Socialist Viewpoint

★ The philosophers have only interpreted the world in various ways; the point is to change it. —Karl Marx ★

MA/AYJUNE 2024 VOL. 24 NO. 3

Nowhere to Run, Nowhere to Hide - Page 4
Only Revolutionary Love Can Save Us Now - Page 7
Palestinians Deserve to Survive. The Zionist State—Never - Page 11
Biden Sheds Crocodile Tears While Supporting Genocide - Page 16
This presentation was part of a program by ILWU Local 10, on February 24, 2024. Other speakers included Angela Davis, former international union president, Brian McWilliams, San Francisco Palestinian leaders, Monadel Herzallah and Dr. Jess Ghannam, and others.

Good afternoon, my name is Beau Logo. I am a rank-and-file member of ILWU Local 10. Some of you may wonder what skin in the game we have with this genocide in Palestine. Or what does my job have to do with this conflict? Why, as a laborer, am I risking my livelihood for something happening overseas? By a show of hands, how many people in this room work and collect a W2?

Well, as tax-paying Americans, we are unwillingly funding and supporting this genocide. We send billions of dollars to support Israel every year. We build the bombs, we build the planes, we create the technology, and amongst other things, we ship everything overseas. See, our elders like Harry Bridges understood the importance of our position in the supply chain. As dock workers, we are the gatekeepers to not only our local economy but the global economy, and with great opportunity comes great responsibility.

I am proud of Local 10, local 5, local 6, Inland Boatmen Union, San Francisco and Southern California, ILWU Canada, and various pensioners in ILWU, all of whom have passed ceasefire resolutions—these stand with our long-time solidarity with Palestine. I hope to hear from more locals speaking up and ultimately have international support from entities like United Auto Workers and United Electrical Workers.

The next step in this journey is educating the membership and building community solidarity to ultimately have direct actions that force change. Take a look at the past. In 1984, Local 10 struck a ship carrying South African cargo at Pier 80. The longshoreman started the action, but it was the community who kept it going for 11 days. Now that’s solidarity! Our union, the ILWU, used to be considered the most radical Union, from rumored sunken Nazi ships, to not shipping scrap metal to Japan in WWII, refusing to load weaponry heading to Central America, refusal to unload ships loaded by scab labor during the Liverpool dock worker strikes, having a coast shut down opposing the Afghanistan war. Shutting down the port in 2022 for police brutality, along with countless other actions. This is what we do, and this is what my generation of dock workers must continue to do. We must maintain that resistance for Humanity.

Here in the Bay Area, we have had great solidarity at the Ports. To be truly effective in future actions, we must expand—reach out to other locals, specifically ones in which Zim [Israeli shipping line] feels comfortable going. As far as I see it, as long as genocide and apartheid are being carried out on Palestinians, Zim shouldn’t feel comfortable docking anywhere.

“I am no longer accepting the things I cannot change. I am changing the things I cannot accept.” I am quoting my Union sibling Angela Davis. These words fit this crisis perfectly. None of us should accept this situation. I’m confident that with our solidarity and our direct actions, we will see a free Palestine in our lifetime.

Watch the video of the whole program on YouTube at:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XiPs6lcJM0
May/June 2024 Vol. 24, No. 3

CONTENTS

U.S. and World Politics

Why the International Longshore Workers Union Defends Palestine ...................... 2
By Beau Logo

Nowhere to Run, Nowhere to Hide .............. 4
By Bonnie Weinstein

Only Revolutionary Love Can Save Us Now ...... 7
By Michelle Alexander

Palestinians Deserve to Survive.
The Zionist State—Never ...................... 11
By Chris Kinder

The War on Gaza Is a Labor Issue ............... 15
By Paul Stauffer

Biden Sheds Crocodile Tears
While Supporting Genocide .................... 16
By Fred Weston

The Two-State Solution Is an Unjust,
Impossible Fantasy ...................... 18
By Tareq Baconi

13,000 Palestinians in Gaza Are Missing in Addition
to 34,000 Dead ...................... 21
By Sharon Zhang

Inside the Detention Camp for Gazans .......... 22
By Brett Wilkins

George Galloway, “This One’s for Gaza” ........ 23
By John Blackburn

The State of Genocide ...................... 25
By Linda Loew

Pro-Palestinian Student Protests Spread ........ 26
By Erum Salam

We Need an Exodus from Zionism ............. 27
By Naomi Klein

The Way to Fight Genocide is Class Independence ..... 29
By Molly Rosenzweig

German University Rescinds Jewish American’s
Job Offer Over Pro-Palestinian Letter .......... 31
By Kate Connolly

Israel’s Illegal Attack on Iran .................. 32
By Marjorie Cohn

The Coming Israeli Attack on Iran ............... 35
By Gilbert Achcar

Haiti Regime Collapses ..................... 37
By Rob Lyon

The Grim High-Tech Dystopia on the
U.S.-Mexico Border ..................... 40
By Petra Molnar

Abortion Rights and the Cold, Dead Hand
of Anthony Comstock ..................... 44
By Thom Hartan

The World Turned Upside Down ................ 47
By Leon Rosselson

Google and Israel’s “Hit List” ................ 48
By Sam Biddle

Review

Patients at Risk ..................... 50
By Brian Schwartz

Incarceration Nation

Boris Kagarlitsky is in Prison! .................. 53
“Sex for Lies” Franklin Conviction Reversed .......... 55
By Rachel Wolkenstein

How Prison Officials Manufactured Gangs
in Virginia’s Prisons ..................... 56
By Kevin “Rashid” Johnson

Gwynn Gets a Win ..................... 59
By Mumia Abu-Jamal

Arsenal of Marxism

How Can the Jews Survive? ................. 60
By George Novack

Obituaries

Ralph Poynter: Revolutionary Life .......... 67
By Mumia Abu-Jamal

Iyaluua Ferguson, 91 Years of Life,
Love, and Struggle ..................... 67
By Mumia Abu-Jamal

Socialist Viewpoint (ISSN 1535-5438) is published bi-monthly by the Socialist Viewpoint Publishing Association, 60 29th Street, #429, San Francisco, CA 94110. Rates: For one year (6 issues): Introductory rate in the U.S. $20.00; Regular rate in the U.S. $30.00; Bargain rate: $35.00 for two years; All other countries $50.00 (Money orders, checks, etc., should be in U.S. dollars.)

Periodicals Postage Paid at San Francisco, California.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Socialist Viewpoint, 60 29th Street, #429, San Francisco, CA 94110
“Never was it so clear as it is today that the salvation of the Jewish people is bound up inseparably with the overthrow of the capitalist system.” —Leon Trotsky, 1940.1

April 18, 2024—Over 34 thousand Palestinians have been killed by the U.S./Israel genocidal war on Palestine—not counting those still missing and buried under the rubble. And the killing goes on with the unconditional U.S. financial and military support to Israel paid for by the taxes collected from us, the working class.

We have no say in how much money is taken from our paycheck, or at the checkout counter, or how our taxes are spent. We have no say on whether to go to war, or how much money our schools get, or how much we must pay for healthcare, or how much we should be paid for our labor.

The capitalist system allows us no control over these issues that affect us so profoundly.

Our only effective option is to organize ourselves into unions and an independent, unified, democratically-functioning organization devoted to fighting for our right to life, liberty, social and economic equality—and finally, an end to capitalism and its perpetual wars for wealth and power.

The war on Gaza—a microcosm of capitalist aggression around the world

With over 34,000 Palestinians killed so far, the ratio between Palestinian and Israeli deaths is 20:1—approximately 34,000 Palestinians to 1700 Israelis2—and the U.S./Israeli genocide is far from over. Biden has promised his unconditional support to Israel because it is, in essence, a strategic U.S. military base in the region.

There are people who believe that Israel controls the U.S. but that cannot be further from the truth. Without U.S. support—both financially (at least $3.8 billion annually) and militarily. The U.S. has massive amounts of U.S. weapons, equipment, and supplies, under their sole command and control, inside Israel. The U.S. has made sure that Israel is the most powerful military force in the region—a region full of oil and other natural resources crucial to U.S. industry—and it is nuclear-armed.

