

# East Belfast riots: Only united working class action can prevent further attacks

**Socialist Party**  
CWI, Ireland

The rioting in the Catholic enclave in the predominantly Protestant east Belfast, Northern Ireland, on 20 and 21 June – the worst in recent years – did not appear from a blue sky. Throughout the Troubles, the interface between the Catholic Short Strand and Protestant Lower Newtownards Road has been the scene of sporadic sectarian violence emanating from both communities.

In recent months, there have been an increasing number of attacks on homes in both communities and this has ratcheted up sectarian tensions. The loyalist paramilitary Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF) used an incident to organise hundreds of young people from across east Belfast to join them in an orchestrated attack on the Short Strand.

There is little doubt that the UVF carried out the attack for its own cynical reasons. It has been angered by the continued investigation by the Historical Enquiry Team, established by the police service of Northern Ireland into the UVF's role in sectarian atrocities during the Troubles.

Like the rioting in another area, Rathcoole, last year, this was an attempt by the UVF to flex its muscles and send a warning to the state to back off. Internal tensions in the UVF may also have been factors leading up to the riots.

On 22 June, UVF members were among those stewarding the area to prevent clashes between young people following a series of talks. Obviously, they felt their point had been made.

When the rioting broke out dissident republican paramilitaries consciously intervened, hoping to be seen as 'defenders of the community'. The dissidents are seeking to develop a base of support in the communities by their actions and have no interest whatsoever in the welfare of working class people.

These events are yet another demonstration that, despite the propaganda from the establishment, sectarianism has not been overcome by the so-called 'peace process'. In

fact, as the Socialist Party has previously explained in depth, the institutions established by the Good Friday Agreement have cemented and deepened sectarian division.

The rioting also reflects the dire social conditions, including high unemployment, which exist in these communities. Youth who see no hope of a decent future and who feel alienated from society can be drawn towards sectarian forces such as the UVF and dissident republicans.

## Sectarian attacks

For now, the conflict has subsided but nothing is resolved. The conditions which sparked the riots remain to ignite at another point, not just in east Belfast but at all sectarian interfaces.

The majority of people in the Short Strand and Lower Newtownards Road, and the majority of people in other interface areas, are totally opposed to sectarian attacks. Despite this, conflict does break out. Con-

scious sectarian elements deliberately foment low level attacks on a regular basis and seek opportunities to provoke more serious outbreaks of violence.

While working class people on either side of the peacelines can and do work hard in their own areas to prevent attacks, it is of vital importance that genuine activists link up and work together across the peacelines if a more permanent solution to the problem of sectarian attacks is to be found.

Trade union activists based in interface areas can and should play a key role in taking such initiatives. At key points throughout the last 40 years trade union activists have held the line in combating sectarianism.

Taking such initiatives is not easy, especially at times of sharp increases in tension and violence. If even a handful of activists on both sides of an interface were to take a stand however, building joint bodies, they could mobilise large numbers of local people behind them, and trans-

form the situation.

Anti-sectarian bodies should consciously take up social and economic issues from the outset. Uniting communities in their common interests, to campaign on issues like youth unemployment and oppose attacks on services, would not only strengthen campaigns on these issues, but would help to break down sectarian divisions. Ultimately, tackling the conditions which breed sectarian conflict is the only way to defeat the reactionary forces that base themselves on division.

As the recent events in east Belfast demonstrate, if a political alternative is not built, then reactionary, sectarian groups can develop further and gain support.

All the Assembly parties depend upon sectarian division to maintain their political power. A new party of the working class, which actively combats sectarianism, is urgently needed.

**Full article see**  
[www.socialistworld.net](http://www.socialistworld.net)

no image available

## The Committee for a Workers' International

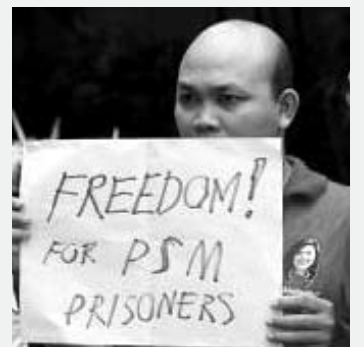
The Committee for a Workers' International (CWI) is the socialist international organisation to which the Socialist Party is affiliated.

