



THE FUTURE

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The Future is a newsletter periodically published by The Future Institute. This newsletter aims to chronicle the significant events and developments in the societies of the emerging nations with the potential of impacting their future. This publication offers snippets of news analysis that might be advantageous to academics, policymakers, social and political workers, students and various organisations.

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European diplomat condemned for racist remarks

In controversial remarks in mid-October, European Union foreign policy chief Josep Borrell claimed that “Europe is a garden... The rest of the world [...] is not exactly a garden. Most of the rest of the world is a jungle, and the jungle could invade the garden.” These comments by Europe’s top diplomat were made at the inauguration of the new European Diplomatic Academy in Bruges, Belgium. This unseemly metaphor to describe Europe, reeking of nineteenth-century ideas of racism and colonising Europe’s supremacy and progress at the expense of the colonised peoples of Asia and Africa, has drawn widespread condemnation from many experts and politicians, especially those from the global South.

Experts had pointed out that like imperialists and racists before, Borrell’s remarks constituted references to European ‘civilisation’ (the garden) versus non-European ‘barbarism’ (the jungle) and the fear that the ‘jungle’ inhabitants will invade the ‘garden.’ The Malthusian language of population control is also evident from his statement that “the jungle has a strong growth capacity, and the wall will never be high enough in order to protect the garden”. In this vein, Borrell then unsurprisingly suggested that the solution was that the gardeners go to the jungle, a reference to the notion of the European’s civilising mission abroad in the colonial era.



Borrell’s remarks were heavily criticised on social media, and the controversy even spilled onto the diplomatic scene, where the UAE summoned the acting head of the EU delegation in the country, demanding an explanation for the top EU diplomat’s “inappropriate and discriminatory” remarks. Recently at an event in Istanbul, Turkish President Erdogan also denounced the remarks, saying that such remarks betrayed the lack of a conscientious mindset. Meanwhile, in the face of a backlash over his comments, Borrell apologised for the ‘garden’ vs ‘jungle’ metaphor but defended his speech, all the same, saying that it did not have any racist connotation but referred to actual political realities outside Europe.

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Developments in the Ukraine-Russia war and the grain deal

The Russia-Ukraine war has dragged into its ninth month, with no signs of a peaceful solution just yet. The tide of the war, however, seems to have run in favour of the Ukrainian armed forces, since they have been steadily advancing against the Russians on the eastern front, while the Russians have been largely on the defensive, and are showing signs of weakness in terms of strategy, tactics and most importantly, the weakening of morale.

The Ukrainian forces have been steadily retaking territory in the east and the South, recovering a huge area in the Kharkiv region in the east and advancing on Kherson in the South, where Russian President Putin has already ordered an evacuation. Signs of weaknesses in the Russian offensive have been evident for some time, especially in events such as the highly publicised Russian calling up of reservists and the Ukrainian offensive of blowing up parts of the highly strategic Kerch Strait road-and-rail bridge connecting Russia and Crimea, after which Russia attacked energy installations of Kyiv using drones and artillery. Moreover, the threat of Putin's use of nuclear weapons, despite worrying many actors in the international arena, is being seen as more of a reflection of Russian desperation rather than a wielding of a big stick.

On another front, the Ukrainian Grain Deal has been quite successful in the resumption of grain exports from Ukraine thanks to the mediation efforts of the Turkish government in partnership with the United Nations. The export of grain has continued despite Russian threats to back off from the deal in light of claims of alleged Ukrainian drone attacks on the Russian Black Sea fleet. Russia rejoined the deal at the end of October after assurances that Ukraine would not use humanitarian corridors to attack Russian forces. Both Ukraine and Russia have praised Turkish President Erdogan's efforts to mediate and maintain neutrality in the face of tense negotiations on both sides, the fruits of which have been the resumption of the supply of grain to global markets, and as many experts have noted, the aversion of hunger in many developing and underdeveloped countries mainly in Africa, which are heavily dependent on such a supply.

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Hindutva responsible for rise of anti-Muslim hate worldwide

Twenty years ago, in 2002, the world was shocked at the unfolding of the Gujrat riots, where hundreds of innocent Muslims were massacred, murdered and lynched by Hindutva mobs under the watch of erstwhile Gujrat Chief Minister and BJP leader Narendra Modi. Today, Modi is a two-time Prime Minister under whose

rule life has steadily worsened for Muslims throughout India. Over these two decades, Hindutva has grown exponentially, spilling over borders and becoming a problem of global proportions.