While Biden has cried crocodile tears over the ten’s-of-thousands of Palestinian deaths—including over 14,000 children—he does not waver on his devotion to the apartheid state of Israel, and neither do the Republicans.

The problem with capitalism and the parties that represent them, is that the war and the brutality war brings is felt both by those who do the fighting and those who are their targets—but not to the capitalist class who commands the wars.

They, and their sons and daughters, do not fight and die in war. They command and profit from war and death, and the destruction of their enemies.

Anyone who challenges their power and rule anywhere in the world will not be met with reason and generosity, but with the finality of not just death, but the destruction of the infrastructures of life-support itself—of schools, hospitals, roads, buildings, farms, industry, transportation, water, power—the total ruin of the means of survival.

This is what’s happening to Gaza right now. If the war stopped right now the people of Palestine would still have nowhere to run, and nowhere to hide.

And make no mistake about it, it is a warning to the entire world of what the commanders of capital are willing to do to maintain their control of the wealth they have stolen from the masses of working people everywhere.

Nowhere to Run, Nowhere to Hide

Why the world’s working class must organize a bold defense of our lives if we are to survive

By Bonnie Weinstein
In a March 28, 2024, *New York Times* article by Emily Baumgaertner, titled, “Health Concerns Mount for Migrant Children at Outdoor Holding Sites,” I was stunned by a photograph from the article showing a makeshift tent filled with women and children sheltering on a dirt floor. It could have been a photo from Rafah.

The article centers on “…an open-air holding site in San Diego’s rural Mountain Empire, to provide volunteer medical care to asylum seekers who had breached the United States-Mexico border wall and were waiting to be apprehended by American authorities.”

According to the article:

“With the capacity at immigration processing centers strained, migrants, including unaccompanied children, are waiting for hours—sometimes days—in outdoor holding areas, where a lack of shelter, food, and sanitation infrastructure has triggered an array of public health concerns for the most vulnerable.”

The difference between the people in Gaza and the occupied territories, and the people held in San Diego, is that the people in Gaza have no more homes to go to, while the people in San Diego had to flee their homeland to avoid death and brutality. In the end, neither have anywhere else to go.

Tens-of-millions of people across the globe are suffering conditions of war and poverty causing them to flee their homelands.

And, in the countries where they flee to, they suffer, not only from the high cost of living—the high price of food, housing, healthcare and education—but they are also the targets of police violence and racism. They soon find out they only have access to the lowest paying jobs, the most underfunded schools, and the most run-down housing—if they are fortunate enough to have jobs, schools or housing at all.

These are the conditions of the working class, not only in the poorest countries in the world, but in the richest.

These conditions exist everywhere because it is endemic to capitalism—a system based on the economic exploitation of masses of humanity for the benefit of the capitalist class—the elite few who are the owners of the means of production.

**Biden has promised his unconditional support to Israel because it is, in essence, a strategic U.S. military base in the region.**

They own the land, the factories, farms, and the natural resources needed to operate them. And they own the labor power of the masses of workers who create that wealth with their skill, intelligence, blood, sweat, and tears.

**Capitalism depends on antisemitism and bigotry**

When a small child asks why there is so much greed, violence, and injustice in the world, they are told that those qualities are part of human nature—they have always been with us and always will be.

But these traits are not natural to humans, they are the direct product of class society.

By blaming these traits on human nature, they are blaming the masses for the crimes against humanity the ruling class has been committing for centuries.

The following quote from the book, *The Radical Jewish Tradition: Revolutionaries, Resistance Fighters and Firebrands*, By Donny Gluckstein and Janey Stone, sums this up well:

“These were forces of evil that mankind has feared and has tried to rein in with civilization since the dawn of time. Blaming any oppressed group or human nature for oppression itself exonerates the social system from any responsibility.”

The capitalist class serves itself by pitting workers against each other—getting us to blame others of our own class who suffer the same or worse economic hardships—instead of blaming capitalism’s tyrannical system of economic exploitation and expropriation of wealth from the working masses who create it.
A majority of Americans are opposed to Israel’s military actions in Gaza according to a new Gallup poll released March 27, 2024:

“In a survey conducted from March 1-20, 55 percent of U.S. adults said they disapproved of Israel’s military actions—a jump of ten percentage points from four months earlier, Gallup found. Americans’ approval of Israel’s conduct in the war dropped by an even starker margin, from 50 percent in November, a month after the war began, to 36 percent in March...”

Massive demonstrations here in the U.S. and all over the world show that the U.S./Israel genocide of the people of Palestine is exposing to masses of people the extent to which capitalism—the most powerful dictatorship of the wealthy over the poor that has ever existed—will go to maintain its dominance over land and resources anywhere their economic interests lie, regardless of the mayhem it brings to masses of people, their land, infrastructure, or their well-being, in general.

It’s a class thing

The Democratic and Republican parties are the parties of the ruling class—they do not represent the working class—the overwhelming majority of the people.

Their very existence depends upon convincing us that our only choice is to choose between them—between two capitalist parties whose only interest is to maintain the status quo—keeping us voting for a “lesser evil,” either from the right or the left of the political spectrum.

The problem with capitalism and the parties that represent them, is that the war and the brutality war brings is felt both by those who do the fighting and those who are their targets—but not to the capitalist class who commands the wars.

Then they tell us to believe that this is how it’s always been in America and that this system, whose leaders rule through the threat of death and destruction of the planet itself, is the greatest democracy in the world.

More importantly, they want us to believe human society can’t exist without a ruling class—that because of “human nature,” workers are incapable of democratically controlling the means of production in a way that benefits everyone because war and greed are in our nature.

The opposite is true. And the masses rising up in opposition the U.S./ Israeli genocide against the people of Palestine proves that repulsion to war, greed and mass destruction is the natural human condition.

The collective fight against war, racism, sexism, and bigotry of all kinds is dependent upon the creation of independent workers’ organizations dedicated to ending the tyranny of capitalism everywhere it exists in the world.

If we do not end capitalism, it will end us. A socialist transformation of the world is our only hope for building a future for all of us.

Holt Labor Library

Gerth Archives and Special Collections University Library California State University, Dominguez Hills 1000 East Victoria Street, LIB South 5039 Carson, CA 90747 phone: 310-243-3895 email: holtlabor@holtlaborlibrary.org

Labor Studies & Radical History
- Over 6,000 labor & socialist books and pamphlets
- 90 current subscriptions to labor & left periodicals
- 300 labor & radical movies and documentaries
- Trotskyist bulletins, documents, and papers
- Scrapbooks & ephemera from the Anti-Vietnam War movement and Fairplay for Cuba
- Audiotapes of classes by Tom Kerry & Larry Trainor

Visit us on the web: http://www.holtlaborlibrary.org

2 As of April 18, 2024, By Mondoweiss Palestine Bureau: Over 34,438 Palestinians (including in the West Bank and all occupied territories)/1,743 Israelis (including those killed on October 7, 2023=19.757887.)
4 The Radical Jewish Tradition: Revolutionaries, Resistance Fighters and Firebrands, Paperback—January 25, 2024, Page 17
5 “A majority of Americans disapprove of Israel’s actions in Gaza, a new poll shows,” By Anushka Patil, March 28, 2024

https://www.nytimes.com/live/2024/03/28/world/israel-hamas-war-gaza-news
This moment feels different. Something new is in the air.

Of course, everything is always changing. Impermanence is the way of life. Philosophers, theologians, and poets have reminded us for centuries that the only constant is change. As the late, great Nina Simone, once put it,

_The young become the old
and mysteries do unfold
for that’s the way of time
no one, and nothing stays unchanged_

Still, I think I am not alone in sensing that this year feels different. Something new is in the air.

