

# International protests continue against US war in Iraq

David Walsh  
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A new round of demonstrations took place this past weekend in a number of countries to oppose the impending assault by the US and Britain on Iraq.

In Washington, DC, 5,000 demonstrators marked International Women's Day by marching on the White House to protest the Bush government's war drive. The protest was organized by "Code Pink," a feminist antiwar group whose name is a protest against the government's color-coded terror alert levels. Authors Alice Walker (*The Color Purple*), Maxine Hong Kingston (*The Woman Warrior*) and 25 others were arrested when they stood arm-in-arm in front of the White House.

Actress Janeane Garofalo, who spoke at the organization's rally in Malcolm X Park, told the press, "I don't think that the administration is being particularly honest with the American people about what this is going to cost in life and in dollars, what the dangers are, retaliatory strikes, once it happens. This is not a war that needs to happen immediately, if ever." She continued, "Silence does not equal patriotism. Obedience is not the American way. It's our obligation to watchdog the government because, for the most part, the media has not done so."

In New York City hundreds of demonstrators marched from Union Square down Broadway to Washington Square Park in Greenwich Village.

In Britain and Scotland demonstrations took place in a number of cities and towns over the weekend, including Manchester, Nottingham, Sheffield and Chichester in West Sussex (See: "Antiwar protests held across the UK".)

Seven thousand people rallied in Edinburgh on March 7 in a protest against the US-led war. A group of students from the city's Broughton High organized a walkout. Dressed in T-shirts that read "Don't Bomb Iraq," the students staged a sit-down protest in a park before continuing on to the residence of the first minister of Scotland. When Broughton pupils under 16 were forbidden to join, one of the younger students set off the school's fire alarm and the entire school was evacuated.

Becky Hewer, 17, a former pupil from the school, told the

*Edinburgh Evening News*: "A lot of us have been on the organised marches in Edinburgh, Glasgow and London and really admired the way people were making a stand. There is a lot of strong feeling amongst pupils at Broughton about the prospect of war too, so we wanted to recognise that and voice our opposition in our own way."

In Ireland numerous demonstrations marking International Women's Day were held in opposition to the US-British war plans. Over 200 people protested outside the US embassy in Dublin and another 60-80 outside Leinster House, the Irish parliament. More than 1,000 people took part in a rally in Cork City and another rally was held at Shannon Airport, which the US military has used for the transportation of troops.

Antiwar protests in Ireland were also held in the cities of Waterford, Galway and Sligo, as well as Mullingar, in County Westmeath; Dundalk, County Louth; Dingle, County Kerry; Tullamore, County Offaly; Westport, County Mayo; Letterkenny, County Donegal; Maynooth, County Kildare; and Clones, County Monaghan.

Proinsias de Rossa, a Labour Party member of the European Parliament and former minister, told the embassy rally in Dublin: "The proposed American and British bombing of Iraq will result in a slaughter of civilians not seen since the First World War. To devastate the cities of Iraq will be a war crime."

Tens of thousands of people protested outside Camp Darby, a US military base near Pisa in northern Italy that is one of Europe's biggest munitions bases for US and NATO forces. One protestor told a reporter, "This is going to be, as the pope said, a criminal war of aggression." The marchers burned an effigy of George W. Bush.

In Grenoble, France thousands of people marched carrying a banner reading, "War is stupid. Give us a bit of peace." In Stuttgart, Germany several hundred people held a sit-in, blocking the access road to the headquarters of the US Army's European command.

In Turkey, opponents of US war plans and possible Turkish involvement held numerous demonstrations.

Demonstrators protested in the southern port city of Mersin, where the US is presently unloading military materiel. antiwar protestors also rallied outside the headquarters of the AKP (Justice and Development Party) in Istanbul.

According to a Turkish news agency, a group of youth without any particular political allegiance paraded near the great bazaar in Istanbul, holding up placards that read “No to war against Iraq” and “US murderers.” In Ankara, members of a cultural society rallied, chanting “No to war” and “US, get out of Incirlik,” referring to the Turkish air force base used since the Gulf war in 1991 to launch flights over the northern “no-fly zone” in Iraq.

In Chile’s capital, Santiago, an antiwar protest was held March 7. Chile is one of the reportedly undecided members of the UN Security Council.

In Tripoli, Lebanon some 8,000 people staged an antiwar protest, burning an effigy of George W. Bush. The protestors shouted “Death to America” and carried banners calling for the expulsion of the US ambassador to Lebanon. Many of the demonstrators, Lebanese and Palestinians, carried Iraqi flags and accused the US of attempting to occupy the Middle East. Muslim clerics participated in the rally.

Thousands of people gathered in Rawalpindi, Pakistan March 9 to oppose the US war against Iraq. According to the Associated Press, “Security was tight, though organizers pledged the march against a possible US-led war on Iraq would be peaceful. Even before the march started, several thousand people gathered near the venue where it was to begin. Hundreds of police wearing helmets, wielding sticks and metal shields manned intersections along the road.”

The rally was organized by a coalition of Islamic religious groups. Many demonstrators came by bus from Peshawar, near the Afghanistan border. On March 2 nearly 100,000 people rallied in the port city of Karachi to protest the war.

In Dhaka, the capital of Bangladesh, some 2,000 people protested against the impending war. The demonstrators marched through the city’s downtown shouting, “No war, no Bush and no blood” and “An attack on Iraq is an attack on Muslims.” An antiwar protest was also reported in Chittagong, 135 miles from the capital. Nearly 100,000 gathered on March 6 in Dhaka to oppose the war, denouncing Bush and British Prime Minister Tony Blair.

In Tokyo more than 40,000 people marched on Saturday to protest the Bush administration war drive. Demonstrators marched through downtown streets holding signs that said, “Why Iraq?” and “Stop War.” The rally was sponsored by more than 100 groups. According to opinion polls, 70 percent of the Japanese population is opposed to the war.

KenTakada, a spokesman for World Peace Now, told the press: “On February 15 in Shibuya, we started to march with 3,000 people. But when we returned to our starting point,

there were already 5,000. That means many people who were strolling in town decided to join. This has hardly happened before. So I think we’re in for a change.”

Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi has criticized the antiwar protests, claiming they could send the “wrong message.”

In Surabaya, Indonesia on March 9 100,000 people gathered for a prayer rally organized by the country’s largest Muslim organization, Hahdlatul Ulama. Some local media reported the crowd grew to 500,000 over the course of the 3-hour event. In Jakarta 7,000 people marched in protest to the US embassy, led by the Muslim preacher Abdullah Gymnastiar.

At the Surabaya rally many of the protestors, dressed in traditional Muslim attire, told reporters that they were there to express opposition to the war, not support for the regime of Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein. “I came here to pray for peace in the country and in the world,” said Hadi Alil, a 45-year-old farmer from the town of Pasuruan outside of Surabaya. “I hope that the war in Iraq won’t happen. I don’t want to see the United States attack Iraq.”

Hundreds of protestors greeted Australian Prime Minister John Howard when he arrived in New Zealand March 8 for a three-day visit. One hundred demonstrators carrying a mock inflatable bomb were on hand at Auckland’s Whenuapai air force base when Howard landed. Protestors held up banners that read “Stop the Genocide” and “Yankee Poodle Johnny,” as a large police contingent guarded the base’s perimeter. Another 300 demonstrators gathered in central Auckland to protest Howard’s support for the war against Iraq.



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