

Indonesia elections - which way forward?

Leon Reiza Mon, 27/04/2009 - 22:00

Leon Reiza

Leon Reiza from Indonesia reports on the recent elections and what workers will get out of them

On 9 April Indonesia held a general election for its parliament, which will be followed by a second election for the President in June. This election is the third since the student movement kicked out Soharito regime in 1998. Student, pro democracy movement, left groups and workers were very active on the streets and in mass protests and movements to defeat the military dictatorship. But today many people question why more was not achieved.

This question is very sensible because after the 1998 movement Reformasi was hijacked by capitalist politicians such as Amien Rais, Megawati, GusDur, and also the GOLKAR Party. Now the hijacking is happening again after many former generals organised to make a new political party. These generals include people like Wiranto (Who made his name slaughtering people in East Timor) have formed a party called HANURA. Among them is General Prabowo (who was involved in kidnapping pro-democracy activists in 1996) who had launched the GERINDRA party and Susilo Bambang, the current president (A general who was responsible for attacks on pro-democracy activists in 1996), have created the Democratic party. The Social movement which, during the last ten years was very active in fighting for social change has started to look weak in the last few years. Leaders of the movement such as Dita Sari and student activists in 1998 now compromise with the mainstream capitalist political parties. Many have joined them and gone to the elections as their candidates to try and reform them ?from within?. We know this is a hopeless cause.

Indonesia during the last 10 years faced a terrible neoliberal agenda with a very pro western government. The current president Susilo Bambang opened up a lot of Indonesia to neo liberalism and more marketisation for foreign multi nationals. Alongside this the government bailed out private companies, and cut many subsidies. Furthermore he also privatised industries, mostly from US companies. However the most unpopular issue is fuel prices but a month before election the oil price down again in an attempt in win votes before the election. All these conditions are very bad for workers: workers in Indonesia are the largest victims of the policies of neoliberalism. The attacks of workers in the past period have been possible due to the repression against workers struggles. They must not be forced to pay further for the current economic crisis that was caused by the bosses. Many bourgeois politicians claim to have the answer, but all their solutions are pro-market and capitalist ? workers must not have illusions in them.

With a turnout of around 60% for the parliamentary elections, the largest number of votes went to the Democratic Party with around 21%, followed by both on slightly more than 14% Golkar and The Democratic Party (Struggle). The Presidential election will have candidates from these three parties, with the democratic party ahead in opinion polls by around 5%. The constitution allows the army to conduct physical and psychological tests which could be used to stop a workers candidate in these elections. Sadly however there is no workers candidate standing and the choice for Indonesian votes is between three

bourgeois candidates or a spoiled ballot ? we advocate the latter, while building a protest movement to force the downfall of the government which will represent the small number of rich rather than the large numbers of urban working class and rural workers and poor peasants.

What does Indonesia need now? In the history of Indonesia has been a big leftist movement with organizations like the Communist Party of Indonesia, which at one point was the third biggest communist party in the world. But Soharito with support from the CIA destroyed it in the 1960s, killing hundreds of thousands of people. So with the new era of democracy which started after Soharito stepped down, the left movements in Indonesia had started to organise again. The socialist left has a very important role to play in organising workers struggles against neo liberalism. Our goal now is to make a new working class party with a revolutionary program, which bases itself on the working class, poor, excluded and oppressed groups and the urban poor, uniting these forces in a struggle for social revolution. We must reject pro democracy activists and leftist activists who compromise with capitalist politicians and do not fight for a working class solution for Indonesia from this party. It is understandable that some people still fear a repeat of the tragedy of 1965, but this fear cannot hold us back now from launching a fight for a working class party that can lead a serious revolutionary struggle against capitalism

We must take steps forward to make a revolutionary workers party in Indonesia. League supporters propose the following steps:

? We demand the nationalisation of all major industrial and productive sectors and place them in the control of the working class.

? End all laws or constitutional bans on Marxist and Leninist organisations

? No votes in the election for non working class candidates and parties. The capitalists parties rob us and keep us poor ? we do not support their government!

The only solution for the complex social and economic problems of Indonesia is a federation of socialist states across the islands, as part of a wider South East Asian socialist federation. For this we need a new world party of socialist revolution, a fifth international.

Source URL: <https://fifthinternational.org/content/indonesia-elections-which-way-forward>