

On the threat to dismiss the 1200 suspended soldiers

We salute the soldiers who were bold enough to take to the streets in August last year to march to the Union buildings. They came unarmed and had every intention of demonstrating peacefully. From the unfolding of events it is clear that imperialism (and primarily US imperialism) had every intention not only to disrupt the planned protest but to bash the soldier unions. Unarmed protestors were shot at, teargassed and brutally dispersed before organisers had proper chance to address them. In other words, imperialism deliberately wanted to create an incident to discredit the soldier unions. This, they hoped would sweep up the masses against the soldiers. Imperialism miscalculated. The Cosatu Congress later endorsed a campaign to promote the unionisation of soldiers and to defend the soldiers who were being victimized.

Across the channel the soldiers in Madagascar joined with the workers and peasant committees, and sided with the masses as they ousted the US puppet regime of Ravalomanana, who wanted to sell off one third of the island to the US-imperialist backed company, Daewoo. The soldiers took over the military bases, sent tanks into the cities with the slogan of 'we are with the people, we are the people'. Imperialism drew the lesson from Madagascar. They cannot tolerate soldier unions because such unions are based on a challenge to authority, in the final analysis a challenge to the instruction of imperialism who want to use the army as its last reserve to crush a workers' revolution.

This is why imperialism will not stop at dismissing only the 1200 who formed the vanguard of the soldiers unions; they will continue until every last vestige of progressive thought of being 'for the people' as the ex-liberation army combatants were taught, is wiped out. This is why imperialism instructed the government to hastily push through a militarised police within months. Imperialism needs a counter-revolutionary force that can put down the starving masses when it rises for bread, work, for services, for housing, for education, for health care etc. The world economy is not growing, so the only way for imperialism to increase their levels of profits is to dismiss more workers, to increase food, fuel and electricity prices more, it take back more from the working class. Imperialism knows the masses will rebel, they know that if and when a generalised uprising occurs across the region, the army, which is based on 'defence of the people' could see through the plans of the capitalists, and really defend the people against the terrible ongoing attacks by the capitalist class. This is what is behind the threat to mass dismiss the soldiers.

1. The first step must be a united front of the soldiers which cuts across union affiliation. (The attacks on the unions have more to do with preparing attacks on the broader working class than on an attack on 'unions'). Thus we call for soldiers committees based on rank and file soldiers and the right of instant recall of elected delegates, irrespective if the soldier is not unionized or whether they belong to Sasfu or Sandu.



2. We need to campaign among the soldiers to reinforce and explain that the increases that they received really came because of the August march last year. Before then the army heads had been brutalizing soldiers for many years.
3. We need to encourage all soldiers to help form and to join workers locals in every industrial area and every working class area. The soldiers face the same problems of lack of housing, high food and fuel prices, high electricity prices, as the broader working class.
4. Forward to a national workers summit of delegates of employed , unemployed, urban and rural workers, of rank and file soldiers, of students, to discuss an emergency workers plan and a single campaign in defence of the broader working class against the ongoing imperialist attacks; delegates from workers, unemployed, rank and file soldiers to be invited from all countries in the region as we are exploited and oppressed by the same imperialism.

Forward to a general strike against the high electricity costs, high food prices, unemployment, against the attacks by imperialism on the soldiers.

The Cosatu leaders have failed to defend the soldiers, they have failed to carry out the resolutions of the past Congresses for general strikes. The SACP sits in cabinet and supports the mass dismissal of the soldiers. They support in practice the massive increases in the price of electricity to bail out imperialism with over R1 trillion (R1000 bn).

It is only the working class in power that can really nationalise, ie expropriate without compensation, imperialism and all its assets, no other class or multi-class formation can do this.

The SACP members should choose: either with the soldiers and the working class, or with the imperialists and their Cabinet.

The French working class has given a warning to all the imperialists, that we will not sit with folded arms while they launch their attacks.

Forward to an organizing committee to refound the Fourth International!

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