

The 2026 International May Day Online Rally and the tasks of the international working class

WSWS Editorial Board

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The 2026 International May Day Online Rally, held on May 1 by the International Committee of the Fourth International (ICFI), the *World Socialist Web Site*, the International Youth and Students for Social Equality (IYSSE) and the International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees (IWA-RFC), was a milestone in the development of an international socialist and revolutionary movement against imperialist war and capitalism.

A total of 18 reports were delivered by speakers from 14 countries on five continents. The broadcast was subtitled in 11 languages—English, French, German, Italian, Polish, Portuguese, Russian, Sinhala, Spanish, Tamil and Turkish—making it accessible to broad layers of the international working class. Five montages, drawing on more than 30 interviews on every continent, were interspersed throughout the program, integrating the analysis of the ICFI with the testimony of workers and youth entering into political struggle.

The rally was entirely unique in the political analysis and orientation it advanced. This is not a subjective claim. There exists today no other political tendency anywhere in the world that addresses the global crisis as the eruption of the historic and insoluble contradictions of the capitalist system, or that identifies the international working class as the revolutionary force capable of resolving that crisis. The language of Marxism is spoken nowhere else. The rally addressed, as a unified whole, all the decisive questions confronting the international working class. In doing so, it underscored a central political fact: the ICFI stands alone today in advancing a Marxist-Trotskyist program based on the perspective of world socialist revolution.

The WSWS will be publishing each of the speeches in the coming days, and we urge our readers to study them and share them as widely as possible.

The political framework of the rally as a whole was set out in the opening report delivered by WSWS International Editorial Board Chairman David North. “The celebration of May Day,” North insisted, “must not be limited to declarations of international solidarity. It must also be the occasion for an objective analysis of the present world situation, for it is on the basis of such an analysis that the strategy of the working class is formulated.”

The rally, in its entirety, supplied that analysis, centered on the US-Israeli war against Iran and its historical significance and global impact. As North explained, this war “marks the culmination of a distinct 35-year period of history that began with the dissolution of the USSR in 1991.” It cannot be understood “as a discrete episode, nor as the policy of a particular president, nor merely as the product of the Israel lobby” but as a qualitatively new stage in the rampage of capitalist barbarism against the working class. North stressed, “World war is not a future threat but a presently unfolding reality.”

American imperialism’s war against Iran is the product of the deepening crisis of world capitalism and the relentless deterioration of the economic position of the United States within the global system. The successive wars of the past decades—from Iraq and Afghanistan to Libya and Syria, from the NATO war against Russia to the genocide in Gaza—have been interconnected stages of a single trajectory: the effort to enforce the imperialist redivision of the world in the interests of finance capital.

The war abroad is inseparable from the war against the working class in every country: the dismantling of social reforms, the redistribution of wealth upward and the turn by ruling elites toward authoritarian rule and fascistic methods to suppress resistance. As North explained:

The breakdown of democratic forms in the United States, the turn to open gangsterism in politics, the subordination of all social life to the interests of the oligarchy, and the drive to redivide the world through military violence express the crisis of the entire capitalist order in its most concentrated and explosive form.

The most far-reaching consequence of this crisis is the response of the international working class. The rally identified 2026 as a fundamental turning point in modern history. As North declared:

What can be stated with certainty is that the period of relative social equilibrium has ended. The objective conditions identified at the start of the decade—the breakdown of the post-war capitalist order, the impossibility of continuing the old methods of rule, the necessity of either revolutionary transformation or descent into barbarism—have not only been confirmed but have intensified. The first months of 2026 mark the point at which the resistance of the working class has emerged as a global force, contending against the offensive of the oligarchy on a scale that places the fundamental questions of the epoch—war or peace, dictatorship or democracy, socialism or barbarism—directly on the historical agenda.

This is the defining reality of the present period. The rally advanced a theory of revolution rooted in the upsurge of struggle of the international working class. Numbering in the billions, bound together by the processes of global production, this class is now compelled to recognize itself as a single objective social force.