Some would say it is the stench of death. We can smell it now, almost taste it. Tens-of-thousands of people have been killed in Gaza in just a few months with our bombs—mass murder funded by our government, aided, and abetted by our military, paid for by our tax dollars. We have been told by our government that we are not witnessing genocide. But that is not all that I have watched. For more than 150 days, I have watched videos that have traveled around the globe. I have watched as mothers have pulled body parts of their dead children out of rubble, then gathered the pieces of their children—hands, arms, legs—into bags, and carried the remains of their children down the street in agony, with grieving relatives wailing and trailing behind them. I have watched as fathers have sprinted to buildings that have just been bombed, arriving in time to learn that their entire family is dead. I have watched as children in hospitals have been told that, no, your mother did not survive, and neither did your father, or your sister, or your uncle; one nurse, with tears in her eyes, tried to reassure a young boy that he isn’t actually alone in the world, telling him, “I am here, little one, I am here for you,” even though all his family is gone—every last relative—lost in the rubble. I have watched as children have had their limbs amputated—sawed off—without anesthesia because the hospitals have been destroyed by bombs and there is no medicine, including pain medication, to be found. I have watched as people facing starvation have been shot at by soldiers as they approach vehicles carrying aid.

I have watched and I have watched. All of this is occurring on our watch.

Something different is in the air. But it is not just the mass killing in Gaza, including more than 12,500 children [as of March 12], and the destruction of schools, churches, mosques, hospitals, universities, museums, and basic infrastructure. It is not just the memories of the killings that occurred on October 7, memories of brutality which many continue to carry along with grief and unshakable fear. More than a thousand Jews were killed on that day, leading to panic and unspeakable pain.

As if all of that were not enough, there is another source of anxiety, fear, and dread that is hanging in the air. This is an election year. And some are
saying that if things do not go well, it could be the last election our nation ever has. Democracy hangs in the balance. Donald Trump has said that, if he is elected, he will be a dictator only on the first day of his second term. After that, he says, we can trust that he’ll behave himself.

I do not trust Donald Trump.

But is not just the brutal war or the threats to our fledgling democracy or attacks on voting rights or attacks on the very ideas of diversity and inclusion that has many of us feeling anxious in a different kind of way right now; 2023 was the hottest year on record—by a lot. We reached the highest global temperature of all the years since scientists began tracking that data in 1850. Last year’s record beat the next warmest year, 2016, by a record-setting margin. Climate change is accelerating faster than nearly anyone predicted. It is no longer our future; it is our present. And yet, the five biggest oil companies last year raked in record profits, nearly $200 billion in profits—more than the economic output of most countries.

We wonder why so many young people today are depressed, anxious, and struggling with their mental health. Perhaps it is social media. The attention economy, also driven by a lust for profits, has kept us glued and addicted to our phones—isolated and alone—endlessly scrolling and comparing ourselves to others, caught in outrage loops and doom spirals.

And yet, as author Johann Hari has pointed out, it is perfectly normal for any species to become anxious and depressed when their habitat is being destroyed. Even if social media did not exist, why would we expect young people to be anything other than anxious and depressed when they know that, with rapidly accelerating climate change, the conditions for their very survival are being destroyed?

Perhaps technology will save us, some say. The price of green energy is falling, and new forms of green technology are being created every day.

Yet, what is also new is the awareness that AI just might destroy humanity. I was at a conference recently where two experts on AI, people who themselves have helped to build and create technologies that have transformed our world, warned that if we do not engage in unprecedented action right now to reign it in, we will unleash a power beyond our control. Many now believe that AI poses a greater threat to our democracy and to our world than the next election—It may even be a greater threat than world war, and a more immediate threat than climate change.

Wars are frequently declared on problems, but they are always waged on people.

Some of you may be wondering what any of this has to do with mass incarceration or police violence—the issues and causes that I have held most dear for much of my life. My answer is that what I’ve just described has everything to do with mass incarceration. I have been talking about the existential crises we face in our nation and our world because we have persisted in treating people—and all creation—as exploitable and disposable, unworthy of our care and concern. We persist in believing that we can solve problems, do justice, or achieve peace and security by locking people up, throwing away the key, destroying their lives and families, getting rid of them, declaring wars on them—wars on drugs, wars on crime, and wars on Gaza. Wars are frequently declared on problems, but they are always waged on people.

Of all the incredible speeches that Martin Luther King, Jr. gave in his life, I think the one that speaks most directly to the times that we are living in now, and that models what is required of us as we face multiple existential threats to our democracy and our world, is the speech that King gave when he publicly condemned the Vietnam War—and was immediately cancelled.

That speech has become a touchpoint for me in recent years. Whenever I need a moral compass or my courage begins to falter, I return to the words King spoke on April 4, 1967, one year before his assassination, at the Riverside Church in Manhattan.

King said, “I come to this magnificent house of worship tonight because my conscience leaves me no other choice.” He explained that “a time comes when silence is betrayal” and that time had come in relation to Vietnam.

It is difficult to overstate the political risk that King was taking when he stepped to the podium at Riverside Church. Our nation had been at war with Vietnam for two years, more than 400,000 American service members were deployed, and roughly 10,000 American troops had been killed. The war had enthusiastic bipartisan support within the political establishment, and those who dared to criticize the war were often labeled Communists and subjected to vicious forms of retaliation and backlash. Many of King’s friends and allies warned him that speaking the whole truth about the war would jeopardize the fragile gains of the civil rights movement. Little could be gained, they said, by speaking up for people halfway around the world and much could be lost. “Why are you joining the voices of dissent? Aren’t you hurting the cause of your people?” they asked.

King acknowledged the source of their concerns but said that their questions revealed that they did not really know him, his commitment, or his calling. Indeed, as far he was concerned, “they do not know the world in which they live.” King acknowledged that it is not easy for people to speak out against their own government, especially during wartime,
and that the situation in Vietnam was complex. But he felt morally obligated to speak for the suffering and helpless children of Vietnam. He said:

“This I believe to be the privilege and the burden of all of us who deem ourselves bound by allegiances and loyalties which are broader and deeper than nationalism and which go beyond our nation’s self-defined goals and positions. We are called to speak for the weak, for the voiceless, for the victims of our nation and for those it calls “enemy,” for no document from human hands can make these humans any less our brothers.”

Far from soft-pedaling his criticism, King described the American government as “the greatest purveyor of violence in the world,” and urged our nation to get on the right side of the liberation struggles occurring around the world. He wondered aloud what the Vietnamese people must think of us, a nation that promises democracy, dignity, and equality but delivers bombs instead.

“We herd them off the land of their fathers into concentration camps where minimal social needs are rarely met,” he said. “They know they must move on or be destroyed by our bombs.”

In unflinching terms, King condemned the moral bankruptcy of a nation that does not hesitate to invest in bombs and warfare around the world but can never seem to find the dollars to eradicate poverty at home. He called for a revolution of values. He said:

“We must rapidly begin the shift from a thing-oriented society to a person-oriented society. When machines and computers, profit motives and property rights, are considered more important than people, the giant triplets of racism, extreme materialism, and militarism are incapable of being conquered.”

The moment King ended his speech, he was cancelled. More than 60 newspapers railed against him, including the Washington Post and the New York Times. The Post claimed that King’s speech had “diminished his usefulness to his cause, to his country, and to his people.” Many civil rights leaders and organizations criticized him too, including the NAACP. But despite the withering public condemnation, King continued to speak out against the Vietnam War on both moral and economic grounds until his death.

King was right back then. And he’s still right. He’s just as right today as he was fifty years ago about the corrupting forces of capitalism, militarism, and racism and how they lead inexorably toward war. He was right that, if machines and computers and property rights and profits are considered more important than people, we are doomed. He was right, without knowing it, about climate change. About AI. He was right about mass incarceration and mass deportation without ever knowing those terms. He was right about the threats we now face to our democracy and to our world. He was right about the starving, helpless children in Gaza who are being annihilated by bombs paid for by our tax dollars.

...it’s important to keep in mind that every arrest and caging of a human being is an act of violence...

Above all, he was right about what is required of us now: to speak and to act with unprecedented courage and with love. To oppose all forms of hate and racism, including antisemitism and Islamophobia. To oppose any policy and any economic system that places profit over people. And to reject militarism and state violence as the answer to our most profound, seemingly intractable conflicts and struggles

If we are to honor the principles and values for which King sacrificed his life, we must demand a ceasefire in Gaza and an end to the occupation of Palestine. We must speak unpopular truths and organize to save our planet, rebirth our democracy, and embrace human creativity and the natural beauty of our world rather than artificial intelligence and virtual reality.

