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Iran

Where do things stand in Iran?

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With the benefit of hindsight, it is easier to draw some lessons from what has happened in Iran since last September.

Daily street demonstrations took place all over the country from September to January. This was not a sudden event that came out of nowhere. The experiences of the 2017 and 2019 uprisings were there, and were used by the young people involved in this struggle.

The feminine character of this uprising sets it apart from all the others. The active presence of women is undeniable. Their courage in the face of the forces of repression dazzled the whole world, and provoked an outpouring of solidarity from the four corners of the planet. At the same time, the presence of women without veils in public spaces in the cities gave the general protest movement an unprecedented dimension of civil disobedience.

The participation of students is reminiscent of their role in the uprisings of 2017 and 2019. But the scale of the massive student involvement far exceeded their activism in previous movements. The geographical dispersion of the universities meant that student participation broadened the scope of the protests. At the same time, it gave considerable impetus to the movement's demands, thanks to the heroic modern history of the student world, which has been the vanguard of movements for democracy and social progress for the last 70 years.

All social classes, with the exception of the new capitalist-religious bourgeoisie, have been present in this movement, with a predominance of the lower middle classes, as well as young workers in precarious employment, the unemployed, small shopkeepers, etc. Strikes have taken place in all sectors of society. Strikes took place in shops and shopping centres, especially in Kurdistan, in the northern province of Guilan, in Tehran and in some other large cities.

Solidarity strikes took place, including in the Tehran Bazaar, the historic base of the Islamic regime. This too is new, and is a distinctive feature of the Women, Life and Liberty movement.

Social groups such as doctors and lawyers, who were not involved in the protests of 2017 and 2019, were present, in their own way, in this movement. This unprecedented fact shows that the "all together" character of the uprising was much broader than in the past.

The whole country was in turmoil: people in every province, from north to south and east to west, big and small towns, the centre of the country and outlying regions.

National minorities such as the Kurds, Azeris, Lors and Baluchis were not only present, but in solidarity with all the demonstrators, thwarting their opponents' accusations of "separatism". Women, Kurds and students were the three main pillars of the movement.

The solidarity of the Iranian diaspora with the current uprising is particularly noteworthy. The rally in Berlin last December, where over a hundred thousand Iranians came from all over Europe, was unprecedented in the history of the Iranian diaspora.

But there was one big absence from this movement: the political strike by workers as a class, not as citizens taking

part in street protests. Iran is a country dominated by capitalist relations of production. Urban wage earners, in all their diversity, make up the majority of the population. Nothing radical or profound will happen in Iran without the participation of the working class.

The success of urban and student demonstrations requires that they be accompanied by labour strikes, as shown by the anti-monarchic revolution of 1978-1979. Unfortunately, this latest confrontation between the Iranian people and the current regime failed to make up for this shortcoming.

The turning point at the beginning of 2023

It was marked by the end of the major demonstrations and the publication, on 15 February, of a charter by 20 unions and associations ("[The Statement of Minimum Demands of Independent Iranian Unions and Civil Society Organizations](#)"). This set out the minimum demands of the social movement, combining social-economic, political and social justice demands, which were unachievable within the framework of the Islamic Republic,

This charter was a turning point. It testifies to the maturity of the progressive leaders of the social movements in Iran. It could provide a good basis for the next political and social "storm".

Since the regime succeeded in putting an end to the large-scale daily demonstrations, strikes and industrial action by workers have been on the increase. Employees, pensioners and teachers have come up with their own demands.

There is a gap between movements with a political objective and those that are fundamentally protest movements. As long as this gap exists, the success of an uprising against the ayatollahs' regime will be compromised. And it is on this subject that the lively discussions currently taking place between activists in Iranian social movements are focused. Unless this major problem is resolved, the chances of success for the next popular uprising will be very slim.

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