North then turned in his report to the question of revolutionary

leadership, noting the gap between the objective situation and the political preparedness of the working class:

We acknowledge that the sections of the International Committee are not yet mass parties. But this is not a fault but the expression of the long period of political reaction during which the old social democratic, Stalinist, labor and trade union bureaucracies were able to suppress the class struggle. But as Trotsky stated, “The laws of history are more powerful than the bureaucratic apparatus.” The intensification of capitalist crisis is radicalizing the masses, and this will create the conditions for an immense growth of the Trotskyist movement.

North concluded by stressing:

The question now posed is not whether to fight but how to fight and under what banner. Our answer to these questions is this: The road forward is the conscious and organized struggle of the international working class for power. The banner is that of the Fourth International. We say: Build sections of the International Committee of the Fourth International in every country. Take up the fight for socialism. Forward to the world socialist revolution!

The reports that followed concretized this analysis through a precise national and regional overview of the world crisis. Joseph Kishore, National Secretary of the Socialist Equality Party (US), characterized the Trump administration as “a government of the oligarchy, the product of unprecedented levels of social inequality that are not compatible with democratic forms of rule.” Christoph Vandreier, National Secretary of the Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei (Germany), speaking outside the Bundestag in Berlin, stated bluntly that “Germany has long been at war with Russia again,” documenting Chancellor Friedrich Merz’s announcement of the largest German rearmament since Hitler.

Tomas Castanheira, leader of the Socialist Equality Group in Brazil, analyzed the imperialist offensive in Latin America—the kidnapping of President Maduro, the ultimatum issued to Cuba and the murder of more than 180 fishermen by US drone strikes—exposing the bankruptcy of every form of bourgeois nationalism in the face of imperialist eruption. Ula? Sevinç, Chairman of the newly-founded Turkish section of the ICFI, reported on the resurgence of the class struggle in Turkey, documenting the extraordinary 190-kilometer march of the Doruk mining workers and the Erdoğan regime’s arrests of their leaders. Deepal Jayasekera and Dilaxshan Mahalingaman delivered a joint speech in Sinhala and Tamil—a deliberate rebuke to the ethnic divisions on which the Sri Lankan ruling class has preyed for nearly eight decades—exposing the JVP/NPP government’s collaboration with the US-Israeli war and the assault on the working class across South Asia.

Reports from Thomas Scripps (UK), Alex Lantier (France), Cheryl Crisp (Australia), Tom Peters (New Zealand) and Keith Jones (Canada) documented the complicity of each national ruling class in the Iran war and the drive toward austerity, rearmament and authoritarianism—including Lantier’s exposure of the Macron administration’s direct military complicity in the Iran war and the deaths of more than 35,000 refugees in the Mediterranean since 2014, and Jones’s reference to the Carney government’s determination to be “predator, not prey” in the imperialist redivision of the world.

Speakers in every section drove home the essential political conclusion about the pseudo-left formations—from the Democratic Socialists of

America in the US, to the FSP in Sri Lanka, sheltering behind studied “non-alignment,” to Mélenchon’s New Popular Front in France, to the cynical rebranding of the NDP under Avi Lewis in Canada: However varied their national costumes, they perform the same essential service as agencies of imperialism within the workers’ movement.

A central theme of the rally was the defense of Comrade Bogdan Syrotiuk, the 26-year-old leader of the Young Guard of Bolshevik-Leninists, imprisoned by the Ukrainian state for two years on “high treason” charges carrying 15 years to life—the alleged “evidence” comprising nine volumes of WSWWS articles, ICFI May Day speeches and an essay by Trotsky. The reports of Tamino Dreisam (IYSSE Germany) and Andrei Ritsky (YGBL) focused on the imperialist offensive against the socialist opposition that Bogdan’s persecution embodies, while David North, Will Lehman, Ula? Ate?çi and other speakers raised the demand for Bogdan’s immediate release, along with those of other political prisoners.

