

UK: London Picket Of Kazakhstan Embassy!

Tuesday 18 January 2022, by [CONWAY Terry](#) (Date first published: 10 January 2022).

Around 50 people braved teeming rain and the challenges of travelling during the pandemic to protest against the barbarous actions of the Kazakh regime against its own people, writes Terry Conway.

Called by [AntiCapitalistResistance](#) (ACR) and supported by the [Ukraine Solidarity Campaign](#), [Labour Representation Committee \(LRC\)](#), [rs21](#), [Workers Power](#), [Socialist Alternative](#), [Workers Liberty](#) and a number of individual activists, people had been galvanised by the speed and depth of working class resistance to the major attacks on their living standards that the removal of the price cap on liquefied gas – and then outraged by the repression that followed.

Russia sent 2,500 troops into the country, on Thursday in response to an appeal from President Tokayev who was clearly worried he was losing control. The night before the rally, Tokayev ordered troops to shoot to kill protestors, who he has consistently labelled “outside agitators”. It is difficult to know how many have been murdered – even the BBC balks at using Tokayev’s term of “eliminated” without comment. Certainly thousands have been arrested.

Meanwhile China’s President Xi also expressed support for the regime. While the European Union is worried about Russian intervention, it makes little criticism of the Tokayev regime, seeming to blame the protestors for the violence.... UN rights chief Michelle Bachelet said:

People have the right to peaceful protest and freedom of expression. At the same time, protesters, no matter how angry or aggrieved they may be, should not resort to violence against others.

Biden and his team have made similar comments.

Britain is certainly not absent from this gang of thieves. Johnson has echoed the comments of other world leaders in recent days – not a surprise when he welcomed the Kazakh Foreign Minister Kairat Abdrakhmanov to London in late November, saying he looked forward to working with him on [global security](#)”.

And of course, as was pointed out at the protest, Tony Blair acted as advisor to former president Nursultan Nazarbayev, in power for more than three decades until 2019 and who still has a significant influence.

The rally was chaired by the ACR’s Simon Hannah who read part of the statement of the Kazakh Socialist Movement. Then we heard from Yuliya Yurchenko speaking on behalf of the Ukrainian Social Movement and Chris Ford from the Ukraine Solidarity Campaign who read messages from the Ukrainian Socialist League and from Ukrainian socialist writer and historian Marko Bojcun.

Other speakers were from Socialist Alternative, Pete Firmin from LRC, Steve McSweeney from Workers Power and journalist Paul Mason. Paul, as a member of the NUJ, sent particular solidarity to journalists in Kazakhstan, trying to disseminate news of the resistance under impossible

conditions.

A police van arrived quite early on and spoke to the organisers but then moved back. During the speeches one of the protestors noticed the poster on the embassy window – Kazakhstan a great place to visit and amended it to Kazakhstan a great place to overthrow the president. Shortly afterwards the police moved in and arrested the comrade and took him to Charing Cross police station, saying he would be charged with criminal damage.

This was despite the fact that others in the crowd removed the graffiti before he was taken away and took timed photographs to show no damage had in fact been done. A number of speakers made the point that the police were more concerned about protecting the property of a repressive murderous regime than respecting our democratic rights to protest. Such sentiments are undoubtedly bolstered by the Police bill wending its way through Westminster.

During the action at the embassy we heard that there was a gathering of the Kazakh community in Trafalgar Square and made our way to join them, The organisers who were clearly inexperienced, seemed nervous about being joined by the left, though they were happy to borrow our megaphone. Later John McDonnell MP who had been speaking at an event in another part of the square to mark the shameful 20th anniversary of Guantanamo Bay came and addressed them so some links were made.

As Simon Pirani argues here, the left needs to urgently discuss the most effective forms of solidarity we can develop with the people of Kazakhstan, of the other Eastern European countries and with those in Russia itself. The ACR is committed to being part of this process.

Terry Conway

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