This has been exacerbated manyfold through online and social media, such that Hindutva groups now regularly target Muslim activists, organisations, and also academics who they deem a threat to their Hindutva enterprise in different countries in the West, such as in the US and UK, where there is large diaspora population. Such moves are reminiscent of activities by Zionist organisations, which regularly police speech pertaining to criticism of apartheid Israeli policies through the deployment of a vague understanding of antisemitism and testify to the ideological alliance of the former with the latter, often following at the heels of military and diplomatic cooperation between BJP India and far-right Israel.

A new study conducted by the Islamic Council of Victoria (ICV) shows how over a three-year period, social media users from the US, the UK, and India contributed a staggering 86 per cent of anti-Muslim content on Twitter. The role of the BJP itself is enormous - around 55 per cent of anti-Muslim hatred tweets now originate in India alone, thanks to the media cell of the BJP. Researchers have also found a strong collaboration between online hate-mongering and on-ground incidents targeting Muslims, such as in the case of the 2019 Christchurch Mosque attack in New Zealand, which actually triggered or inspired a wave of anti-Muslim violence in England, Scotland, Germany, and Canada, among others.

In the past month, Hindu nationalists and Hindutva organisations have organised rallies in the UK and US, where symbols and tools of the far-right, ultranationalist political ideology of Hindutva were displayed, as in the case of a bulldozer adorned with the posters of leading Hindu nationalist figures at an India Independence Day rally in Edison, New Jersey, and instances of violence against Muslims occurred, as in the streets of Leicester in mid-September. Such events have gone hand in hand with the work of Hindutva advocacy groups, whose aggressive outreach and lobbying are backed with tens of millions of dollars- a recent report found that seven US-based Hindutva groups have spent more than \$158 million in the US towards their cause during the past two decades, including influencing members of Congress to support the policies of India's far-right BJP.

Activists and academics, alongside Muslim and international organisations, have long condemned such Hindutva activities and called for their immediate halting and confrontation via social, legal, and administrative means. They have noted the boost in anti-Muslim hate arising from the alliance of Hindutva groups with far-right movements in Europe and in the US; in the latter case, none other than Trump and his support for Modi and his extremist policies against Muslims.

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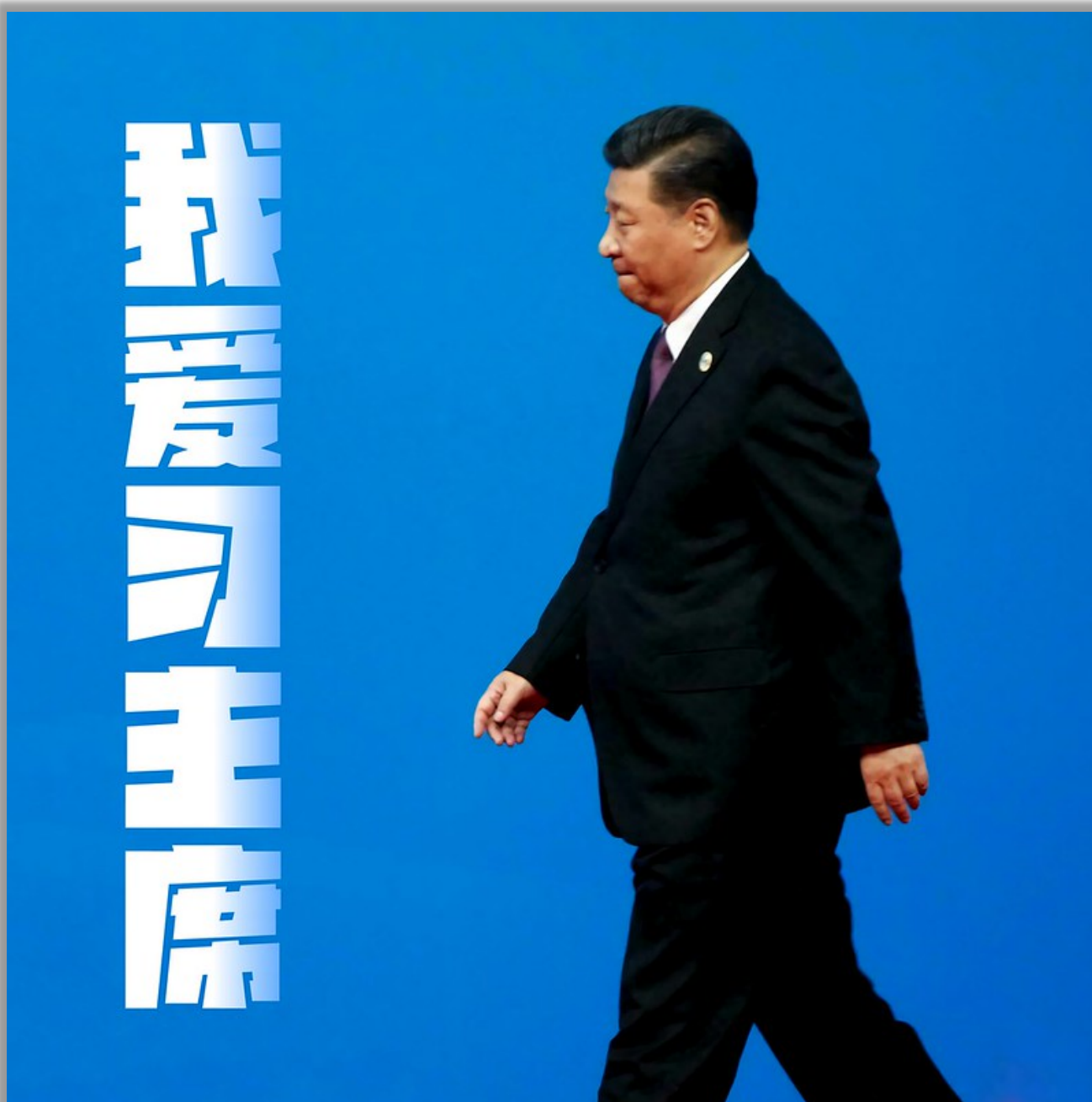
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Xi Jinping elected as China's President in third term: implications

