

# Toronto marchers denounce slaughter in Iraq

**Our correspondents**  
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An estimated 9,000 people braved severe icy conditions to march through Toronto Saturday demanding an end to the US-led slaughter in Iraq. The mood was palpably angrier than previous demonstrations. The loudest applause was given to a speaker who suggested that the Bush administration be tried for war crimes—a demand that also found its way onto a number of placards.

Among the hundreds of home-made signs carried by marchers were the following: “Democracy? From George Bush plutocrat?” “Bush is not above the law”, “Illegal president, illegal war”, “Rogue state USA” and “\$, this flag is not worth dying for.”

Other slogans included: “Bring home the troops and stop lying to them”, “Bush, Rumsfeld and Co use weapons of mass distraction” and “The White House is occupied by thugs and gangsters”.

An Iraqi student from York University told the rally: “The world’s most superior military power in history to date is bombing, attacking, assaulting, invading—anything but liberating a country and a people. They tell us this war is for the good of the Iraqi people and for the most part welcomed by them. Do they honestly hope for us to buy into images of happy Iraqis welcoming American soldiers with their flags and of love for American G.I. Joes pouring out into the streets? They can’t fool us anymore. No people want to be occupied by foreigners, no matter how evil their current leader might be.”

Despite the fact that the Bush and Blair governments have defied massive global demonstrations, the main message being projected from the platform was a plea to apply more pressure on existing governments.

A speaker from the Toronto Coalition to Stop the War told the crowd: “We might not be able to stop the slaughter, but we will put enough pressure that no nuclear bombs are used in Iraq, that no cluster bombs will be used anymore. The only reason why the United States of America hasn’t bombed Iraq with nuclear bombs, and other chemical and biological weapons, is that we are watching.”

Radical celebrity Tariq Ali pushed a similar line,

welcoming the supposed opposition to the war initially expressed by the French and German governments. After conceding that French President Chirac and German Chancellor Schröder were now calling for a quick American victory, Ali nevertheless insisted that the antiwar movement had to keep trying to pressure them. “And what can only push them and what will continue to maintain the pressure on the warmongers in Washington and London is you—is us—the global antiwar movement and we have to link now the anti-globalization movement to the antiwar movement.”

New Democratic Party leaders and parliamentarians were noticeably absent with the social democratic camp represented instead by less prominent figures, such as Canadian Labor Council vice president, Marie Clarke Walker. Shirley Douglas, daughter of social democratic forefather Tommy Douglas, delivered a long oration in which she appealed to Canadian nationalism, white-washing the role played by Canadian governments as one of Washington’s junior partners in NATO.

A heavy police presence was noticeable. Hundreds of mounted and foot police armed with shields and truncheons monitored the march and guarded the US Consulate. Police provocatively arrested one young man before the march on charges concocted from a previous antiwar protest. Since the war began on March 20, police say they have arrested 14 people at antiwar rallies in Toronto.

Supporters of the WSWs and the Socialist Equality Party distributed hundreds of copies of the first two resolutions passed at the March 29-30 conference “Socialism and the Struggle against Imperialism and War: The Strategy of a New International Working Class Movement”.

Demonstrators who spoke to the WSWs expressed contempt for the Bush and Blair governments. “You can’t attack a country just because it might attack you,” said Ben Rogers, a security industry worker. “It’s all about oil and control over the Middle East. The main reason that Bush and Blair gave—weapons of mass destruction—was

fallacious. The use of cluster bombs, etc., makes obvious that they are the aggressors.”

Asked how he thought the war could be stopped, given that Washington and London had defied the largest global demonstrations in world history, Rogers was less certain. “I haven’t given much thought to that. I’m here to find out.”

Rakesh, a worker, said: “I don’t like innocent people getting killed for the benefit of a few. Only governments win out of wars and that’s what will happen this time. The leaders will keep gaining until people have the power.

“Bush and Blair’s only concern is to get enough oil. The war’s not about weapons of mass destruction, because many countries have them, with the United States having the most.”

Two high school students were among the large numbers of young people on the march. Colin said: “Capitalism does not need more oil, and the US nobility does not need more power. Bush and the Republicans are only listening to those with money. We don’t have any, but the oil companies and business leaders do.

“It reminds me of France before 1789—the nobility controls all the wealth. Only this time the inequality is global, because America dominates the world. There are poor people in the United States, but you don’t see them in the media. The troops should be asking their officers, ‘what’s going on’”.

Colin’s friend Kyle observed: “It’s a strange idea that killing innocent people will save lives. Bush seems to be changing his story all the time. He used to be about disarming Iraq but he has switched to getting Saddam Hussein out.

“It’s the same with Blair. Neither of them have the best interests of the Iraqi people at heart.”

Sizeable antiwar marches were also held Saturday in Vancouver and Edmonton, with smaller rallies in other Canadian cities, including Halifax and Regina.



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