Numerous smaller protests were held in other major towns and cities across Britain the same day, including Coventry, Southampton, Kettering, Bedford, Preston, Middlesbrough, Cambridge and Cardiff.

More than 1,000 people participated on demonstrations in Oxford and Sheffield while Bristol city centre was paralysed for several hours as hundreds of antiwar campaigners brought traffic to a standstill. In Bath, school children organised their own antiwar rally outside Bath Abbey, after they had been criticized for missing school to join protests on weekdays.

Stop the War campaigners set up camp on roads and bridges after they were stopped from demonstrating outside Fairford military base, where American B-52 bombers are stationed. The protestors say that so many of their number have been banned from going near the base due to court action that they have been forced to set up camp on the bridge in nearby Cricklade.

The BBC was the target of several protests amid growing anger at the biased news accounts being relayed by journalists "embedded" with US and British troops.

In London, around 1,000 protested outside the BBC studios in Wood Lane, including a large contingent of Arab and Palestinian workers and youth, under heavy police escort.

Diverted by police from its intended route, the march passed through a residential area, heavily populated by Arabs. Young people joined in the march as it passed through the busy shopping areas and local people came out onto the balconies of flats in the area to show their

support. After a protest at the BBC lasting around 20 minutes, protesters marched back to Shepherds Bush Green for a rally.

Elsewhere in London, police reported a further 22 separate antiwar protests, involving more than 10,000 people, in Lewisham, Hackney, White City, Enfield, Brixton, Camden, Islington, Haringey and Tower Hamlets. Several thousand joined a demonstration in East Ham, East London to protest the pro-war stance of local Labour MP, Stephen Timms.

One thousand people also gathered outside the Manchester offices of the BBC for a rally to protest pro-war propaganda. The demonstration, which had set out from assembly points in the Cheetham Hill district of the city and the other leg from Platt Field before converging, was addressed by several Iraqis. One from the International Federation of Iraqi Refugees said the Anglo-British war was "against the people of Iraq, not against terrorism, not against dictatorship in Iraq".

Another told the crowd that American troops were currently blockading Basra. "They are trying to starve it. They have cut the water, they have cut the electricity, they are bombing them every day and every night," he said. But Iraqis "will not accept invasion, we will not accept dictatorship from the White House."

A demonstration of several hundred was also held outside the BBC's Pebble Mill studios in Birmingham.



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