We must also demand a ceasefire in our communities. But I am not talking simply about ending violence in our streets—violence born of trauma, despair, and desperation. Last year was a record-setting year for police killings in the United States, the highest rate of police killings in more than a decade. Even after all the protests and uprisings, even after all the promises of policy reform and change, the killing and violence perpetrated by those who wear badges has continued unabated.

In fact, I think it’s important to keep in mind that every arrest and caging of a human being is an act of violence. This is easy to forget because policing and incarceration have become so pervasive and normalized, but the fact is that locking people in cages at gunpoint is violence. And those who are subjected to state-sponsored violence in this country are overwhelmingly poor people and people of color. We have the largest prison system in the world, a penal system on a scale unlike anything the world has ever seen. Why? Because we chose to respond to racial fears and anxieties with wars. And we chose to respond to poverty and drug addiction and mental health challenges with violence.

If we are going to take King’s life and legacy seriously today—and not just give him lip service—we must admit to ourselves that we, as a nation, have yet to learn the lessons on nonviolence that he and so many other courageous souls who risked their lives organizing for Black liberation aimed to teach us decades ago.

We haven’t learned yet and time is running out. The clock is ticking on
our democracy, on the climate, and on our hopes for a truly just peace in Gaza and beyond. As King said at Riverside Church, there is such a thing as being too late. He said:

“We are now faced with the fact that tomorrow is today. We are confronted with the fierce urgency of now. In this unfolding conundrum of life and history there is such a thing as being too late…. We may cry out desperately for time to pause in her passage, but time is deaf to every plea and rushes on. Over the bleached bones and jumbled residue of numerous civilizations are written the pathetic words: ‘Too late.’”

King’s message was not a hopeless one. To the contrary, he aimed to remind us that we have more creativity and more power and collective genius than we often imagine. He called us to a world-wide fellowship, a radical solidarity, that lifts neighborly concern beyond one’s tribe, race, class, and nation. He called us to embrace an unconditional love for humanity—not just in words but in deeds. Not just when it’s convenient or politically profitable or safe or good for our careers.

Of course, the concept of “love” is often misunderstood and misinterpreted, but it is not some sentimental weak response. King explained, “I am speaking of that force which all the great religions have seen as the supreme unifying principle of life,” and this force, he said, has now become an absolute necessity for the survival of humankind.

bell hooks echoed this view in her essay, “Love as the Practice of Freedom.” She wrote:

“Without love, our efforts to liberate ourselves and our world community from oppression and exploitation are doomed. As long as we refuse to address fully the place of love in struggles for liberation, we will not be able to create a culture of conversion where there is a mass turning away from an ethic of domination.”

I know many people feel helpless in these times, but there are countless ways in which we can practice freedom by acting with revolutionary love. Even small acts done with love and in the spirit of justice can help to change everything. Consider, for example, what happened in Ferguson, Missouri when Michael Brown was murdered by the police and his community rose up, took to the streets, and remained there, even as the tanks rolled in. Palestinian activists tweeted from thousands of miles away messages of hope and solidarity, along with instructions for how to survive an occupation, including what to do when the tear gas begins to flow. Those gestures of love and solidarity were not forgotten, leading Black activists years later to travel all the way to Palestine to learn more about the ways in which struggles for racial justice in the United States are inextricably linked to movements for justice and liberation around the world.

We have the largest prison system in the world, a penal system on a scale unlike anything the world has ever seen. Why? Because we chose to respond to racial fears and anxieties with wars. And we chose to respond to poverty and drug addiction and mental health challenges with violence.

A beautiful mural now adorns the Israeli Separation Wall at the northern end of Bethlehem in the occupied West Bank. It was painted by a Palestinian artist who was struck with inspiration after watching the protests in the United States following the killing of George Floyd by a police officer who placed his knee on Floyd’s neck for nearly nine minutes. The artist painted a giant image of Floyd next to the image of Palestinian teen activist Ahed Tamimi and slain medic Razan al-Najjar. When the artist was asked why he added Floyd to the mural, he said, “I want the people in America who see this mural to know that we in Palestine are standing with them [in their struggle for justice], because we know what it is like to be strangled every day.” Photos of that mural went viral and were featured in news outlets around the world, something the artist never dreamed would occur. A wall that once symbolized only apartheid now also symbolizes international and interracial solidarity in the struggle for freedom.

Obviously, tweets and spray paint cannot alone change the world. But they are important reminders that everything that we do or fail to do matters, and that all of us have a role to play. We can never know if our small acts of love or courage might make a bigger difference than we imagine. The fact that Black activists today are showing up at marches organized by Jewish students, who are raising their voices in solidarity with Palestinians who are suffering occupation and annihilation in Gaza, is due in no small part to thousands of small acts of revolutionary love that have occurred over the course of years, acts that I hope and pray are planting seeds that will eventually bloom into global movements for peace, justice, and liberation for all.

2024 just might be the year that changes everything. But the way that things change is ultimately up to us. It can be a time of world war, genocide, the collapse of democracy, and the loss of hope. Or it can be a time of great awakening—when we break our silences and act with greater courage and greater solidarity, a time when the existential threats that we are facing finally lead us to embrace humanity and per-
haps even glimpse the spark of divinity that exists within each one of us, and all creation.

Something new is in the air. And it’s not just dread. In virtually every community, people are coming together in remarkable ways—learning about each other’s histories of struggle, marching together, co-creating with each other, planting seeds of something new together, making another way possible: a way out of no way. People are casting off old ways of seeing the world and being in the world and recognizing that everything depends on us rising to the challenges of our times, speaking unpopular truths, and acting with courage and with love and with the fierce urgency of now.

In the words of Grace Lee Boggs: “These are the times to grow our souls.” Let this be the moment that we commit ourselves to doing precisely that.

—The Nation, March 8, 2024
https://www.thenation.com/article/activism/mlk-vietnam-war-speech-gaza-democracy/

King was right back then. And he’s still right. He’s just as right today as he was fifty years ago about the corrupting forces of capitalism, militarism, and racism and how they lead inexorably toward war. He was right that, if machines and computers and property rights and profits are considered more important than people, we are doomed.

Palestinians Deserve to Survive. The Zionist State—Never
BY CHRIS KINDER

April 8, 2024—The U.S./Israel war on Gaza rages on, now in its sixth month, and shows no sign of abatement. Israel is pursuing its long-held goal, by any means necessary, of forcing the indigenous Palestinians out of what they view is their land including forced evacuation, starvation, and outright mass murder. And the U.S. government is in this up to its eyeballs, which is why it is a U.S./Israel war. The U.S. doesn’t have “boots on the ground,” but without the funding and supplies of weapons and ammunition and the U.S., there would be no war.

Israel’s many attacks on Palestinians

Although Israel has mounted many attacks including invasions against Gaza which have slaughtered thousands of civilians along with military in the past, this war is for the first time killing more civilians by far than it has fighters. This genocide is a challenge to the whole world: will this mass murder of a whole people, tens-of-thousands killed so far—as you read this going into its seventh month—be allowed to continue unabated?

This would be much harder to do without U.S. heavy weapons sent to Israel soon after the October 7th attack by Hamas, which included 2,000 pound “bunker buster” bombs designed to blow up fortified infrastructure. The U.S. gladly continues to send these bombs, which Israel is using to turn neighborhoods into huge piles of rubble with dead humans buried in them. Meanwhile, Israel has targeted over 60 percent of homes and residential buildings in the Strip. The bombing of the Al-Taj tower in Gaza City on October 25th killed 101, mostly women and children, and injured hundreds, and it doesn’t avoid refugee camps either, such as its attack on the Jabaliya refugee camp on October.

Devastation in Khan Younis, April 8, 2024, after Israel pulled some of its ground forces out of the southern Gaza Strip.
Israel says its enemies are “human animals”

Israel’s war is a little like prison guards murdering prisoners by shooting them through the bars, because the Gaza Strip—the most densely populated place on Earth—is an open-air prison with no escape route.

