

Argentina's Milei government brutally represses protests against draconian anti-worker bill

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On June 12, tens of thousands of striking workers and students marched in the center of Buenos Aires and rallied in Congress Square to protest a legislative package of historic attacks against the working class that was ultimately approved by the Senate near midnight.

As they approached Congress Square, protesters chanted, “Kick them all out! Let no one stay!” in reference to the fascistic Javier Milei administration and the legislature. This chant was made famous during the 2001 workers uprising that forced the resignation of then President Fernando De La Rúa and four other appointed successors in the space of a few weeks.

Justice Minister Patricia Bullrich sent federal police contingents to repress the protests, claiming that the demonstrators were a “modern *coup-d'état*” attempt against the Milei government. Federal Police blocked the marchers and attacked them with pepper spray, water cannons and rubber bullets. Scores of marchers were arrested in Buenos Aires. Many were wounded and needed to be hospitalized, including five members of the House of Deputies who had joined the protest.

Bullrich claimed that the protesters attacked the police with rocks and Molotov cocktails. She accused the protesters of setting fire to a TV news vehicle and another car. She called for sedition charges against those arrested. She openly accused the followers of the Peronists, the trade unions and the pseudo-left parties of being “provocateurs of violence who speak of overthrowing the government because they do not like what this government does.”

Leaders of the protest blamed police agent provocateurs for scattered incidents. Opposition Deputy Cecilia Moreau (Union for the Fatherland Coalition)

described this as one of the worse acts of repression in 40 years.

As the news of the repression spread, protests broke out in Buenos Aires' working class neighborhoods, with people banging pots and pans and denouncing the government.

Milei congratulated Bullrich for her militaristic response, stating: “The President's Office congratulates the Security Forces for their excellent performance repressing the terrorist groups, which attempted a coup with sticks, stones and even grenades.”

That evening, during a forum with the Cato Institute before traveling to the G7 Summit in Italy that evening, Milei preemptively blamed the protesters for potential deaths from the repression.

“Don't discard that they will use the tactic of throwing dead people in the street, looting—something the journalists promote in their spaces,” he said.

This is the same propaganda employed by the US-backed fascist dictatorship of 1976-1983, which massacred tens of thousands of left-wing workers, youth and intellectuals while slandering them as “terrorists.”

Inside the legislative headquarters, the Senate was discussing the so-called “Law of Bases” or “omnibus bill,” which contains more than 200 counter-reforms including austerity measures, pro-market measures, privatizations and attacks against workers' labor and democratic rights. After extensive debate, the Law of Bases squeaked through the Senate with few changes, and thanks only to the tie-breaking vote of Vice President Victoria Villaruel.

Villaruel, an open supporter of the military-fascist

dictatorship, cynically declared that she was casting her yes vote on behalf of those who are “suffering” and leaving the country.

Milei’s party Libertad Avanza holds seven out of the 72 seats in the Senate; therefore it needed the votes of other parties, including Peronist legislators, along with the support from the trade union apparatus to suppress opposition.

The General Labor Federation (CGT), and the Argentine Labor Federation (CTA) refused to call for industrial actions on June 12 or to mobilize their members for the demonstrations. After workers voted for an indefinite, national strike against the bill, the cooking oil workers unions shut down their strike in response to a court order. The union apparatus is limiting its role to negotiating with Milei.

Among the most controversial measures in the bill is a system of subsidies to big business called “Rules to Incentivize Large Investments” (RIGI), which includes a 10 percent reduction in corporate taxes for very large corporations. RIGI applies to investments of over 200 million US dollars, particularly in agriculture, forestry, mining, fossil fuels, energy and technology. It exempts big business from paying tariffs to import machinery and capital goods and from taxes on export revenues. The Law of Bases also paves the way for the privatization of numerous government-owned firms.

The measures that the Senate removed included the re-imposition of income taxes, and the elimination of government subsidies to the very poor [a measure that the House of Deputies had added to the original proposal]. The bill now goes back to the lower house for a final vote on the amendments.

The June 12 vote met with the approval International Monetary Fund, which signed off on its most recent loan disbursement to the Milei administration and possibly helped to negotiate with China the renewal of a recently cancelled debt swap agreement, negotiated under the previous administration, that will make available \$6.5 billion in stand-by credit to the South American nation.

Wall Street gave a thumbs up to the passage of the Law of Bases. Initially, relevant stock and bond prices went up. *Bloomberg* quoted from a Bank of America statement that pointed to the passage of this legislation as proof that “dialogue” is possible between Milei and his political opposition in the legislature.

Not only does the ruling class and US imperialism see the passage of this anti-working class legislation and RIGI as positive; they are also encouraged by the Milei administration’s fascistic attacks on protesting workers, coupled with the repression of left-wing groups.

During his six months on the job, the Milei administration has kept food supplies away from food banks, which are essential to poverty-stricken families, devalued the currency leading to dramatic inflation, sacked thousands of workers, repeatedly repressed protests by government employees, teachers, healthcare workers and students, raided the homes and headquarters of left-wing groups while establishing links with fascistic politicians around the world, including US former President Donald Trump, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, and Italian Prime Minister Georgia Meloni.

All these events expose an administration bent on destroying democratic rights and openly marching to dictatorship against the working class.



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