

# The protests against Trump's Muslim ban and the conflict within the state

**Barry Grey****31 January 2017**

Across the United States and internationally, tens of thousands of people are participating in protests to denounce the brutal and illegal anti-Muslim policies imposed over the weekend by the Trump administration. On Monday, the protests spread to the United Kingdom, where many thousands marched in scores of cities and towns to denounce both Trump and British Prime Minister Theresa May. Protests erupted as well in Mexico and Canada.

Those marching in opposition to Trump are motivated by genuine outrage and sympathy for the men, women and children caught up in Washington's anti-immigrant dragnet.

At the same time, Trump's ban on travelers from seven majority-Muslim countries and on refugees from all countries has provoked a bitter political conflict within the US state. This internal struggle escalated Monday night when Trump fired the acting attorney general, Sally Yates, a holdover from the Obama administration, after she announced that she would not defend Trump's anti-immigrant executive order in court.

Internal opposition within the American state has been further inflamed by Trump's unprecedented reshuffling of the National Security Council (NSC). On Saturday, Trump signed an executive order elevating to the NSC's Principals Committee his chief strategist, the fascist former head of the "white nationalist" Internet outlet Breitbart News, Stephen K. Bannon. He simultaneously downgraded the role in the NSC of the director of national intelligence and the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

Dozens of US diplomats are circulating a statement denouncing Trump's immigrant ban. Asked about this opposition at a Monday press briefing, Trump's press secretary, Sean Spicer, underscored the

administration's refusal to back down, declaring, "They should either get with the program or they can go."

The motivations of those within the political and media establishment in the US and its imperialist allies are very different from the deeply felt democratic sentiments of protesters in the US and internationally.

Democratic politicians such as Senate Minority Leader Charles Schumer and former President Barack Obama himself, as well as their Republican counterparts such as senators John McCain and Lindsey Graham, are denouncing Trump's actions not out of concern for the democratic rights of immigrants or anyone else. They are all complicit in the policies that produced the greatest refugee crisis since World War II and paved the way for the installation of the Trump cabal.

Their hypocritical disavowals are driven by fears that Trump's overtly racist and thuggish ban will undercut US imperialism's crusade for global hegemony and disrupt its military operations in the Middle East, North Africa and Central Asia, as well as its war preparations against Russia and China.

Similar concerns are motivating the imperialist governments of Britain, Germany and France, all of which have expressed shock and disapproval of Trump's measures, even as they continue to bar refugees from countries they have bombed from gaining asylum and treat those few who have been admitted with callous contempt. They have the blood on their hands of thousands of refugees from the very countries targeted by Trump's travel ban, who have drowned trying to cross the Mediterranean to reach the shores of Fortress Europe.

Both the Democratic Party-aligned *New York Times* and the pro-Republican *Wall Street Journal* published

editorials Monday attacking Trump's executive order. The editorial in Rupert Murdoch's *Journal* declared that "the bonfire over [Trump's] executive order on refugees shows that government by deliberate disruption can blow up in damaging ways... Political disruption has its uses, but not if it consumes your Presidency in the process."

The *Journal* bluntly spelled out the position of critics within the establishment, warning: "The US will fight wars in foreign lands in the future, and we will need local allies who will be watching how we treat Iraqis, Kurds and other battle comrades now."

Barack Obama, barely one week out of the White House, took the prize for cynicism when he issued a statement Monday declaring that he was "heartened by the level of engagement taking place in communities across the country," a reference to the outpouring of protest against Trump's anti-immigrant measures.

Obama spent the entire ten weeks between Trump's election victory and his inauguration seeking to legitimize the billionaire president-elect, despite Trump's having lost the popular vote by nearly three million ballots. Obama played down the extreme right-wing, antidemocratic character of the incoming administration. In his final press conference two days before Trump's inauguration, Obama said, "As you know, my working assumption is that having won an election...it is appropriate for him to go forward with his vision and his values..."

The fascistic policies of the Trump government cannot be separated from the policies that have been carried out over an extended period by both big-business parties in the US as well as imperialist governments all over the world. For more than a quarter century, since the dissolution of the Soviet Union, US imperialism has sought to counter its global economic decline by using its unmatched military machine to bomb, invade and occupy a series of virtually defenseless countries, particularly in the oil-rich Middle East, North Africa and Central Asia.

Millions have been killed and many millions more turned into refugees by the savage neocolonial wars waged by Washington, beginning with the first Gulf War against Iraq in 1991. Under Democratic no less than Republican administrations, entire countries have been decimated and leaders toppled or murdered. The list includes Iraq, Afghanistan, Serbia, Libya, Syria and

Yemen, Obama having continued or started wars in all but Serbia.

The Obama years were a transition to the naked rule of the billionaire oligarchs embodied in the Trump administration. Not only did he expand and add to Bush's wars in the Middle East, he deported a record number of undocumented immigrants and, as Trump has repeatedly pointed out, targeted for increased visa vetting the seven majority-Muslim countries whose residents are now barred from entering the US.

Trump's policies are the outcome of this historical process. His virulently nationalistic, militaristic and authoritarian government is the true face of American capitalism.

His attacks on immigrants, carried out by decree and with open contempt for Congress and the courts, are only the beginning. This gangster government will stop at nothing to attack core democratic rights of citizens and foreigners alike.

Trump demonstrated his contempt for his establishment critics on Monday when he told reporters, speaking of the previous day's press conference by Senator Schumer, "I noticed Chuck Schumer yesterday with fake tears. I'm going to ask him who is his acting coach."

Trump's advantage is that he knows full well his establishment opponents are more frightened by the danger of a social movement against capitalism than they are of him.

For the emerging movement against the Trump government to develop, it has to grasp the connection between Trump and the capitalist system over which he now presides. In the final analysis, he is not just an individual. He is the representative of a class.

A movement in defense of the rights of immigrants and the population as a whole must become a mass movement based on the working class and armed with a socialist and internationalist program. It must break with the two parties of American imperialism and adopt a strategy for replacing the government of billionaire oligarchs with a workers' government.



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