So far, Israel has obliterated about 80 percent of medical facilities, 68 percent of telecommunication infrastructure, as well as half of the roads and commercial, industrial, and agricultural centers throughout the Gaza Strip. Most of these facilities were occupied by civilians and had no military value. The municipal and governmental facilities destroyed undoubtedly contained Hamas operatives, but most of them would be government officials, not fighters, as Hamas was duly elected to govern. This fact is ignored in almost all U.S. media reports, many of which refer to Hamas’ rule as the result of a “coup.”

Who do you believe?

The question of Hamas coming to power legally or through a coup d’état is just one more reason to beware of lies told in wars. So, what is the evidence in this case? In 2006, elections were held in Palestine on local levels and for seats in the Legislative Council (PAL), the ruling body of the Palestinian National Authority (PAN). Although Hamas had boycotted the previous election, it entered this one as the “Change and Reform” list against Fatah and five others. Hamas won 74 out of 132 seats as against 45 for Fatah. Independents won four, and most others none. The election was overseen by over 17 thousand domestic observers, complemented by 900 credentialed international monitors.

An exit poll of voters showed that large majorities of those asked said that corruption would decrease under Hamas. Large majorities said that there should be a national unity government, and rejected Fatah’s refusal to support unity, the majority also said yes to “under Hamas, internal security will improve.” Interestingly, majorities said yes to support for a peace agreement with Israel, which is a stark shot away from Hamas’ position that Israel has no right to exist.1

The 2006 election was deemed to be honest by the National Democratic Institute (NDI) in partnership with the Carter Center, and a Congressional Research Service (CRS) report to Congress which concluded that the election was free and fair.

A worsening of genocide

As I write this, several events are thought to represent a turning point in this genocidal war. First is Israel’s second invasion of Al Shifa, Gaza’s largest hospital, a complex of buildings located in Gaza City in the north. The first invasion of this essential institution happened back in November, which was deadly and horrible, but left the hospital functioning despite the lack of medicines, anesthetics, vaccines, and other necessities due to Israel’s preventions of essential aid supplies.

This time it was much worse. Israeli troops stormed at dawn on March 18th, and after two weeks of terror, every single building in this large complex was bombed, burned, and rendered unusable. About 400 were killed—medics and wounded and sick were killed—and 300 arrested. After the abrupt withdrawal of the IDF on April 1st, people from the surrounding area where many live and others have sought shelter went to the complex to check on the damage.

“We did not expect this”

“We did not expect to see all of this…” It is crystal clear that the Israeli army is the most unethical army in the world,” said a local journalist on the scene.2

Another said, “The occupation has violated everything in the Gaza Strip, and nobody in the world seems to be determined to stop them. Rather, major global powers are complicit and partners in massacring our Palestinian people.”

“The Al Shifa Medical Complex is the largest hospital in the Gaza Strip, and it is the lifeline of the health sector in Gaza,” said one local journalist. He should have said “was,” because now, “everything in the complex is destroyed. All the buildings of the hospital were bombed and are no longer usable. … now, it is destroyed, and the occupation has completely taken it out of service.”3

Three days later, the Electronic Intifada released more eyewitness reports. “Salem Baraka has seen the kind of horror no parent should ever have to endure: The Israeli military killed his son Karim right in front of him.” Like many others, Salem and his son Karim had fled from his home in Jabaliya refugee camp and taken shelter in Al Shifa hospital. They were inside the hospital when it was stormed by Israeli forces on March 18. He said he had spent the following week “waiting to die.” The situation was “worse than hell.”

“Quadcopter drones were firing wildly striking anything that moved,” he said. “The Israelis smashed the glass in the windows and destroyed the walls in the department where we were hiding. A shell fell on us and killed my son in front of my eyes,” he added. “I could not save him. He bled to death.”

Tanks against unarmed victims and their bodies

The Electronic Intifada report goes on: “Among the terrible scenes we witnessed were Israeli tanks driving over the bodies of people who had been killed in the hospital’s courtyard. Because the hospital could not function, infections soared among people who were wounded. In many cases, injured people were devoured by parasites due to the lack of treatment.

After the hospital had been under siege for approximately a week, the Israeli forces used loudspeakers to summon everyone into the courtyard.
The Palestinian men were ordered to strip. Then they were beaten. Women were subjected to both verbal and physical abuse, according to Salem.

Salem recalled that he “trembled in horror when one of the soldiers called my name.” He was interrogated for around 48 hours. “I was not allowed to sit down or turn to the left or right,” he said. “My hands were tied behind my back. I was blindfolded and completely naked.” Salem added that he repeatedly heard gunfire and that his interrogator “threatened to kill my wife, who is ill and lives with her family in northern Gaza, if I did not cooperate.”

“Throughout the interrogation, I was thinking about where the soldier would shoot me. In the head, chest, or heart? I did not believe him when he said the interrogation was over. I realized that I had miraculously survived death.” Salem was given a choice of evacuating to southern Gaza or being killed. Salem had to walk to southern Gaza, but he was not allowed to see his son’s body for a final goodbye.

**Three strikes kill seven aid workers**

The same day that the Israeli military pulled out from the wreckage of Al Shifa, another earthshattering event happened—seven workers with the World Central Kitchen aid group were leaving after delivering 100 tons of food to a warehouse in central Gaza when multiple Israeli air strikes hit all three of their well-marked cars, killing them. They had communicated with Israeli officials about their mission beforehand and had permission to go.

Another seven dead in six months of fighting that has left hundreds-of-thousands of Palestinians dead and tens-of-thousands more wounded: why is that earth shattering? It’s because six of them were from Australia, Poland, the United Kingdom, and an American/Canadian dual citizen; and all of whom, except for Poland, were from countries supporting Israel in this war. (The seventh person killed was a Palestinian driver.)

Suddenly, it’s “Houston, we have a problem!” Killing the aid workers was “unacceptable” said Biden. “If we don’t see the changes that we need to see, there’ll be changes in our own policy.” (Blinken); and an “outrage” said U.S. defense Secretary Austin, as he was sending more two-thousand-pound bombs and 50 fighter jets (a first) over to “Bibi” Netanyahu in the largest and most expensive military shipment to Israel to date in this one-sided war.

Biden’s administration had plenty of time in the past six months of Israel’s genocidal war to become even more outraged than it was over a targeted murder of seven aid deliverers, but it only managed to mumble something about Israel going “over the top.”

**Bunker buster bombs slaughter civilians**

The bunker-buster bombs, supposedly used to penetrate to the tunnels below ground allegedly being used by Hamas, are killing everyone in homes and apartments in order to target just a few or even just one Hamas member living there, for which their “human shield” civilians are considered expendable. But except for Israel’s chief backers—mainly the U.S. and German administrations—most of the world knows that this war is a genocidal campaign to kill and/or drive out all Palestinians from their homeland and turn it into a Jewish-Zionist-state.

As Israel’s defense minister, Yoav Gallant, said just two days into this war, “I have ordered a complete siege on the Gaza Strip. There will be no electricity, no food, no fuel, everything is closed. We are fighting human animals, and we act accordingly.” To this declaration of the war crime that is this conflict, Gallant might well have added that destruction of all of Palestine’s essential infrastructure, apartment buildings, medical facilities, schools, mosques, are going to be included.

The sight of children digging through the rubble that was once their homes to find food sums it up.

“Why should Israel be allowed to exist?” asks Hamas

The question now is, as Hamas says, why should Israel even be allowed to exist? Nazi Germany created sights of starving children wasting away in concentration camps, and it was abolished, albeit in an unsupportable inter-imperialist war. The Confederate States of America was abolished in a revolutionary war, which was the real revolution in the U.S. that 1776 was not. The monarchical state of Russia was abolished in a two-stage revolution which overthrew the centuries old Czarist state, then smashed capitalism in the first successful socialist revolution—the Bolshevik revolution—in 1917.

Now, we need to see the Palestinians defeat apartheid Israel. We need a socialist revolution in the Middle East and the world, and we need to replace the Zionist state with a revolutionary socialist state of Palestine. But we also must understand how this barbarism by a state dedicated to, and populated largely by a people who were the victims of the Nazi holocaust just nine decades ago, came about. To understand how this incredible crime happened in 2024, we must breakdown the history.

