

Who are we ?

● The International Workers Committee Against War, Exploitation, for a Workers' International (IWC) was set up at the World Conference held in Mumbai (India) on November 19, 20, 21, 2016 gathering delegates from 28 countries.

● The IWC was set up on the basis of the Mumbai Manifesto against war, exploitation and precarious labour which was endorsed by labour activist and trade union and political organisations officers from 46 countries (*)

● Its continuations committee is composed of labour activists from all political/ trade union backgrounds:

Innocent Assogba (Benin),
Alan Benjamin (USA),
Colia Clark (USA),
Constantin Cretan (Romania),
Berthony Dupont (Haiti),
Ney Ferreira (Brazil),
Daniel Gluckstein (France),
Rubina Jamil (Pakistan),
Apo Leung (China),
Gloria Gracida (Mexico),
M.A. Patil (India),
Mandlenkosi Phangwa (Azania),
Klaus Schüller (Germany),
Jung Sikhwa (Korea),
John Sweeney (Great Britain),
Mark Vassilev (Russia),
Nambiath Vasudevan (India).

(*) Afghanistan, Argentina, Austria, Azania, Belarus, Bangladesh, Belgium, Benin, Brazil, Burundi, Canada, Chile, China, Czech Republic, Ecuador, France, Germany, Great Britain, Greece, Haiti, Hungary, Iceland, India, Ireland, Italy, Ivory Coast, Korea, Mali, Mexico, Pakistan, Peru, Philippines, Portugal, Romania, Russia, Rwanda, Senegal, Sweden, Switzerland, Togo, Tunisia, Turkey, Ukraine, USA, Venezuela, Zimbabwe.

LEBANON

Protests Shake the Communitarian Institutions

Massive demonstrations have just caused Prime Minister Saad Hariri (of triple nationality — Lebanese, Saudi and French) to resign. The president has called for the formation of a “government of experts”.

For nearly three weeks now, the Lebanese people have been demonstrating *en masse*. They are demanding radical change, the ouster of “*all the political class*”, which are judged to be incompetent and idle, and the departure of the government. In a country where the Constitution is based on specific rights attributed to each “community”, where these communities are represented in the institutions according to a carefully crafted mix (the Sunnites get the position of Prime Minister, the Christians get the presidency, etc.), the calling into question of this communal construction is a revolution.

“*We are one single people*”, the demonstrators chant, addressing the activists of Hezbollah [one of the parties in the coalition government – *editor's note*] who have been looking for a fight with them, after their leader took a stand against the mass movement. The uniqueness of this movement lies in its rejection of all the existing parties. They are designated as being responsible for the fact that there has been no change in the conditions of the most impoverished sectors of the population for the past twenty-five years.

In recent years, there have been many protest movements. The present explosion is not surprising. What is new is seeing Lebanese people of all different religions side-by-side to denounce corruption, in particular. They wish to decide for themselves. In Lebanon, as in all

the countries where the issue of popular sovereignty has not been settled, the demand has been raised for a Sovereign Constituent Assembly, through which the unity of the nation can be forged.

The trade unions, in particular the FENASOL (National Federation of Commerce Workers and Employees) and the student unions, which participate actively in the demonstrations and occupation of the streets, can play a major role in the expansion of the movement. The FENASOL has maintained its demand for general strike, despite the repression and intimidation. They could open the way to the fight for a Sovereign Constituent Assembly which is, under the circumstances, the demand that corresponds to the profound aspiration of the Lebanese people to decide for themselves.

An observer from the newspaper *L'Orient / LeJour* recently exclaimed: “*The demonstrators want a revolution!*” The same day the article was published, the demonstrators answered him using the popular Arabic expression “*From your mouth, to God*”. In a country where, behind a religious cover, this type of popular expression can have a democratic and social content, this meant: “Yes, it is indeed a revolution.”

