

UK mass protests against Trump:

“The Labour Party here and Democratic Party in the US have left a void and the right-wing are trying to fill it”

Our reporters

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Up to a quarter of a million marched through central London yesterday to protest the visit of US President Donald Trump to the UK, in what organisers have described as the biggest weekday protest in the capital's history. Thousands more marched in cities throughout Britain, with a further protest due today in Edinburgh.

Protestors joined two separate rallies in London. That Together Against Trump, assembled at BBC headquarters in Portland Place at 2pm, marching to Oxford Circus and down Regent Street to Trafalgar Square. An earlier Women's March walked the same route at 11am, rallying at Parliament Square.

News helicopter footage showed a sea of protestors marching down Regent Street.

The turnout showed the extent of popular opposition to the anti-democratic and fascistic policies of the Trump presidency. The main march drew support from workers and young people, as well as large sections of the middle class, with many attending their first ever protest. A carnival atmosphere prevailed, with the rally featuring a giant blimp of an orange-coloured baby Trump in diapers. Handmade placards included ones expressing solidarity with immigrants such as “Children need cuddles not cages.”

Other placards read, “F*ck Brexit, F*ck Trump, Love Britain”, “Overcomb Brexit” and “Trump loves Brexit”--showing the efforts of rally organisers to advance an alliance between Britain, the European Union, and the US Democrats, as a counterweight to Trump's “America First” agenda.

The Socialist Equality Party intervened at protests in London, Sheffield, Manchester, Leeds and Glasgow, distributing copies of the statement, “What does it really mean to ‘Stop Trump?’ The working class must be mobilised against capitalism and for socialism”.

WSWS reporters spoke to some of those protesting in London and Glasgow.

Lisa, a 45 year old musician said, "On this demonstration I'm thinking of all the children in cages and the anguish they are going through. I'm thinking of all those turned away from the US because they happen to be brown or Muslim. I'm thinking of the women he has insulted.

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left a void and the right-wing are trying to fill it.”

Drew, a 21-year-old student from London, said, "I think with Trump everything comes out of hatred and his hatred comes out of fear. He wants to create a divide between people. But you can't break down the system by playing at its own rules. It's incredibly difficult to get things through parliament as the system is slanted against us.”

Orphee, a 19-year-old student, attended the march with her friend, **Bella**. Condemning the separation of immigrant families in the US, she said that UK Prime Minister “Theresa May is condoning it. The only reason she is forging a friendship is because of Brexit. They are leaving the UK and she is clinging on to the US for a free trade deal.”

Bella, a bar worker, said, "It feels like all morals are just going out of the window. I heard a recording of the immigrant children in the US in cages. I even heard reports that they were drugged. I don't understand how this can happen in the West. He shouldn't be allowed in the country. It's very cowardly.”

Christy is an immigration lawyer at Laura Devine solicitors in London. She said, “I practice US immigration, so I deal first hand with the invisible wall that Donald Trump is building against immigrants, both legal and illegal, into the US. Everyday we're seeing the children separated from their parents, but also businesses and foreign employers trying to send employees to the US and there is an invisible wall. It's not just the wall in Mexico that we're fighting against.

“We can't stand for this. We have to show that the world doesn't want this. This is a very narrow-minded and fascist view.”

Edward, who will be attending the University of South Wales in Cardiff, said, “Trump wants to come over here and deregulate, through a trade deal with the UK. Deregulation, as seen in America, leads to the poorest getting pushed down, and the richest not having to pay to keep the poor in good living conditions. They don't have to pay good wages, they don't have to pay anything.

“Take McDonalds, for example, where people work in appalling conditions and they have to work there because they don't have the money to not be there. You have to have the government step in and say that's not okay. You can't say ‘I think you're less than

human and so should work for me because you don't have money.' And it doesn't matter how much you decrease corporation tax, or increase it, because the corporations don't pay it."

Hannah, an executive assistant in a medical school in Tooting, said, "I think what this rally is really about is neo-liberalism, which is the economic system which has been in place since the late 1970s and has now completely failed--economically and socially. Trump is the logical endpoint of neo-liberalism.

