

World Affairs:**Indonesia | Students & Workers are up in Arms**

Student protests continued in Jakarta and other cities braving the police repression. The protests began in the middle of September grew during the last week to become largest student mobilization in two decades.

Students are opposing the introduction of new criminal code by the Parliament and curtailing the powers of anticorruption body. The protestors also raised other issues, including a call for an end to 'militarism' in Papua and West Papua, amid the brutal army crackdown in those provinces and government action to end massive peat fires that are engulfing cities with toxic gases.

The government of President Joko Widodo postponed the vote on criminal code which contained many anti-democratic measures criminalizing various activities and explicitly anti-communist provisions. Even then students continued protests through to the first week of October. On 30th September, thousands of students marched towards Parliament building in Jakarta as that was the final session of the Parliament whose term ends in 2019. The students were stopped by police barricades and heavily armed officers. As the students tried to breach the barricades, hundreds were injured and several hundreds were detained. The clashes continued till that evening and authorities said 210 were injured and 519 were detained for questioning. As usual the government branded the protestors as 'rioters' who conspired to disrupt the Parliament proceedings.

As the talks with Widodo failed, the Confederation of Indonesian Trade Unions announced stoppage of work from first October. The union stated that it will mobilize upto 50,000 workers outside the Parliament and 1,00,000 across the archipelago.

The action of unions has been called in opposition to industrial laws, which repressed wages and led to the victimization of workers seeking to fight for their social and democratic rights.

President Widodo imposed many pro-business policies including tweaking the anti-corruption body to make it ineffective, privatization of water supply, removing of the regulations over corporate control of land and natural resources and implementation of many infrastructure projects to attract foreign investment that had displaced poor people and caused considerable harm to environment. These are part of the ongoing policy of the successive governments imposition of the dictates of big business and imperialist finance capital.

This led to deterioration of living and working conditions many more times and vast social and economic inequalities. The protest by students and strike by the workers are the outcome of growing unrest and discontentment among the people of Indonesia.

The ruling classes of Indonesia are using nefarious tactic of nurturing religious chauvinism along with brutal repression and denial of democratic rights. The new criminal code panders the conservative Islamic forces by seeking to uphold monogamy, marital fidelity and other religious values.

The crisis is leading to infighting among the ruling class sections. One section wants to clip the wings of President Widodo by proposing constitutional amendments, while other section is encouraging its front trade union to take over the protest actions by the people Indonesia. Yet the aim of both sections is only to strengthen the grip of family oligarchies that control Indonesian politics for decades and to find ways to effectively suppress the political and social upheavals being recently erupted.
