

UK protesters speak out against Syrian war threat

Our reporters
2 September 2013

Protesters in London Saturday against the drive to war in Syria spoke to the *World Socialist Web Site* about why they were participating.

Shalini, an actress, said, “I came on today’s protest to show my opposition to yet another war. They are talking about taking military action without a grain of evidence and flushing more weapons into Syria is not going to solve anything. They can’t 100 percent say the missiles won’t injure innocent civilians.

“There’s a real hypocrisy as they don’t have enough money to feed the poor, but have enough to finance an assault. It’s rubbish! This is not a game!

“The UK’s government campaign to ‘help Syrians’ in the Middle East has nothing to do with Syria. It’s insincere. Their intention is to keep their alliance with the US and control the Middle East. Palestine, Egypt and Iran are all in their sights.”

Speaking about social conditions facing youth, Shalini said, “You have the highest number of unemployed young people since the depression. I don’t know what the solution is, but war is not it.”

Amrit and Zara are students from a sixth form college in Ilford, London. The protest was the first they had attended.

“It’s ridiculous that we have to endure cuts here and yet they have got money for another war.” Amrit said. “Missiles aren’t the answer, I don’t see the logic. I’m happy for once we are not fighting with America because of what’s happened in Iraq and Afghanistan.”

“I’m from Ilford in East London which has seen so many cuts. The effects are devastating to education, leisure and health. They wanted to shut down King George’s hospital in Ilford so then the nearest one is in London where the National Health Service is already buckling under pressure. Our nearest would be Queen Mary in Romford. which is one of the worst in the country.”

Zara said, “I hate what’s going on in the Middle East. As long as there’s profit and war there won’t be peace.”

Danielle, a therapist, said, “I’m anti-war and pro-peace and not in any of the political parties. If the population took a vote of no confidence we might have a chance of a decent place to live.

“The government is heinous and the Labour Party is a war party and has been since Tony Blair. Throughout the world all the leaders are power hungry and they’ve all got to go. The world is run by ego and greed and they have spent trillions on arms and defence to protect their position.

“I live in Deptford which is stuck in the middle of two rich areas. The level of poverty is devastating. Working people are having to go to food banks. You have a choice: heat your house or eat.

“Our whole street is now overrun with bookmakers [betting shops]. It’s frightening. There has to be a change.”

Sayed from Bahrain said, “I’m here as a Bahraini citizen in solidarity with the campaign against war in Syria. Our region has had enough of wars in Iraq and Bahrain and the Saudi occupation of Bahrain.

“We know what it means to have a military attack on a country that will lead to more problems and more crises. I’m campaigning against all wars in the Middle East. Our calls for freedom and justice in Bahrain have been totally ignored. The US and the UK have always supported these dictators—giving them the political coverage they need and supplying the weapons and training they require.

“The crackdown is not only by the Bahraini regime but by their allies.

“Syria has the potential for a third world war as there are big players; Russia and China on one side and the Western allies on the other. This is something that is very critical. Syria could be the spark of a serious war.”

Anna, a Russian journalist from Moscow, bought a copy

of the Socialist Equality Party 2012 Congress resolution, which includes a resolution against war. She said, “I think you have to encourage people to fight against war. Every country in this has its own interests. I hope that one day the leaders will be tried for global crimes.

“Governments all over the world are driven by corruption and greed, power and money. Everything they do is by physical force. There should be a common language for everyone in the struggle against the crimes of each government as every country is in a war against its people.”

Alison works with single mothers in London and has regularly visited the Middle East in support of the Palestinian people. She also visited Syria before the civil war and expressed concern for the thousands of refugees who fled from the war in Iraq. “They are begging on the streets of Damascus and what will become of them?” she asked. “That was a Western invasion based on no credible evidence. People are being displaced again and again from country to country.”

On US plans to attack Syria, Alison said, “Although the United Nations weapons inspectors have just come out of Syria, the US says it knows what the findings are going to be. It’s like it doesn’t matter. Why have UN resolutions when they have made the decision to go ahead and carry out military strikes that are going to serve no purpose?”

On the vote in the parliament, Alison said, “History shows military intervention doesn’t work. When [Prime Minister David] Cameron came out asking for military intervention, there was another car bomb in Iraq. That’s still going on. Dropping bombs is not the answer and never has been and certainly not against someone like Assad.”

Karen, a mother who has been on 11 anti-war demonstrations in recent years, including the 2003 anti-Iraq war protest in London, said, “War doesn’t achieve anything. It is just horrific. I am a mother and have grandchildren and I feel so much for the people in Syria.”

Eylem is from Turkey and lives in London. “I remember the Iraq war and there was a mass protest all around the world,” she said. “I was on the protest in London. The US used chemical weapons in Fallujah in Iraq. I have very big doubts about these chemical weapons used in Syria. I think the rebels used it in order to justify this action in Syria. We have to be against this war and every war in every part of the world.

“In Turkey there are about 55 percent of people against the war in Syria. Yesterday there was a demonstration against the war in Istanbul.

“I still think the US will try to go ahead with the war without Britain and I think an anti-war movement in the US will grow.”

Andrea is from Argentina and participated on the 2003 protest in Buenos Aires. “The arguments that Cameron is giving to invade Syria are in opposition to international law; that countries have sovereignty to decide their own future,” she said. “There is no moral legitimacy for this war and from every point of view it is fundamentally wrong. Despite this, the US is still planning to go ahead with it.”

WSWS reporters also spoke to protesters at an anti-war demonstration in Leeds, West Yorkshire, on Saturday.

James, a student, said, “Western military intervention in Syria is just fundamentally wrong. The situation there is very complex and it would be easy to get carried away with speculation about motives regarding the intervention. But there is one concrete fact, and that is what I am here to protest against today; unsanctioned action would be illegal.

“I do not believe that there should be any surgical strikes. Cameron and Obama insist that the Assad regime is guilty. But surely the burden of proof lies with the accuser. What jury would convict if a barrister was to say, ‘I’ve seen the evidence and trust me, it’s compelling?’”

His friend Sasha said, “Syria, for millennia, has been a cultural-religious melting pot and up until recent events a bastion in the Middle East for peaceful coexistence between communities of every creed. What we are witnessing now is the unspeakably tragic decomposition of this mosaic.

“Our government has revealed an appalling level of appreciation for the cultural intricacies of this country, and indeed the complexities of the conflict at hand. We cannot simply pick a side, go in with our heavy hand, like bulls in a china shop, and destroy further. Such destruction will be irreparable and I personally want no part in this diabolical action.”



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