Will Lehman, candidate for UAW president, addressed himself directly to the international working class. “We workers of the world are already united by the global forces of production. What we have to do, right now, starting today, is unite as a conscious fighting force.” The answer, he insisted, “is rank-and-file rebellion—workers rebuilding our own organizations, independent of union officials who serve management and the government.” Martez Crutchfield, a fifth-generation Ford Rouge worker running for delegate to the upcoming UAW Constitutional Convention alongside Lehman on the “insurgent slate,” developed the call to build rank-and-file committees in every workplace.

In his report, SEP (US) National Committee member Evan Blake addressed the role of AI and announced a substantial development of Socialism AI. Blake explained:

In launching Socialism AI, for the first time in the history of the socialist movement we placed in the hands of workers and youth a tool capable of making the entire heritage of Marxism—the works of Marx, Engels, Lenin, Trotsky, Luxemburg and Plekhanov, and nearly three decades of daily analysis on the *World Socialist Web Site*—accessible in real time, in dialogue, in any language, at any hour.

Blake announced that based on the feedback of users in over 100 countries, the architecture has been substantially improved, and Socialism AI is now qualitatively more powerful in answering political, theoretical and historical questions.

The significance of this development cannot be overstated. The objective conditions for socialist revolution are maturing globally, but the most decisive obstacle remains the gap between those conditions and the political consciousness of the working class—a gap forged over decades by the betrayals of the Stalinist, social democratic and trade union bureaucracies and reinforced by the censorship and falsification of the bourgeois media. Socialism AI is the most powerful instrument the Trotskyist movement has ever developed for the systematic political education of the international working class. Its further development, alongside the daily expansion of the WSWWS, is among the central tasks of the period ahead.

The rally’s analysis has not had to wait long for confirmation. The war against Iran is profoundly destabilizing the world economy—driving up energy and food prices, disrupting supply chains and deepening the social crisis in every country. The day after the rally, Spirit Airlines ceased operations and began eliminating 17,000 jobs—the first liquidation of a major American airline in 25 years, a direct casualty of jet fuel prices driven sky-high by the Iran war.

The same day as the rally, Trump framed his “options” in the grotesque language of the mafia: “Go and just blast the hell out of them and finish them forever,” or “make a deal”—before adding, “Frankly, maybe we’re better off not making a deal at all.” The administration is a regime in deep crisis. Trump believes that he can resolve the contradictions of American imperialism through homicidal violence and threats. This will fail. Reports of significant retaliatory strikes from Iran on US military assets across the region have intensified conflicts within the state apparatus over how to proceed after a war that has not achieved its aims.

The study of this rally—of its analysis and its program—is not a matter of intellectual interest. It is the study of the interaction between the development of Marxist theory and the actual development of the objective crisis: the war, the upsurge of the class struggle, the breakdown of bourgeois political forms and the maturation of the conditions for socialist revolution.

Outside of the ICFI, there is no comparable analysis, no revolutionary perspective and no Marxist assessment of the unfolding crisis. The rally itself must be understood as an expression of the emergence of the international working class as an independent social force and of the conscious effort to arm that force with a program, a strategy and a leadership.

This is not a matter of self-congratulation. It points to urgent tasks. There remains a major gap between the advanced stage of the world crisis and the political preparedness of the working class. The decisive question is whether the political consciousness, organization and leadership required to transform the eruption of class struggle into a conscious revolutionary movement can be developed at the pace demanded by events.

The task posed by history is the building of revolutionary leadership. The ICFI is fighting to meet this responsibility: to build the Fourth International as the World Party of Socialist Revolution. Everyone who watched the May Day rally should take immediate steps to widen its impact—Share the video and the written reports as they are published, circulate them to coworkers, classmates, friends and family and post the rally on social media. Use the rally as a starting point for meetings and political discussion in workplaces, schools and neighborhoods.

Above all, draw the necessary political conclusions and take the next step. Join the Socialist Equality Party and the International Youth and Students for Social Equality, and contact us to speak with a party member about how to become involved in building a revolutionary movement of the working class against war, dictatorship and capitalism.



To contact the WSWS and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

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