It started before Israel actually existed. A journalist from Vienna named Theodor Herzl came up with a plan in the 1890s to save the Jewish people by moving them from the antisemitism in Europe and around the world, to Palestine. It sounded like a plan to some, but it had a major catch—Herzl wanted to make Palestine a Jewish-only state.

Though he had visited Palestine once (and only once,) Herzl knew very well that Palestine was already occupied. Herzl was known as the author of a book, Der Judenstaat, published in 1896, which made his plan clear, including directions for how to get rid of the native population:

Vol. 24, No. 3 SOCIALIST VIEWPOINT 13
“We shall try to spirit the penniless population across the border by procuring employment for it in the transit countries, while denying it employment in our own country.” For the elite property owners, Herzl, says that they “will come over to our side,” or be “expropriated.” To make clear that this was to be exclusively Jewish, he insisted his state have the “sovereign right” to control immigration. The Jewish state, Herzl wrote, would “form a part of a wall of defense for Europe in Asia, an outpost of civilization against barbarism.”

Herzl gets an answer, and ignores it

While Herzl was founding the Zionist organization in the late 1890s, he received a letter from a prominent Palestinian who was an acquaintance of Herzl’s, named Yusuf Diya al-Din Pasha al-Khalidi. Yusuf Diya was conscious of the pervasive Western, and especially Christian, antisemitism, and his letter seemed to appreciate Herzl’s plan, but he insisted that Herzl recognize the fact that Palestine “is already inhabited by others.” He asserted that it was “pure folly” for Zionism to plan to take over Palestine, and that “the unhappy Jewish nation” needed to find refuge elsewhere. He concluded with, “In the name of god, let Palestine be left alone.” Herzl’s reply was no reply at all. He didn’t address Yusuf Diya’s argument, and instead established a pattern of dismissing the interests, and even the existence of the indigenous population of Palestine.

The violent imposition of the state of Israel on Palestine was still decades away, but capitalist imperialism was an essential element in making it happen from the very beginning. Palestine was part of the Ottoman Empire, which was an old, multi-national entity, that was only beginning to break up, with national interests in sectors of it emerging. Most of these nationalities were targeted by the European imperialist countries seeking to spread their spheres of interest for exploitation. After lengthy negotiations, the Sykes–Picot treaty was agreed to among the powers, chiefly Britain, and France. This agreement was kept secret to prevent the Ottomans, which all these powers knew was going to be completely divided up by them in the “Great War”—World War I—that they all knew was coming. It was officially ratified during the war.

The Palestine region, with a smaller area than the later “Mandate” for Palestine, was to fall under an “international administration,” which effectively meant Britain (which also grabbed Jordan and others, while France got control of Syria, Turkey and more.) Most of the divided up Arab territories became nations, but Palestine remained under British domination.

A solution is difficult, but necessary

Given what they have had to go through, Palestinians are amazing. They survived British occupation and have survived six wars/invasions counting the 1948 war, in which Israel killed and drove out almost all the Palestinians from their newly formed “mandate.” Israel is now trying to kill or drive out everyone from Palestine. Palestinians deserve to live, while its attacker, Israel, needs to be abolished.

Palestinians and Jews have lived side by side in the past and could do so again. The Jews then were a small minority in the Ottoman Arab state, but they were welcome there, as were Christians and other minorities, and that is true today in Palestine. Israel is the exact opposite, with 1.6 million Palestinians who are citizens of Israel (total population of 9.5 million) but who are treated as second-class citizens. What is needed now is a united and free socialist Palestine!

---

3. The Electronic Intifada credits Doaa Shaheen, a journalist from Gaza, for this report, at: electronicintifada.net. April 2, 2024.
4. These quotes come from Herzl’s diary in 1895, and other writings as reported by Rashid Khalidi, in The Hundred Years’ War on Palestine, A History of settler Colonialism and Resistance, 1917–2017. As a descendant in a prominent Palestinian family that goes back to this time, Khalidi has produced here a very informative and essential history of Palestine and its terrifying occupation by the Zionist state.
5. The Sykes–Picot Agreement was a 1916 secret treaty between the United Kingdom and France, with assent from the Russian Empire and the Kingdom of Italy, to define their mutually agreed spheres of influence and control in an eventual partition of the Ottoman Empire. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sykes–Picot_Agreement
The War on Gaza Is a Labor Issue
BY PAUL STAUFFER

As the U.S. government helps arm and fund the genocide in Gaza carried out by the Israeli military, the connections between global capitalism and the war machine have become abundantly clear. Yet, for most U.S. workers, the atrocities facing Palestinians can seem disconnected from everyday life.

The starvation Gazans face after Israel’s systematic denial of food and water shipments, for example, isn’t directly felt by the agricultural worker harvesting chickpeas in Idaho. The air-strikes that have murdered at least 25,000 Palestinian children have all been detonated too far away to be felt by the nurse at Penn Hospital in Philadelphia. The bulldozers that crushed civilians outside Kamal Adwan Hospital don’t profoundly threaten the machinist leaving her shift at Caterpillar in East Peoria, Illinois.

The fact that Israel is risking the permanent destruction of Gaza’s only water aquifer—if the military follows through on its threat to pump seawater into Hamas’s tunnel system—didn’t factor into my work as a union plumber as I pumped thousands of gallons of high-pressured potable water down sewer lines to clear blockages.

The shop is still open. We have bills to pay, so we go to work, same as always, just trying to get by in an economy where it has become increasingly harder to do so.

So, when the average working person in the United States sees the extreme violence Israel is inflicting on Palestinians half a world away, I think they can be forgiven for telling themselves it has little to do with them.

But the truth is, it has everything to do with us.

The agricultural worker in Idaho may not realize it, but the chickpeas he harvests may be sold to Sabra—jointly owned by PepsiCo and the Strauss Group, Israel’s largest food and beverage manufacturer. Penn Hospital is partly funded by donors to the University of Pennsylvania, some of whom have threatened to pull their donations because they think school officials haven’t done enough to quiet pro-Palestinian voices on campus. The bulldozers that crushed displaced Palestinians as they hid in their tents in Gaza were Caterpillar D9Rs, manufactured in East Peoria.

While I was on the job clearing out those sewer lines here at home, in Gaza, at least 96 percent of the enclave’s water supply was unfit for human consumption and only 30 percent of the population had access to proper sanitation. The taxes I pay, along with other working people across the country, are used to fund arms and military aid to Israel.

It is imperative for all of us to make these connections clear. Instead of spending on housing programs, healthcare, childcare and abolishing student debt, the U.S. government has spent $3.8 billion annually in military aid to Israel, money that has gone to enrich weapons manufacturers and corporate bosses who profit from colonial violence abroad.

The Palestinian General Federation of Trade Unions put out a call for international solidarity not long after the siege on Gaza began in October.
Biden Sheds Crocodile Tears While Supporting Genocide

The term “to shed crocodile tears” derives from the fact that crocodiles have been noted to shed tears as they consume their victims. According to the Collins Dictionary, the meaning of the saying is “to pretend to be sad or to sympathize with someone without really caring about them.” Crocodiles do indeed produce tears, but they serve to keep the eyes clean and lubricated and are in no way connected to emotions. Today, we have many crocodiles in human form—they are called Presidents, Prime Ministers, Foreign Secretaries, newspaper editors, and so on. But Biden stands out clearly as the Chief Crocodile.

His shedding of fake tears is worse than the behavior of a real crocodile. In the case of Biden, the tears are a calculated ruse to fool the world that he somehow cares about the plight of the Palestinians. He clearly does not. But it is not just a case of not caring. To state that someone doesn’t care implies they are indifferent to the plight of the victims. But Biden is not indifferent. While he goes through the motions of a man who cares, he cynically and actively collaborates in Netanyahu’s genocidal war, providing much of the weapons that are being used to carry out the butchery.

