

CHINA

Labour activist Meng Han has been released!

A declaration co-signed by the International Workers Delegation that travelled to China 2 to 9 September, and the Hong Kong Confederation of Trade Unions (HKCTU)

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 Novembre 19, 20 and 21 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.

Their declaration expresses their reaction to the liberation, on 3 September, of labour activist Meng Han, who had been arbitrarily arrested and jailed in December 2015, for having helped the workers of a shoe factory in Guangzhou to organise collectively to defend their rights.

Declaration

"On September the 3rd, Chinese labour activist Meng Han was released after twenty-one months in prison.

He was the last of the four activists arrested on 3 December 2015 to be freed.

We rejoice at his liberation and salute his combat for workers rights.

The independent International Workers Delegation, which had been created at the World Conference in Mumbai, happened to be in China at the moment of his release. The delegation met with several labour NGOs in continental China. The delegation also asked to meet with the leadership of the ACFTU (the All-China Federation of Trade Unions, the official Chinese trade union federation). The ACFTU refused any discussion, pretexting that the delegation had not been officially invited. We consider that this confirms the fact that the independent labour movement in China is harshly repressed and that the arbitrary imprisoning of labour activists is commonplace.

Although Meng Han has been released, he remains under judicial supervision. We emphasize the importance of the statement that he made to his judges, in which he reaffirmed his innocence concerning all the charges made against him. This is why we call on the Chinese government to ensure that Meng Han's right to organise workers be respected, and that his rights not be hindered in future. We know very well that other labour activists are victims of similar repression and miscarriages of justice. We furthermore declare that freedom of association, the right to negotiate collective bargaining contracts and the right to strike are indivisible, and know no borders. We call on the Chinese government to cease the persecution of Chinese labour activists and their organisations, and to ensure that all those who have been wrongly arrested and imprisoned be immediately freed.

September 8 2017."

The Independent International Workers Delegation in China, made up of Pascal Corbex, trade unionist* (France), Klaus Schuller, member of the National Bureau of the SPD Workers Commission, EVG trade unionist* (Germany), John Sweeney, Unison* (UK), Guillaume Thenoz, trade unionist* (France)

** in a personal capacity*

Co-signer : **The Hong Kong Confederation of Trade Unions (HKCTU)**

This is Part 2 of the report on the International Youth Conference against War that met near Paris on August the 27th and was attended by seventy young people from Azania (South Africa), Belgium, the United States, France, Palestine, Russia, Turkey and Zimbabwe; the young delegates from Afghanistan and Burundi were unable to participate, as their visas had been refused.

United States

"The majority of Americans have shown they are against the white supremacists"

Karina, a student and member of Socialist Organizer, comes from California (USA) and explains that, like millions of American youth and workers, she was *"born into a working-class family, a Mexican immigrant family, who were searching for a better life."* A lot of her family, she said, is undocumented.

Trump *"based his campaign on anti-immigrant propaganda; he promised to deport even more*

undocumented immigrants than Obama had deported." But immigrant workers and young people are organizing across the country against this policy of mass deportations. Karina reported that 100 workers and youth activists, half from Mexico and half from the United States, issued a joint appeal against the "Wall of Shame" that Trump wants to build on the border between Mexico and the United States. The appeal also calls for stopping "free trade" agreements, beginning with NAFTA, that have ruined both Mexico and good industrial jobs in the United States.

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Karina explained that she also participated with her comrades in demonstrations of the "Black Lives Matter" movement, which for several years has been developing in opposition to the total impunity enjoyed by the police, who murder a Black person every 28 hours in the United States. After the events in Charlottesville, Karina reported, mass demonstrations took place in Boston and San Francisco, among other cities, to fight the Nazis and the white supremacists. *"The majority of Americans have shown that they are against the white supremacists; they are also outraged that Trump refused to take a stand against the murder of a young activist in the counter-protest in Charlottesville."*

Having heard the testimony of the young people from Afghanistan, Karina condemned Trump's announcement that more U.S. troops will be sent to Afghanistan, just as she condemned Trump's renewed threats of military intervention against Korea and Venezuela.

Turkey

"Against the state of emergency and the new Constitution"

Alperan, who is a student and a young worker, is an activist of the IKP (the Workers Fraternity Party) in Turkey, a country that has been warring against the Kurdish minority for years now and since 2011 has been suffering the consequences of the war of decomposition in Syria. The new Constitution, which will come into effect in 2019, gives *"full power to the president,"* which will exacerbate the consequences of the state of emergency which has already resulted in the firing of 800,000 people; the closing of a dozen TV channels, 11 radio stations and 15 press groups; and increased restrictions on the right to demonstrate and to strike, which has facilitated a wave of privatisations.