Correspondence from Lebanon, published on 31 October 2019 in *Minbar El Oummel* (Workers Tribune, Algeria)

CHILE

“It's not about 30 pesos, it's about 30 years”

The eruption of the workers and young people has opened a revolutionary crisis. “It's not about 30 pesos” [the increase in the price of an underground ticket – *editor's note*], say the millions of workers and youth, “it's 30 years that we reject.” Thirty years is the period during which, after the end of Pinochet's dictatorship, all the political parties in Chile, including those on the “left”, have continued to accept and maintain the dictatorship's institutions, beginning with the 1980 Constitution — institutions that enabled the implementation of IMF plans. Our correspondents for the Alliance of Workers and Students write:

High School Students Erupt

When President Piñera announced the increase in the price of an underground ticket, the high school students in Santiago (the capital of Chile) entered the fray. They called on underground users not to pay. The management of the underground called on the army to stop the fare-evaders. Students then massively descended upon the underground stations, outflanking the forces

of repression. The underground workers' trade union called on its members to stop work. A large percentage of underground users followed the instructions to refuse to pay. On 17 October, the underground workers' union backed the call by the students and demanded withdrawal of the forces of repression. The mobilisation is expanding, and yet no organisation had decided it; the students have led the population into the fray.

The Call for General Strike

On 18 October, the mobilisation spread. The government decreed a state of emergency. Repression resulted in twenty deaths and hundreds of injured. Finally, on 22 October, several organisations formed the Unidad Social (Social Unity) coalition and called for a general strike on 22 and 23 October. Among them was the CUT/Workers' United Central, led jointly by the Communist Party and Christian Democracy, the Colegio de Profesores, CONFUSAM (Autonomous Trade Union Federation of Healthcare) and the Coordination Committee "NO AFP" (against the pension funds system inherited from the dictatorship). The call demands President Piñera's resignation, lifting of the state of emergency, and the return of soldiers to their barracks, as well as the immediate convening of National Constituent Assembly. Hundreds of thousands answered this call, while the government reinforced the state of emergency. The mass mobilisation — in obedience to no one's instructions — has grown, reaching even the most remote villages of the country.

Popular Sovereignty or "dialogue" with Piñera?

The leadership of the Socialist Party has proposed to call on the U.N. Commission on Human Rights, without even asking for the lifting of the state of emergency. The Communist Party and Frente Amplio [formed several years ago on the model of Podemos in Spain — *editor's note*] have agreed on the need for "dialogue" with the government. All

the parliamentary groups in the Senate are calling for a "way out of the crisis" by means of a referendum such as provided in the Constitution ... which is a holdover from Pinochet. It's a Constitution that millions of people have rejected!

The Workers Enter the Movement

In spite of a divided trade union movement, shipyard workers were among the first to mobilise, imposing unity on the organisations and a united march on the capital. While the unions in the copper mines — a key sector of the economy — are calling to join the mobilisation, the president of the federation has launched a call, side by side with government officials, to refrain from mobilising. The Colegio de Profesores (educators' trade union) has already embarked in the struggle in defence of public education, which has attracted genuine goodwill from large layers of the population.

Popular Assemblies

Popular Assemblies are being formed in neighbourhoods and districts. Activists of the Alliance of Workers and Students participate in them in their neighbourhoods; there are also workplace assemblies in some companies. They bring broad layers of the population together, although at times a bit chaotically, as everyone wants to speak. The demands are being expressed: to do away with the Constitution, to call for a Constituent Assembly, for the departure of the government, etc. For our part, we affirm that no social or democratic demands can be met under the present

government. Therefore we raise the need for the organisation of these assemblies and their coordination at the local, regional and national levels.

"General Strike! Sovereign Constituent Assembly Now!"

Over the past 48 hours, neither the leaders of the United Social coalition nor those of the Communist Party and Frente Amplio have demanded that Piñera must leave. In a leaflet that was distributed on November 4, the Alliance of Workers and Students concluded: *"Our demands in the interest of the majority of the people can only be met on the condition that another type of government is established, a government for the people, represented by a SOVEREIGN CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY (...) The young people have had the honour of initiating the fight on behalf of all of us, showing their courage and their conscience. The time has come for the workers to enter the scene, with all the power that their ability to block the means of production and services gives them. From the mines and all the way to the smallest of ports, everything must be paralysed. The United Social coalition must call for an UNLIMITED GENERAL STRIKE up to and until POPULAR SOVEREIGNTY is established. The people who are independently rich, the economic and financial groups, the speculators, the thieves and parasites that live off of our work do not create the wealth, THE WORKERS DO! Unity of action! Sovereign Constituent Assembly now!"* ■

Santiago de Chile, 4 November, 8 pm



October 25: a million demonstrators. Written on the banners: "General Strike!"
"Free and Sovereign Constituent Assembly!"