Statement on the Barcelona /Cambrils Terrorist Attacks

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The attacks on August 17, in which a vehicle ploughed into crowds of people, many of them tourists, strolling along the famous Las Ramblas in Barcelona, killing 13 people and injuring more than 100, and then a second vehicle attack in Cambrils wounded seven people, have been claimed by so-called Islamic State (ISIS) who called the perpetrators its soldiers.

All socialists, trade unionists and progressive people will condemn these cruel and indiscriminate acts of terrorism and extend their sympathy and solidarity to the families and friends of the victims and to all those traumatised by these horrific events.

They come as the latest in a series of ISIS-inspired terrorist attacks across Europe; in Nice, Paris, Berlin, Stockholm, London and Manchester. The ?weapons? involved are readily available and the coordination needed minimal. No matter how quick police responses might be, such attacks are virtually impossible to prevent.

As long as there are tiny groups, or lone individuals, inspired by the terrorist-jihadist ideology of ISIS or al-Qaeda to undertake these murderous, but also suicidal, missions, they will not ultimately be stopped.

Nothing can either excuse or justify such atrocities, but neither can they be explained simply by the ?evil ideology? of the perpetrators or by blaming ?radical Islamic preachers?.

Still less can they be blamed on the whole Muslim communities of Europe, as the more reactionary populist politicians and media regularly do. The spikes in Islamophobic attacks in Britain after the London and Manchester events show how racists and fascists are ever-ready to exploit the sentiments stirred by such demagogy.

In fact, spreading such false connections is just what ISIS and Al-Qaeda themselves are seeking to achieve. Their aim is to further isolate and alienate large numbers of the continent?s Muslims, as a result of increased police harassment and persecution, and thus win more recruits to their arch-reactionary cause.

That is why we have to oppose the states of emergency and extra repressive powers adopted by states in the wake of these attacks and mobilise the workers and youth in solidarity both with the long established Muslim communities and with the recent refugees from the wars in the Middle East.

After the Nice and Paris attacks, France introduced a State of Emergency, which allows the police to ban demonstrations and violate many citizens? rights. President Macron has now threatened to integrate this veritable state of siege into French law on a permanent basis, at the same time as he is moving to abolish
workers’ rights by decree. Let us be clear; the anti-terrorism laws and special powers will be used against the workers and youth of Europe. That is why we have to oppose them.

More than that, we have to expose the real origins of these horrific terrorist acts; the far, far greater scale of horror and suffering in the Middle East, above all, in Syria and Yemen today, but also in Iraq, Afghanistan, Libya, the list is a long one. It is the actions, over decades, of the ?democratic?, ?secular? or ?Christian?, ?human rights loving? states, and some of their closest allies in the region, that have created the self-proclaimed, but misnamed, ?Islamic? terrorists. They are Frankenstein monsters of those oh-so-liberal rulers.

Their creation started with the Afghan civil war in the early 1980s, and was then accelerated by the Iraq war in 1991, the proclamation of the War on Terror after 9/11, the occupations of Afghanistan and Iraq and, most recently, by the interventions in Syria and Libya. All these wars and invasions, first by the Western Allies and more recently by Putin?s Russia, are the purely self-interested actions of exploiting imperialist powers.

Their bombings and invasions have killed many hundreds of thousands of innocent people and brought not peace, democracy or human rights but indescribable levels of destruction and suffering. In Syria, the work of generations of the country?s workers, plus the cultural treasures of millennia, have been reduced to rubble.

In response to the launching of the ?War on Terror?, young people, workers' and women's organisations built a mass antiwar movement, which was particularly strong in Spain. Our rulers pressed on regardless of this mass opposition while the actions of the terrorists, such as the Madrid train bombings of 2004, which killed 192 people and injured 2000, acted to confuse and diminish the antiwar movement.

Today, the immediate background to the atrocities in Barcelona and Cambrils is that the US and its allies claim to be on the verge of victory over the so-called ISIS caliphate and to have killed its caliph, again at the expense of huge loss of civilian life in its centres, Mosul and Raqqa. As the truth about the scale of the loss of life and the evidence of the total indifference of the bombers, raining fire and fury from the skies, becomes clearer, it will only fuel more terrorist outrages.

The very best service we can render to the victims of the Barcelona attacks, is to restart a mass movement of 2003 proportions to demand an end to all interventions by the US and its Nato allies and Russia in the entire Middle East region and to mobilise support for those democratic and secular activists fighting both jihadi-terrorist forces and imperialism and its stooges.

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