The CWI is organised in 45 countries and works to unite the working class and oppressed peoples against global capitalism and to fight for a socialist world.

For more details including CWI publications write to: CWI, PO Box 3688, London E11 1YE.  
email [cwi@worldsoc.co.uk](mailto:cwi@worldsoc.co.uk)

## www.socialistworld.net

The CWI website contains news, reports and analysis from around the world. Recent articles include:



## Malaysia: Detained opposition activists brutally treated

Government steps up attacks on democratic and human rights to maintain grip on power

*CWI supporters, Malaysia*



## Hong Kong: Over 200,000 march for democracy and against property tycoons

Interview with Socialist Action (CWI) in Hong Kong after 1 July demonstration

*Chinaworker.info*



## Greece: Savage austerity measures passed despite mass protests

Tear gas and police brutality against general strikes and movement of the Enraged

*Stephan Kimmmerle, CWI, Athens*

# Kazakhstan: Striking oil workers attempt to break news blockade

## Further threats made against strike leaders and supporters

**CWI reporters, Moscow**

Oil workers' strikes in West Kazakhstan are now into their second month of taking strike action. The employers appear to have decided to hold back from more repression and instead are attempting to exhaust the workers. The Kazakhstan media are putting forward a wave of propaganda in an attempt to undermine support for the strike, claiming that most workers have "returned to work".

In an attempt to break the press refusal to cover the strike, at the invitation of the Russian section of the CWI, a delegation of strikers visited Moscow this week and met with trade unionists and reporters.

In a live video link with Peter Taaffe from the Socialist Party (CWI England and Wales), the delegation heard of the international support organised by other sections of the CWI for their dispute.

Also, Moscow News, the main



**Striking Kazakhstan oil workers**

central Asian news site Fergana.ru and the Reuters news agency all covered the story.

While the delegation was in Moscow, news came through that a further 300 workers were sacked and that Kuanysha Sisenbaeva, the strike

leader from Karazhanbas was taken to court and charged with organising illegal pickets and demonstrations. This is against the background of reports that the riot police are amassing in the oil producing areas.

The authorities are clearly getting desperate. In Almaty, the largest city, they no longer even pretend to hold fair law court hearings. It took three judges just three minutes to expel a cameraman from a court room and to go on to 'hear' evidence from the prosecutors' office, the appeal of mortgage debtors against five breaches of law during a trial against them in a lower court and to write and read out the verdict – which, of course, supported the banks. This is an example of injustice that is startling even by Kazakhstan's record.

Even more worrying is the letter printed by the 'Respublika' newspaper, which reveals that a meeting of foreign investors was recently held at which they were ordered by the government to sort out the 'social conflicts' in their corporations. But

rather than promise to pay higher wages and to improve social conditions to resolve workers' grievances, the government and corporations promised to 'weed out' the "trouble makers" amongst the workforce.

According to Respublika, first on the list is Ainur Kurmanov, whose organisation, Socialist Movement Kazakhstan, is the main opponent of injustice and inequality. It appears Ainur is now followed in the streets by not just by the Komitetshiki (the political police) but also by the security forces belonging to the corporations.

●Please send solidarity messages to:  
[solidar@socialismkz.info](mailto:solidar@socialismkz.info) with copies to [Robert.cwi@gmail.com](mailto:Robert.cwi@gmail.com) and [alex@socdeistvie.info](mailto:alex@socdeistvie.info)  
Protests should be sent to:  
**Embassy of Kazakhstan in United Kingdom - Thurloe Square, London SW7 2SD; 020 7581 4646 – 020 7584 8481 [london@kazakhstan-embassy.org.uk](mailto:london@kazakhstan-embassy.org.uk)**