

Protesters in Britain speak out against air strikes in Syria

Our reporters
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On Monday evening, Socialist Equality Party members distributed hundreds of copies of the statement “US-British-French missile strikes on Syria heighten danger of a catastrophic war” to workers and young people at anti-war protests around the UK. At London’s Parliament Square, demonstrators rallied against the bombing of Syria by the United States, Britain and France. Around 500 attended the protest called by the Stop the War Coalition.

The demonstration was called by its organisers with the purpose of corraling anti-war sentiment behind support for the Labour Party and appeals to MPs in parliament. Labour MPs spoke including Emma Dent Coad, Richard Burgon, Chris Williamson, and Lloyd Russell-Moyle to claim that Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn, and the UN Security Council could be entrusted with leading a struggle against war.

Russell-Moyle said, “The struggle continues, and now with an anti-war Labour leader, we, united together, can lead this charge.”

Williamson said, “Let’s get behind Jeremy Corbyn’s call for a War Powers Act, to prevent a prime minister from ever again taking us to war without a vote in Parliament.”

Corbyn put forward the proposed Act in parliament Tuesday, but Labour’s pro-war MPs backed Prime Minister Theresa May’s ordering Britain to participate in last Saturday’s military strikes without parliamentary approval.

Joel, a university student from West London, said, “It is an abomination that Theresa May thinks she can speak for the people without consulting them. We are supposed to live in a democracy and it’s not democratic at all to take this position and initiate more bloodshed. If she did take it to a vote among the public, she would have lost the vote. So, the only way to bomb

Syria is to do it behind closed doors at night behind people’s backs.

“The threats against Russia have been going on for a long time. Instead of agitating against Russia and promoting war, we need peace.

“You cannot believe 90 percent of what you see in the media now because it is controlled by a few people. There will come a time when there are too many of us for them to control. The YouGov survey that said 78 percent did not support the bombing of Syria and it made me think, ‘Do I live in a democracy or a dictatorship?’

“The BBC’s coverage is incredibly biased. We are being told there is propaganda being put out across the world and we are told not believe it, but it is happening right here.

Sohaib, a student, said, “I am opposed to wars and attacking other countries. Let the Syrian people decide their own future. May has no right to say if a Syrian house is bombed tomorrow or not. If there were chemical factories, when they were bombed, why was there no smoke or chemical fumes? It’s just an excuse to bomb.

“It is totally unjust what is going on in Syria, and we should not be a puppet to the United States. We have got no money for the National Health Service or for homeless people. You walk down to London Victoria Station, and there are 50 people out on the streets, but they have money to bomb. They threw £100 million in bombs the other night. May did not take it to Parliament because she knows the British public are awake. The youth are a lot more active when it comes to standing up and speaking for their rights against war.”

Around 400 people, half of whom were youth, took to the streets of Bristol. A spokesperson of the Bristol

Stop the War declared that the demonstration was called to “halt the military intervention and demand that our MPs and parliament represent this opposition and stand against this potentially catastrophic move from our government and its allies. Let’s show them what democracy looks like.”

Others addressing the rally were Green Party councillors and Labourites who sowed illusions that a Corbyn-led Labour Party government would be anti-war. The bankruptcy of these claims was underscored by the fact that Bristol’s four MPs—Kerry McCarthy, Darren Jones, Karin Smyth and Thangam Debbonaire—are all pro-war and opposed to Corbyn’s leadership.

None of the four attended the rally. Neither did Bristol Labour Mayor Marvin Rees, who steered through an austerity budget earlier this year that cut £34.5million from public services as well as increasing local council tax by 5 percent.

Maximillian, a student, said, “I think it’s clear to anyone who has been following the situation that it’s an unnecessary and illegal action which has been taken by the UK and the US in Syria. I’m more broadly against war in general. American and British involvement has nothing to do with liberating Syria.

“Capitalism is the driving force in as much as the oil interests and so forth are the only reason we are interested in these far-flung countries. Capitalism is necessitating constant regime-change operations for the benefit of a few corporate sponsors of American and British politicians. There are multinational corporations, therefore we must organise ourselves on an international basis.”

Student Macie said, “I thought most of the speeches [on the platform in Bristol] were terrible...so meek and mild. The British government is lying, they go ahead and bomb and don’t care about any opposition, and all the speakers say is talk to your MP. My MP is Kerry McCarthy, a Labour MP, who voted for bombing Syria and did all she could to stop Jeremy Corbyn becoming Labour leader. So, I am supposed to talk to her?

“The only person who said something sensible was Daisy, who I think was from the [Corbyn-supporting] Momentum Youth. I agreed with her that most young people are anti-war and a lot have seen through the lies about Syria after Iraq and Libya. She also said what no one else did, that we have to stand up to Western

imperialist aggression. But then it was really disappointing, and she spoilt it all by saying contact your MPs and councillors.”

Amirah, who bought a copy of the SEP’s 2014 Congress pamphlet “Socialism and the Fight Against War,” came back to say, “I’ve just read a bit of your little book. I can’t believe you were already predicting that the world was heading for such dangerous times back in 2014. And that a nuclear war was possible. I don’t remember anyone else saying that back then.

“I think it’s really good the way you explained how all these governments such as ours are trying to re-divide the world again and prevent Russia and China having any influence. That makes it much clearer why there’s so much hatred against Russia at the moment. I really agree with you that a proper anti-war organisation is needed, because Stop the War is useless.”



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