

# **Why Riot against the World Cup?**

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With just a few days left before the 2014 World Cup in Brazil, we conducted an interview with our comrades in São Paulo about the demonstrations that are unfolding. In a wave of unrest emerging on the heels of last year's riots against proposed transportation fare hikes, thousands are once again flooding the streets and clashing with police in hopes of disrupting the games. We anticipate more unrest in the coming weeks.

## ***What is your analysis of the situation surrounding the World Cup? Why are so many Brazilians opposed to it?***

There are many reasons to oppose the World Cup in Brazil. Since 2007, popular committees like the Comitê Popular da Copa have been organizing protests and campaigns against the social costs of the World Cup, with the participation of many anarchists.

First of all, 250,000 people have already lost their houses in the cities that will host the games, without a fair repayment and under operations reminiscent of what the former Nazi government did with Jews, immigrants, and others: they painted a number on their doors one day, and evicted them the next. Those people were forced to sign papers accepting these bad conditions, or else lose everything with no hope of repayment at all.

Second, there are thousands of workers who earn a living from informal work on the streets, and they will be forbidden to work inside the FIFA-imposed perimeter during the days of the games. This perimeter extends for two miles around the stadiums and the area of the Fan Fests, where the games will be shown on the streets via giant screens. In addition, prosecution will target those who sell products that FIFA has been given a monopoly over, such as the products of sponsors.

The families of the ten workers who died during the construction of the stadiums are also waiting for reparations.

Alongside all this, FIFA is imposing a state inside of the Brazilian state. The whole population can see how corruption is increasing with these structures for the mega-events, while our lives are being destroyed. In 2007, the government said that no public money would be used, yet we have seen approximately \$4 billion spent on infrastructure to host the games. That includes mega-stadiums and roads, and lots of other buildings that won't even be finished for the games and will not be useful in the future, while hospitals, schools, public transportation, and work remain precarious for most of the population. Strikes are taking place everywhere in a way we have not seen in a long time, including teachers, students, bus drivers, and subway workers.

Nor have the other struggles in Brazil disappeared. The homeless movements, indigenous resistance, the black and women's movements, and LGBTTT organizations are all getting some attention now, fighting for their rights and intensifying their struggles. The MTST, a big movement for housing in São Paulo, organized an occupation with a thousand families, including those who lost their houses because of the World Cup, near the Itaquera Stadium where the first match will take place.

The expected profit for FIFA in Brazil is greater than the last two World Cups put together. To ensure this, state repression has increased against social movements and all manifestations of dissent—criminalizing strikes and demonstrations that block the street, persecuting leaders and collectives, attempting to pass anti-terror laws and other oppressive measures. They are using vague terms that leave a great deal of room for interpretation to the courts. For now, nobody knows exactly what is a crime or what can land you in prison during a demonstration or mobilization. During the games, there will be a state of exception and special courts to condemn people.

Another \$1 billion has been spent on training and weapons to repress demonstrations. Israel is providing training to the police and the army, and is selling drones and other anti-riot weapons and devices. The military police are being trained by the French police as well as the former American mercenary company, Blackwater [which has changed its name to Academi]. Rumors that the huge organized criminal groups in Brazil want to repeat the actions of 2006, when they brought all of São Paulo to a halt, are being used to justify these operations.

All the police forces and the army are working together in a way we have never seen before. Probably the biggest legacy of the World Cup will be the growth of state apparatuses for governance and repression. These apparatuses will keep this country a perfect place to exploit cheap labor and resources while a growing economy grants enormous profits to international Capital.

***Is the struggle against the fare hikes, which took place last summer, related to this struggle against the World Cup? What lessons have been learned and what are the new obstacles that must be overcome?***

Yes, they are related. First, because many of the movements, collectives, and autonomous militants that composed the struggle against the fare hikes are involved directly or indirectly with the uprisings against the World Cup. Second, and maybe most importantly, they are related because they question a project of a society based on the logic of capital. Remember, the fare hikes were attempted in a country that has one of the most expensive public transportation fees of the world, relatively speaking (consuming approximately a third of the average household income), and a very precarious, overcrowded transportation system owned by a small group of businessmen. This is a place where the urban fabric nearly collapsed due to lack of planning, where public space is being hijacked by the private sector, where roads and highways are controlled by the automobile industry, where the distribution of the city geography is dictated by real estate speculation.

In this scenario, the fare increase was much more than 20 cents: the hike would interfere directly in the mobility of people and, in a city like São Paulo which has 28 million people, it became an issue of depriving the population of basic rights such as school, health care, or home ownership. With that context in view, we can see that when an international com-

pany such as FIFA puts on a huge enterprise such as the World Cup, the whole country is submitted to the same immiseration as the fare hikes would produce. This is a matter of the privatization of the public sphere with the collaboration of the local government.