Chinese President Xi Jinping secured an unprecedented third five-year term as the leader of China in the five-yearly Communist Party Congress held in October, making his mark as the country's most powerful figure in decades. He also announced a six-member list of officials, known loyalists of Xi, who would stand alongside him as members of the Politburo Standing Committee, China's top ruling body, which came amidst a sweeping reshuffle following the departure of two key party leaders not in Xi's inner circle – Premier Li Keqiang and Wang Yang, head of China's top advisory body. Experts have pointed out that four new faces in the Politburo's seven-member Standing Committee are all Xi's long-time allies and protégé, which possibly allows for a consolidation of power with minimal discord as Xi began his third term as President.

Despite Xi's stronghold on power, the challenges facing him are still daunting - domestic economic challenges in the wake of the COVID pandemic and strained international relations, to name a few. The domestic economic challenges are exacerbated by a declining and ageing population, strict zero-Covid

policies and a real estate crisis, not to mention more climate catastrophes. Strained international relations stem from repressive policies against dissenting voices and the internment of millions of Uyghur residents in forced labour 're-education' camps of the Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region (XUAR). Nonetheless, Xi Jinping is expected to go ahead with his grand economic plans for China, such as the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and China's grand rejuvenation by 2049. However, China under Xi has been able to carve out a place of importance in an increasingly multipolar world, both in rebuffing Washington's attempts at exerting its power in the region and as a stabilising force in world politics amidst the war in Ukraine, where Xi has iterated the use of nuclear weapons in the Russia-Ukraine conflict as a red line.

