



2009 Iran elections ? no choice for workers and democrats.

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Iranian presidential elections take place on 12 June. Zhaleh Sahand from Workers Power US argues that there is growing discontent and serious upheavals lie ahead

The tenth Iranian presidential election will see the current president Mahmood Ahmadinejad, face a challenge from a series of candidates, include the Iranian reform movement's Prime Minister Mir Hossein Mousavi and the former speaker of the parliament (Majlis), Mehdi Karrobi, also labelled a 'reformist'. Their debates on television have been surprisingly lively and Mousavi's wife Zahra Rahnavard has played a major part in his campaign.

The conservative candidates- besides Ahmadinejad -are Rafat Bayat, a female Majlis representative and Mohsen Rezaee the former commander of the Iranian revolutionary Guard (the architect of the bloody massacres of the Iranian Kurdish movement, an infamous enemy of the revolutionary communist movement. Akbar Alami, Ghasem Sholeh-Saadi, the former Majlis representatives, and Jila Movahed Shariatpanahi, a member of the Iranian Women's Rights organization and One Million Signatures, are the other independent candidates in this race.

Though these figures utilise differing tactics to either to ignore the basic needs of the Iranian people or to exploit their struggles for freedom of expression, of assembly, of the press and religion, in fact they would all end up with an identical result, enforced through the same ruling institutions of the Islamic Republic, still in place after thirty years.

But the election is a puppet show. The people pulling the strings are not standing for election. The Islamic leaders in the Guardian Council, the Expediency Council and the Grand Ayatollah himself hold their posts beyond the reach of the ordinary electorate.

The 1979 uprising of the Iranian people brought to its knees one of the most blatantly pro US imperialist regime in modern history. But the revolution was soon suffocated by those who had a programme of action designed to defend and extend the same system of barbaric repression and exploitation of the Iranian working class as had existed under the Shah's regime. Despite the heroic movement which overthrew the hated monarchy and SAVAK its secret police, we witnessed the monstrous Islamic regime take power, installing its own dictatorship, its own secret police.

The Iranian regime is system of organised crimes against the Iranian people, but it is focussed mostly on the workers movement, trade unionists, communists, and defenders women's rights. Those who are only interested in getting into the Majlis cannot reform it. Without a movement fighting for a radically different kind of political and economic system all these reforms will be unable to secure meaningful change.

This rotten capitalist system can no longer be reformed into something better for the people of Iran. Capitalism in Islamic garb has failed and brutalised the workers as much as they were under the Shah. The pseudo-democrats in Washington and Brussels still desire regime change, either openly or in the privacy of their cabinets and boardrooms. But bitter memories of the Shah's regime with its ties to the US imperialism - that thereby exercised an indirect control over our country- are still alive in the hearts and minds of Iranians. The pain and suffering that we went through cannot and must not be renewed or repeated yet again.

No matter how hard the regime will push forward their reactionary forces against the will of the Iranian people, while

ruling by the point of the sword, their continued violence against us is simply proof that their regime is, in reality, very weak. The pressing question today is what tactics revolutionaries in Iran should adopt? how to move from being a weak persecuted minority into a serious force that can unite the working class, the urban poor, oppressed minorities and others into a struggle to overthrow the government. The regime has survived for too long ? it must not survive any longer.

The Iranian working class is under mounting pressure from different angles; the world economic crisis and the political turmoil inside Iran. It is increasingly driven to fight for its basic demands and the forces of the regime are increasingly divided. The regime accuses the left of being agents of imperialism, secretly undermining the national government in the services of foreign agents. Nothing could be further from the truth. If there is one thing that the imperialists fear more than the regime in Tehran it is the working class taking power. Why did they allow Saddam Hussein to crush the Shia and Kurdish uprising after the first gulf war? It was because they preferred to have him continue as a dictator than face an Iraqi state run by the shoras (councils) of rank and file soldiers and workers. Now we say clearly that we will defend Iran against any attacks by the imperialist forces and will work with any force that is genuinely fighting the invaders. But at the same time we do not for one moment cease to pursue our real goal, which is the construction of working class power in Iran.

The 1979 uprising of the Iranian people by its bravery, by its sacrifice of the most beautiful budding flowers of the movement for the sake of liberty and equality, proved that no regimes, no matter how bloody, can survive the genuine will of the people for social justice and democracy. This despite the fact that it did not bring a fundamental change in the misery of their lives, but established another dictatorship. We can say that revolutions can be delayed, but cannot vanish from the face of the earth for long. Therefore, the Iranian socialist movement has to strive wholeheartedly, constantly and tirelessly to expose to the world the crimes of the Iranian regime and elevate the demands and the movement of the working class into the higher stages, and realise the fact that without a revolutionary programme, this task will be aborted or become only a wish.

The worldwide crisis of capitalism has brought the Left an opportunity to argue directly about the failure of capitalism and its corrupt regimes in providing the oppressed people of the world a decent life that they all have deserved. Only a programme of action can liberate the oppressed peoples of the third world and can guarantee a future for socialism ? the strategy of permanent revolution is the perspective that we must fight for in Iran. The League for the Fifth International and Workers Power US will work to ensure the victory of the working class revolution in Iran.

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