The World Cup is not going to start on June 12. The World Cup already started in 2007, when Brazil was officially given the responsibility of hosting this massive capitalist spectacle. From that moment, people were being evicted from their homes in order to build stadiums and infrastructure for the Cup, workers were having their activities restricted by the government, and so on. This is the reality of the Cup for the poor and peripheral. These same people are not going to be able to go to the stadium to watch the matches, because the cheapest tickets cost more than the monthly minimum wage. In that sense, the Cup is a classist spectacle that the poor are not only unable to see, but they also must pay for.

So these struggles are related in the sense that they both confront a development project that has no place for the majority of the country's population. And, not by coincidence, they both encounter the very same response from the state: the brutality of its police and army.

***The Black Bloc is all over the news again. Are these actions bigger than in previous years? Are there other tactics that have spread in Brazil?***

Black Bloc tactics are not really on the news right now as much as they were in the months following the victory against the fare hikes. They are still occurring on the street, albeit on a much smaller scale and without much coordination. But they remain a target of the state and the media; the Black Bloc appears on the news as a “threatening organization” that is being investigated as a terrorist group. This is probably because the authorities fear that this reaction to (and intolerance of) state violence can spread. The police are looking for the origins of the black blocs, trying to find out who these people are, collecting information about those detained at demonstrations and from others who leave traces on the internet. They are performing a big lawsuit as if the black bloc were a national criminal organization. What bullshit.

But there are many people who have been introduced to radical thoughts and tactics for the first time through the black blocs in last year's demonstrations. Consequently, many of them act without any other anarchist background, as if they were a movement, with “official” Facebook pages, calling demonstrations by themselves. This can facilitate the pigs' work of finding and identifying them. Also, we can see some of them acting as if their tactics are the best on all the earth, that they should always be used no matter how or when, and not trying to engage in dialog with the other movements that call for demonstrations. So these people sometimes act in a way that ruins the original plan for a march route, or that exposes others to more risks rather than protecting them—such as barricading other people into the same corner with the police, saving their own asses while others are trapped. Unfortunately, some other movements are avoiding them, and sometimes avoiding everybody with black or black and red flags. This is a moment to rethink the way these tactics should be used.

But it is difficult for other anarchists to create dialog with this new generation. Maybe only experience will show us solutions.

***Have the uprisings that followed last year's Brazilian protests in Bosnia, Turkey (again), Ukraine, Thailand, Taiwan, or anywhere else influenced the struggle against the World Cup? And have the nationalists who caused so much trouble in the movement against the fare hikes returned to the protests in Brazil?***

After the uprising in Turkey, we haven't seen any other social mobilizations being particularly influential on the struggles here. None of these other movements have been discussed in the debates here.

Fortunately, middle class liberals and nationalists haven't found a reason to come into the streets again. We saw only one attempt to recreate a march for "Family, God, and Property"—a reenactment of an event that took place during the dictatorship—but it was a true failure. But it is possible to feel that this tension with the nationalists persists. Recent events—including people publicly beating accused thieves or even locking them to posts, and lynchings that had the support of some journalists and authorities, usually against black and poor people—have showed that Brazil hides a monster that can emerge at any time.

***The favelas have been severely affected by the development plans leading up to the World Cup. There have been evictions and raids and some deaths. How have people responded to this repression?***

In the favelas of Rio de Janeiro, we have witnessed the most offensive operations since 2009 by the UPP's—the Pacification Police Unit, a project that has the objective of seizing control of the favelas where the only state institution present is the police. This is like a new conquest of the West, with the excuse of "fighting the drug market," in which private capital supports this operation in order to explore the potential of these communities that until now use resources and services beyond the control and taxation of the state. Resistance to these operations has been strong, and these units are always attacked, particularly after the police commit murders.

We see this "molecularization" of organized revolt when these frequent murders are followed by huge riots. In São Paulo, in January there was at least one bus burned every day in protests against police brutality or for better life conditions in the poor neighborhoods. This is even taking place in small cities like Paty dos Alferes, where all the police stations were burned and all the police were attacked by crowds after a girl died during an arrest.

***What have comrades done outside of the protests and riots? Are there new participants, new spaces, new tools, new meeting points? When social movements end, it is typical for their partisans to become depressed as everything “goes back to normal.” What, if anything, have people done to prevent this? What do you think comrades can do to build strength through these movements in Brazil?***

After the uprising in Brazil during winter of June 2013, we already knew that other fights were about to take place against the World Cup. So during the rest of 2013, we saw radical tactics and also radical organizing taking place in all the struggles in which anarchists could be involved. We witnessed new occupations by the homeless movements, including buildings with hundreds of families. But we didn't obtain any new spaces for anarchist projects, and anarchist squats and social centers are very rare in Brazil. The few that exist are threatened by serious repression.

At the same time, some of these spaces and collectives saw a huge groundswell of popular interest in participating in debates, organizing, study groups, and other forms of anarchist activity. It was good to see that people realize that the struggles of 2013 emerged from an anarchist tradition and experiences from the anti-globalization movements of the preceding 15 years.

We should return to this question again after this new June, this new winter to come; we will see where we will be after that. But in this moment, it is important to test our abilities and the connections we can make. In this context, being in contact and sharing knowledge and support around the world is very important. Thanks a lot for this conversation.

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