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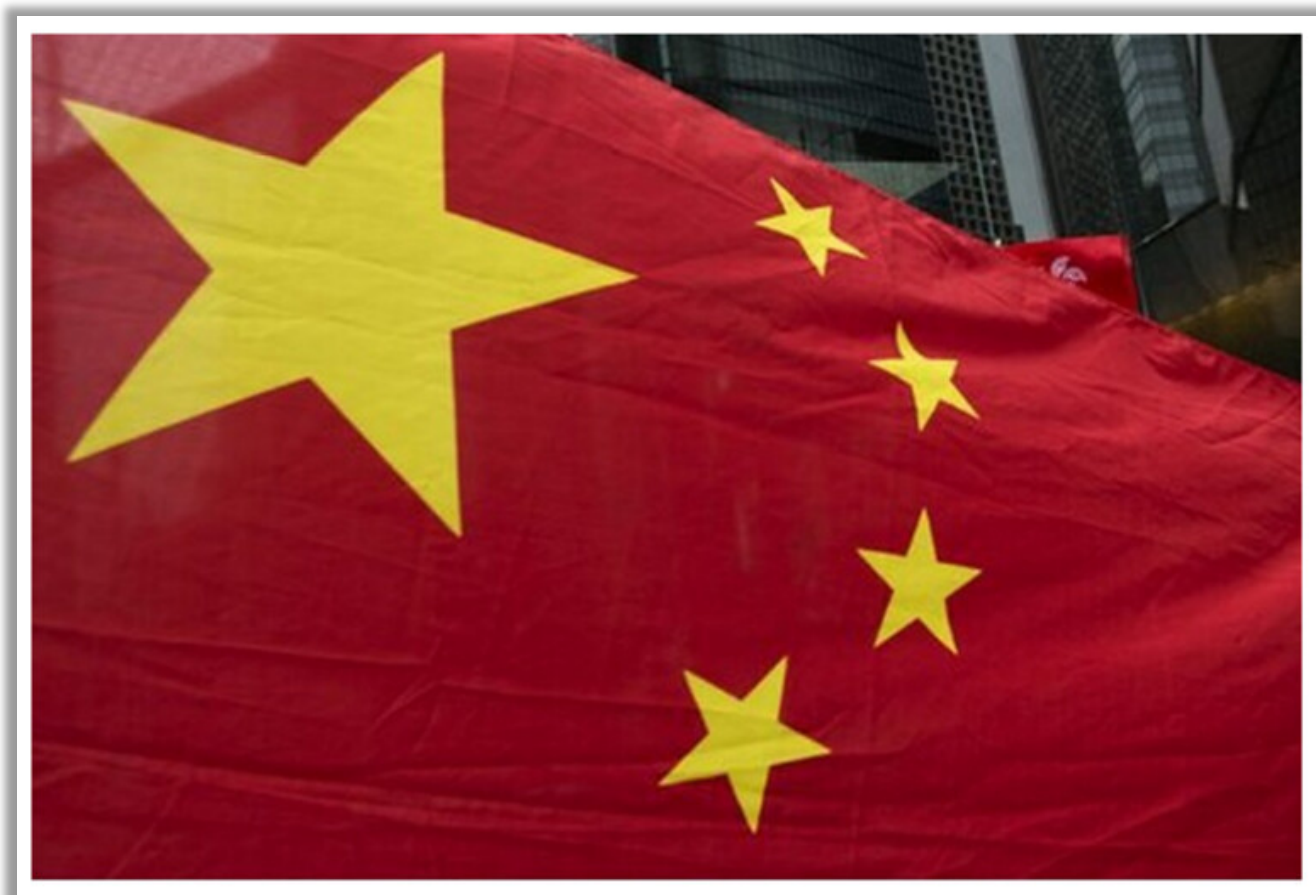
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Rishi Sunak elected as UK PM

Rishi Sunak was appointed the UK Prime Minister on October 25, 2022 by King Charles III, after Liz Truss, the previous Prime Minister appointed by Queen Elizabeth II, resigned after a brief stint of only 44 days at Number 10, making the latter the shortest serving Prime Minister in UK history. Truss was forced to resign on October 22 in the wake of the resignation of key members of her cabinet, the Chancellor of the Exchequer Kwasi Kwarteng and Home Secretary Suella Braverman, and loss of support within the Conservative Party. In her resignation speech, Truss accepted that she had been unable to deliver the promises made when running for the position of Conservative Party leader, having lost her party support. Sunak got the job after gaining the support of 100 conservative MPs, as the only other candidate Penny Mordaunt withdrew from the race, and ex-PM Boris Johnson ruled himself out.

Rishi Sunak, apart from being the first UK Prime Minister of South Asian descent, rose from being an elected MP to the Prime Minister in just seven years. He is also the first Hindu Prime Minister and served as the Chancellor of the Exchequer in the Boris administration between 2020-2022 amidst the COVID pandemic. After resigning from the Boris cabinet, Sunak stood in the Conservative Party leadership election to replace Johnson on July 8, 2022, but was eventually beaten by Liz Truss. Before entering a career in politics in 2014, Sunak had been working as a business consultant and hedge fund manager. Being the son-in-law to Indian billionaire NR Narayana Murthy, UK PM Rishi Sunak and his wife Akshata Murty are valued at around \$844 million, making him one of the wealthiest leaders in the Western world.

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Is degrowth the future?

Degrowth, an idea strongly associated with particular understandings of development and climate politics, has steadily begun to take hold in academic and intellectual circles, with regular conferences on the topic now being thronged by thousands of attendees. Many people understand degrowth as a call for austerity and a recession trigger. Still, economic historian Mattias Schmelzer and University of Vermont researcher Aaron Vansintjan argue that this idea of degrowth as a “misery” or “recipe for disaster” is not just wrong but is also the exact criticism employed by mainstream economists and the Davos elite against this concept. It is, in fact, the opposite – austerity is always imposed for the sake of growth, and degrowth calls for a move away from an economy that exclusively depends on growth. On the other hand, while the recession is often unintentional, degrowth is both planned and intentional.