The Biden administration has been making a lot of noise about avoiding a humanitarian disaster in Gaza, where there is a real risk of mass starvation, particularly in the north. We have all seen the U.S. aid airdrops on our TV screens, as well as news of plans to construct a temporary port on the coast of Gaza to allow deliveries of aid by sea. This is nothing but a show for media consumption, portraying an image of someone who cares.

The latest act in this theatre is the resolution passed by the UN Security Council March 25, 2024, which calls for an immediate ceasefire. However, it is worth noting that, in the course of drafting the resolution, the word “permanent” was dropped from the text at the specific request of the U.S., with the ceasefire call being only until the end of Ramadan, which is April 9, i.e., a mere two weeks. Adding insult to injury, Matthew Miller, a U.S. State Department spokesperson made a public statement that as far as the U.S. administration is concerned, the resolution “is a non-binding resolution.” But we all know that even if it were, Israel has openly flouted UN resolutions many times in the past, as the UN is a toothless body with no means of imposing any decisions it may take.

Biden’s concerns are not about the death and destruction in Gaza, nor the...
real suffering of the Palestinians. His concerns are more about his own electoral prospects in the United States. Opinion polls show that, on top of the erosion of his support that we had already seen prior to October 7, he has lost a lot more support recently due to his handling of the crisis in the Middle East—something he can ill afford. Furthermore, he and his advisers are concerned about the growing destabilization of the whole of the Middle East and the further weakening of the position of U.S. imperialism in the region.

Pretending to care, continuing to kill

The situation faced by the Palestinians of Gaza is truly drastic. Aid, especially food supplies, needs to urgently get into Gaza in much larger quantities than are presently being allowed by the Israeli government. But the much-discussed temporary port is not going to be built overnight. According to Pentagon Press Secretary Patrick Ryder, the work could take up to 60 days to complete. And even when completed, deliveries of aid via air and sea will come nowhere near to compensating for truck deliveries by land.

Aid groups working on the ground in Gaza have calculated that, as things stand at the moment, at least 1,300 trucks of supplies are needed on a daily basis. But Israel is blocking the delivery of aid, especially to the northern part of Gaza, while at the same time cynically trying to shift the blame onto UN agencies, such as United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA), claiming that it is they who are failing to deliver the aid.

If Biden was serious about his “humanitarian concerns,” he would have cut off all supplies of arms to Israel long ago, and demanded that it reopen all the border crossings into Gaza to allow all necessary aid to be delivered. But that is not what crocodiles do.

All the talk of getting aid in is mere theatre, with no concrete action to back it up. The delivery of weapons to Israel, however, is not theatre—it is real and without limits. The amount of military aid and weapons sales the U.S. has provided Israel since October 7 is huge, with around 100 separate arms sales in total.

“If money... ‘comes into the world with a congenital bloodstain on one cheek,’ capital comes dripping from head to foot, from every pore, with blood and dirt.”

Crocodile Biden has not limited himself to massively ramping up military aid to Israel. He has also led the other crocodiles, Sunak, Macron, Scholz, Meloni and many more, in cutting off urgently needed aid to the Palestinians. The U.S., together with a number of other countries, had already temporarily frozen donations to agencies such as UNRWA.

Now, however, the pressure on the Palestinians has been ratcheted up even further. UNRWA is a key lifeline for the Palestinians, and yet last week, precisely in a moment of dire need, the U.S. Congress passed a bill that totally defunds the agency until March 2025. Note that the U.S. has been providing the agency with $300 million to $400 million annually. The same bill also contains a clause which guarantees the continuation of the $3.8 billion dollars in military aid that the U.S. provides to Israel every year.

Here, in a single bill, we find the utter cynical hypocrisy of Biden fully encapsulated: no money for the starving Palestinians, but billions of dollars to pay for the bombs that are killing them every day. The contrast between the haste to get weapons to Israel and the drip-feeding of tiny amounts of aid to the Palestinians is glaring.

But there is another twist to the bill that was passed last week. It is self-evident that the Israeli military has been committing what even international bourgeois law defines as “war crimes.” Unarmed civilians have been killed in cold blood. Desperate people seeking food from the few trucks allowed in have been shot at and killed. Hospitals and schools have been bombed.

Image: own work
“Dripping from every pore with blood and dirt”

A serious investigation would no doubt reveal many more such crimes. But the same bill that defunds UNRWA contains a clause that specifically threatens a cut in aid to the Palestinian Authority in the future (beyond March 2025) if “the Palestinians initiate an International Criminal Court (ICC) judicially authorized investigation, or actively supports such an investigation, that subjects Israeli nationals to an investigation for alleged crimes against Palestinians.” The Senate approved the bill last week and it was then sent to Biden to sign it into law.

What we have here is Biden brazenly telling the Palestinians that they have no right to any kind of justice, that they have no right to seek redress for criminal acts carried out by the Israeli military. Once this war is over, they are being told that they must not even dare attempt to open such investigations if they wish to continue receiving aid. So, the next time you hear Biden talking about humanitarian aid, putting on a tearful show of sadness, remember that you are looking at a crocodile.

While he goes through the motions of a man who cares, he cynically and actively collaborates in Netanyahu’s genocidal war, providing much of the weapons that are being used to carry out the butchery.

These are the people who rule over us today, cynical, cold-blooded, calculating butchers, who have only one concern: to protect the profit-making machine called capitalism, to preserve the wealth and privileges of the billionaires, whatever the cost they deem necessary to humanity. If it means wading through the blood of innocent civilians, of women and children, to achieve their aims, they will not flinch from doing so. And Biden and Netanyahu are both drenched in the blood of the Palestinians.

In Volume One of Capital, Marx stated, “If money…” ‘comes into the world with a congenital bloodstain on one cheek,’ capital comes dripping from head to foot, from every pore, with blood and dirt.” This is even more true today than when those words were first written.

—in Defence of Marxism, March 26, 2024

The Two-State Solution Is an Unjust, Impossible Fantasy

By Tareq Baconi

April 1, 2024—After 176 days, Israel’s assault on Gaza has not stopped and has expanded into what Human Rights Watch has declared to be a policy of starvation as a weapon of war. More than 32,000 Palestinians have been killed, and the international community has reverted to a deeply familiar call for a two-state solution, under which Palestinians and Israelis can coexist in peace and security. President Biden even declared “the only real solution is a two-state solution” in his State of the Union address last month.

But the call rings hollow. The language that surrounds a two-state solution has lost all meaning. Over the years, I’ve encountered many Western diplomats who privately roll their eyes at the prospect of two states—given Israel’s staunch opposition to it, the lack of interest in the West in exerting enough pressure on Israel to change its behavior and Palestinian political ossification—even as their politicians repeat the phrase ad nauseam. Yet in the shadow of what the International Court of Justice has said could plausibly be genocide, everyone has returned to the chorus line, stressing that the gravity of the situation means that this time will be different.

It will not be. Repeating the two-state solution mantra has allowed policymakers to avoid confronting the reality that partition is unattainable in the case of Israel and Palestine and illegitimate as an arrangement originally imposed on Palestinians without their consent in 1947. And fundamentally, the concept of the two-state solution has evolved to become a central pillar of sustaining Palestinian subjugation and Israeli impunity. The idea of two states as a pathway to justice has in and of itself normalized the daily violence meted out against Palestinians by Israel’s regime of apartheid.

The circumstances facing Palestinians before October 7, 2023, exemplified how deadly the status quo had become. In 2022, Israeli violence killed at least 34 Palestinian children in the West Bank, the most in 15 years, and by mid-2023, that rate was on track to exceed those levels. Yet the Biden administration still saw fit to further legitimize Israel, expanding its diplomatic relations in the region and rewarding it with a U.S. visa waiver. Palestine was largely absent from the international agenda until Israeli Jews were killed on October 7. The fact that Israel and its allies were ill
prepared for any kind of challenge to Israeli rule underscores just how invisible the Palestinians were and how sustainable their oppression was deemed to be on the global stage.