In the educational system, the Erdogan government has forbidden the teaching of Darwin's theory of evolution, which was then replaced by religious propaganda. This is why Alperan and his comrades fought for a "no" vote in the April 2017 referendum, against the draft of the new Constitution.

Belgium

"A reform in education, in keeping with the European Union's policy of deregulation"

The rejection of any military intervention was also present in the presentation by Gaetan, a young political and trade union activist in Belgium. *"Belgium, which is a member of NATO, intervenes with its army in Iraq, in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, in Mali and in the Horn of Africa".* One of the many reasons

for building a revolutionary organisation in Belgium is the demand for the withdrawal of Belgian troops in all the countries where they intervene, Gaetan said.

But that is not the only reason. In this country of 11 million inhabitants, 3.4 million workers are organized in trade unions. A great number of short-lived demonstrations and strikes have taken place, but with no follow-up, while the right-wing government has lashed out against the workers and the young people.

So the government, in the wake of the Peters Law (which is the equivalent of the El Khomri Law in France – i.e., a law that destroys an important portion of the guarantees concerning working conditions and wages – has just created "flexi-jobs" which are tantamount to precarious employment, and are supposed to combat undocumented labour. The government also has implemented *"a reform in education that is in keeping with the European Union's policy of deregulation, giving more power to the bosses, planning to make 'savings' at the expense of the students, for example by forbidding them from repeating a school year"*. And while this reform is currently being *"backed by the trade union leadership, even though the union members and activists are 100% against"*, it is necessary, according to Gaetan, to *"get organised so as to stop this policy, and we think that the trade unions have the means to do so, on the condition that this be their goal."*

Palestine

"I come from Palestine. In 1948, my family was driven out of its village."

"I come from Palestine", explained Leïla. *"I was born in Al Quds (Jerusalem)." Leïla also began her presentation by telling the story of her own life, and explained what the tragedy of the people of Palestine has been since 1948.*

"In 1948, during the Nakba ('the catastrophe'), 750,000 Palestinians, out of a total population of 1.6 million inhabitants, were expelled from their homes and their villages. My family had to flee on foot from their village, after my two great-grandparents were massacred in a mosque. They went from town to town, and finally ended up in Jericho, where the UN had set up a refugee camp. These camps still exist today and have become shantytowns, cramming in the refugees and their descendants. 530 villages were obliterated and 70 massacres have been tallied. 150,000 persons are said to have been massacred."

Leïla talked of what the West Bank has become since the Oslo Accords of 1993. *"The territory is divided into three zones: Zone A, Zone B and Zone C. Zone A*

makes up 18% of the West Bank, where the Palestinian Authority exercises both civil and security control. But if you wish to go to another town, you must pass through an Israeli army checkpoint at each crossing of a zone. The Palestinian Authority has the civil control of Zone B (22% of the West Bank), but the Israelis are in charge of security. Zone C (60% of the West Bank) is the zone of Israel settlements, where Israel has full power."

The conclusion of the conference

These testimonials illustrated the barbarism that the capitalist system, in full crisis, and the generalised march to war under Trump's auspices, has led to. Having listened, the 70 young people in attendance decided to create an International Liaison Committee in order to pursue exchanges and combats to be led in common, and to report on their conference and their committee to the International Workers Committee that was created in Mumbai.

"Macron is 40 billion to bomb Afghanistan, Syria and so on"

It was decided to launch a campaign in each country, and particularly in the countries engaged in foreign military intervention (the US, France, Belgium – but also South Africa), in appropriate and adapted forms, for the immediate withdrawal of troops and the confiscation of military budgets. It was also decided to make next 23 September a day of mobilisation on this issue.

In France, JR groups responded in particular to the call from the young people of Afghanistan and launched an appeal to be signed massively, asserting: *"Macron is 40 billion to bomb Afghanistan, Syria and so on. We know what the protraction of these wars has been: terrorist attacks on one hand and, on the other, the endless flow of refugees who are welcomed with billy clubs in the European Union. For us, there is no such thing as a clean war – there is only war. Barbarism will not be committed in our name. Now, immediately: withdraw the troops! Down with war! Give the billions that have been allocated to war to universities, to hospitals, to public services and to social rights."*

It is a combat that is linked to each and every particular combat to help young people to express their demands against the policies of governments in the service of the bosses and the bankers.

In closing, *The Internationale* was sung in all languages because, for the young people of the world as for the workers of the world, *"The Internationale shall be the human race"*.

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