Ideas such as sustainable development and green growth, often used to greenwash ineffective climate policies, have essentially failed since economic policy continues to work within the paradigm of capitalistic demands of unlimited growth with limited resources in the environment, with support from an elite that continues to be exclusively benefited by it. Not only does this steadily increase societal inequality in the process, but it also fuels the growth of infrastructure industries that will use fossil fuels for decades. Degrowth activists point out that austerity measures, which are imposed in the name of growth, come hand-in-hand with offloading the costs of the crises onto the poor and the environment, presenting opportunities for owners of capital to further extract and exploit as government services get scaled down to cut debt and wages get cut to increase profits, all in the name of kick-starting growth.

On the other hand, degrowth wants to guarantee public abundance by taking “universal basic services” such as housing, food, healthcare, etc., out of the market and guaranteeing access to them for the population.

Thus, measures such as turning millions of empty houses into social housing, offering food for everyone at reduced prices (instead of wasting food), pooling tools and transport (such that everyone would not have to buy their own tools or their own car), would drastically reduce both the energy use and amount of material production, since people would have lesser use for them. Degrowth could thus mean a better, more abundant and fulfilling lifestyle for the many, at the expense of the end of private abundance, excessive emissions, and concentrated power at the hands of the few.

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New Australian government 'un-recognised' West Jerusalem as Israel's capital

Australia's recent move to reverse its previous position on recognition of West Jerusalem as the capital of Israel has resonated with beleaguered Palestinians while angering the far-right Israeli administration, which had hoped to strengthen its claim on Jerusalem by gaining diplomatic support on the international scene. The move, announced by Australian Foreign Minister Penny Wong of the Labor government led by Albanese, reversed a decision taken by the government of former Prime Minister Scott Morrison in 2018, which had taken the step to recognise West Jerusalem as the Israeli capital but had stopped short of moving the Australian embassy from Tel Aviv to West Jerusalem. The move elicited a protest statement from Yair Lapid,

Prime Minister of Israel, who criticised it as a hasty decision, while it was welcomed and hailed by the Indonesian and Palestinian authorities. The decision, while welcomed by many within Australia, has been greeted with dismay by the Jewish community in the country, who perceive the move as a step away from a pro-Israeli policy.

The Australian Foreign minister, in her statement, also reiterated her government's commitment to the two-state solution, affirming that the final status issue of Jerusalem "should be resolved as part of any peace negotiations between Israel and the Palestinian people." Israeli outlets note that Australia's backtracking on Jerusalem, which came just two weeks before Israel's election, was perceived as a diplomatic loss for Lapid. In the meantime, events in Israel show that the latest elections in Israel have ushered in an even more right-wing government than before led by erstwhile PM Netanyahu, with losses for the left-wing and Arab parties, meaning that the issue of establishing Israeli hegemony over Jerusalem will keep gaining more importance rather than recourse to any form of dialogue or negotiations. While amounting to little in terms of real effect, experts are hoping that the Australian decision can function as part of a larger international push towards working for a peaceful resolution to the Israeli-Palestine conflict.

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Deadly anti-hijab protests spread in Iran

On September 16, 2022, a series of protests and civil unrest against the Iranian government began in Tehran in response to the death of a 22-year-old woman named Mahsa Amini, who the "Guidance Patrol" arrested for wearing "improper" hijab in violation of Iran's mandatory hijab law, while she had been visiting Tehran from her hometown Saqqez. According to eyewitnesses, Amini was severely beaten by Guidance Patrol officers and suffered serious injuries, ultimately causing her death in custody. Iranian authorities have denied any wrongdoing in the matter. Initially led by mostly women, protests against Amini's death quickly spread from her local hometown of Saqqez to other cities in Kurdistan and other provinces throughout Iran, quickly assuming a national character.

Although the Iranian government initially implemented regional Internet shutdowns in response, the protests intensified, forcing the government to implement nationwide restrictions on social media. Religious authorities such as Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei dismissed the widespread unrest being caused by foreign states and dissidents abroad; observers have described the protests as the most serious challenge to the clerical leadership since the 1979 Islamic revolution. However, there have also been media reports of counter-protests supporting the Iranian clerical establishment. In the anti-Hijab protesters, women have burned their hijabs in acts of protest against strict regulations. Supporters of the protests have shown their support on social media, often by posting videos of cutting their own hair, as seen in many videos posted by women.

According to the human rights organisation Iran Human Rights, as of 5 November 2022, at least 304 people, including 41 children, had been killed as a result of the government's intervention in the protests, which

included tear gas and gunfire. The heavy-handed reaction to the protests has been criticised by both international human rights organisations and governments of various countries and generated numerous solidarity protests in different cities in Europe, Turkey and the US.



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