"We're seeing, much as in the 1930s, the rise of the far right, racism, bigotry and scapegoating of immigrants and refugees--which I think is a symptom but not the root of the disease." She saw similarities to the 1930s because "people are in destitution, can't find a job, can't feed themselves... It's good that we're being brought together, and it's up to socialists to win the argument."

On Trump's predecessor, Democratic Party President Barack Obama, she said, "He was equally in the pay of Wall Street. And our government is becoming less respectful of democratic norms too because they know that's the only way they can stay in power."

Nilufoi is an academic from Belgium, who wrote a PhD on Iranian women and cinema. She said of Trump, "I am very much afraid he will bring about a war with Iran and including Israel.

"Because Iran has ditched the petrodollar, it is a very rich country, it has the second largest gas reserves in the world. There are geostrategic interests playing out.

"It is imperialism at war here. It doesn't look good. For the first time, US and Israeli troops are training together in the Negev desert. And Israelis are testing rockets in Alaska. As we speak 18,000 NATO soldiers, plus Israelis, are training in Poland. So I ask myself who is threatening whom? It isn't Iran that is threatening the West. It is the West, America, Israel threatening Iran.

"Trump is far more dangerous than Hitler. The military industrial machine is acting according to its own logic. The weapons have become so sophisticated that they can annihilate the whole planet."

At the anti-Trump protest in Glasgow's George Square, **Ameris Torres**, a masters student from Mexico, said, "We've been living for the past two years with a bunch of bigotry on his behalf. Economic policy, social policy, immigration policy. One out of four Mexicans has a relative living in the US. I have relatives living in the US.

"So when these kind of statements [by Trump against Mexicans] happen, there is a reaction in the US. People with brown skins, Hispanics, Latinos get chased on the streets by ICE [Immigration and Customs Enforcement]. They are getting beaten down by others, encouraged by the leader of the country. I think it is important to send a message about that, from no matter where in world.

"I think it is terrifying. Even before Trump came to power the European Union was already adopting very aggressive and very discriminatory migration policies towards people coming from the Middle East, the Mahgreb, Central Africa, Eastern Europe. That wave of extreme far-right policies definitely influenced the US.

Italy says they will expel the Roma population. They are the Western allies of the US.

"I think migration is such a phenomenon for working class people. There are terrible things happening in Syria and Iraq, but it is also how underpaid labour is being taken from these countries. There is no consideration for workers' rights across the globe. Workers have to unite and acknowledge the struggles that are happening outside their countries.

"Borders are an imaginary construct that we made up for political reasons. I think that for political reasons we can destroy borders. It's not just about the economy is about the interchange of culture and technology, of anything that will make our lives better. When Europe was destroyed after World War II, it was the idea of no repetition that brought Europe together."

"I think the major powers are normalising hate speech for the sake of national interest. I fear that. The 'other' becomes the excuse for violence. We have lessons as humanity of what things can happen when you look at these kind of policies. It wasn't that long ago."

Khalil is from Algeria. He said, "I'm really impressed all these people are here to oppose Trump. I don't think he knows much about politics. He's just a crooked businessman. He thinks that because he has the power, he can do anything he wants and attack anyone who opposes him--building up tensions with North Korea, stopping refugees and asylum seekers escaping war zones in the Middle East, and things like that. I think this person shouldn't be president of the United States.

Khalil said French imperialism has "killed a lot of our people. We've been independent since 1962, but this isn't real independence. The French are still heavily involved in politics and played a bloody role in the Algerian civil war of the 1990s. They trained the military and left it in power. So they do whatever France wants.

"I don't really trust any politician. It's not about Trump, it's not about Obama or Bush, it's about the power behind them. It is capitalism, the people who own the biggest businesses in the world. The president is just a puppet."

Tom, a Glasgow college student said, "I'd be here if it was Obama or Clinton or Bush. It could have been any other president and they'd be guilty of almost the same thing--capitalism, imperialism and the rest. He just happens to be slightly cruder than the others."



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