This moment of historical rupture offers blood-soaked proof that policies to date have failed, yet countries seek to resurrect them all the same. Instead of taking measures showing a genuine commitment to peace—like meaningfully pressuring Israel to end settlement building and lift the blockade on Gaza or discontinuing America’s expansive military support—Washington is doing the opposite. The United States has aggressively wielded its use of its veto at the United Nations Security Council, and even when it abstains, as it did in the recent vote leading to the first resolution for a cease-fire since October 7, it claims such resolutions are nonbinding. The United States is funding Israel’s military while defunding the U.N. Relief and Works Agency, a critical institution for Palestinians, bolstering the deeply unpopular and illegitimate Palestinian Authority, which many Palestinians now consider to be a subcontractor to the occupation, and subverting international law by limiting avenues of accountability for Israel. In effect, these actions safeguard Israeli impunity.

The vacuity of the two-state solution mantra is most obvious in how often policymakers speak of recognizing a Palestinian state without discussing an end to Israel’s occupation of Palestinian territory. Quite the contrary: With the United States reportedly exploring initiatives to recognize Palestinian statehood, it is simultaneously defending Israel’s prolonged occupation at the International Court of Justice, arguing that Israel faces “very real security needs” that justify its continued control over Palestinian territories.

What might explain this seeming contradiction?

The concept of partition has long been used as a blunt policy tool by colonial powers to manage the affairs of their colonies, and Palestine was no exception. The Zionist movement emerged within the era of European colonialism and was given its most important imprimatur by the British Empire. The Balfour Declaration, issued by the British in 1917, called for a “national home for the Jewish people” in Palestine without adequately accounting for the Palestinians who constituted a vast majority in the region and whom Balfour referred to simply as “non-Jewish communities.” This declaration was then imposed on the Palestinians, who by 1922 had become Britain’s colonized subjects and were not asked to give consent to the partitioning of their homeland. Three decades later, the United Nations institutionalized partition with the passage of the 1947 plan, which called for partitioning Palestine into two independent states, one Palestinian Arab and the other Jewish.

All of Palestine’s neighboring countries in the Middle East and North Africa that had achieved independence from their colonial rulers and joined the U.N. voted against the 1947 plan. The Palestinians were not formally considered in a vote that many saw as illegitimate; it partitioned their homeland to accommodate Zionist immigration, which they had resisted from the onset. The Palestine Liberation Organization, established more than a decade later, formalized this opposition, insisting that Palestine as defined within the boundaries that existed during the British Mandate was “an invisible territorial unit”; it forcefully refused two states and by the late 1970s was fighting for a secular, democratic...
state. By the 1980s, however, the P.L.O. chairman, Yasir Arafat, along with most of the organization’s leadership, had come to accept that partition was the pragmatic choice, and many Palestinians who had by then been ground down by the machinery of the occupation accepted it as a way of achieving separateness from Israeli settlers and the creation of their own state.

It took more than three decades for Palestinians to understand that separateness would never come, that the goal of this policy was to maintain the illusion of partition in some distant future indefinitely. In that twilight zone, Israel’s expansionist violence increased and became more forthright, as Israeli leaders became more brazen in their commitment to full control from the Jordan River to the Mediterranean Sea. Israel also relied on discredited Palestinian leaders to sustain their control—primarily those who lead the Palestinian Authority and who collaborate with Israel’s machinations and make do with nonsovereign, noncontiguous Bantustans who never challenge Israel’s overarching domination. This kind of demographic engineering, which entails geographic isolation of unwanted populations behind walls, is central to apartheid regimes. Repeating the aspiration for two states and arguing that partition remains viable presents Israel as a Jewish and democratic state—separate from its occupation—giving it a veneer of palatability and obfuscating the reality that it rules over more non-Jews than Jews.

Seen in this light, the failed attempts at a two-state solution are not a failure for Israel at all but a resounding success, as they have fortified Israel’s grip over this territory while peace negotiations ebbed and flowed but never concluded. In recent years, international and Israeli human rights organizations have acknowledged what many Palestinians have long argued: that Israel is a perpetrator of apartheid. B’Tselem, Israel’s leading human rights organization, concluded that Israel is a singular regime of Jewish supremacy from the river to the sea.

Now, with international attention once again focused on the region, many Palestinians understand the dangers of discussing partition, even as a pragmatic option. Many refuse to resuscitate this hollowed-out policiespeak. In a message recently published anonymously, a group of Palestinians on the ground and in the diaspora state wrote, “The partition of Palestine is nothing but a legitimation of Zionism, a betrayal of our people and the final completion of the nakba,” or catastrophe, which refers to the expulsion and flight of about 750,000 Palestinians with Israel’s founding. “Our liberation can only be achieved through a unity of struggle, built upon a unity of people and a unity of land.”

For them, the Palestinian state that their inept leaders continue to peddle, even if achievable, would fail to undo the fact that Palestinian refugees are unable to return to their homes, now in Israel, and that Palestinian citizens of Israel would continue to reside as second-class citizens within a so-called Jewish state.

Global powers might choose to ignore this sentiment as unrealistic, if they even take note of it. They might also choose to ignore Israeli rejection of a two-state solution, as Israeli leaders drop any pretenses and explicitly oppose any pathway to Palestinian statehood. As recently as January, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said that Israel “must have security control over the entire territory west of the Jordan River.” He added: “That collides with the idea of sovereignty. What can we do?”

And yet the two-state solution continues to be at the forefront for policymakers who have returned to contorting the reality of an expansionist regime into a policy prescription they can hold on to. They cycle through provisions that the Palestinian state must be demilitarized, that Israel will maintain security oversight, that not every state in the world has the same level of sovereignty. It is like watching a century of failure, culminating in the train wreck of the peace process, replay itself in the span of the past five months.

This will not be the first time that Palestinian demands are not taken into account as far as their own future is concerned. But all policymakers should heed the lesson of October 7: There will be neither peace nor justice while Palestinians are subjugated behind walls and under Israeli domination.

A singular state from the river to the sea might appear unrealistic or fantastical or a recipe for further bloodshed. But it is the only state that exists in the real world—not in the fantasies of policymakers. The question, then, is: How can it be transformed into one that is just?

Tareq Barconi is the president of the think tank, Al-Shabaka. He is the author of Hamas Contained: The Rise and Pacification of Palestinian Resistance, (2018)

—New York Times, April 1, 2024

In addition to the over 34,000 Palestinians who have been counted as killed in Israel’s genocidal assault so far, there are 13,000 Palestinians in Gaza who are missing, a humanitarian aid group has estimated, either buried in rubble or mass graves or disappeared into Israeli prisons.

In a report released April 11, 2024, Euro-Med Human Rights Monitor said that the estimate is based on initial reports and that the actual number of people missing is likely even higher.

The group says missing people are either trapped under the rubble of buildings destroyed by Israeli airstrikes or bulldozers; buried in mass graves with no identification; or arrested by Israeli forces and put into prisons with torturous conditions without charges, with the Israeli army refusing to identify the people they’ve detained and often killing Palestinians in custody or allowing them to die. The group has previously found that there are over 120 mass graves in Gaza, due to the sheer speed with which Israel is killing Palestinians.

Those missing also include people whose bodies have been exhumed from mass graves in and around hospitals by Israeli forces, who are still holding dozens of bodies in custody.

Rights groups and government officials have also said that the death toll is an undercount, with government workers in Gaza having trouble gathering and identifying the dead due to Israel’s dismantling of any form of social or physical infrastructure in Gaza, including all of the region’s hospitals.

The Gaza health ministry has been relying on death counts from hospitals in the region. But these hospitals long ago lost their ability to communicate properly due to Israel’s blockade of electricity and systemic dismantling of Gaza’s healthcare system. Death counts also come from public sources like the media, according to a review of health ministry documents by NPR in February.

With the destruction of the health system, many Palestinians have not been able to take their family members to hospitals in order to receive medical assistance, even when they’re in dire need of it. On top of the fact that seemingly no one and nowhere in Gaza is safe from Israeli forces’ violence, it has been extremely difficult for the government to come up with official death counts.

For instance, as Euro-Med notes, humanitarian aid and civil workers recently recovered 422 bodies from Al-Shifa Hospital and the surrounding area after the Israeli military raided and completely destroyed the hospital over two weeks.

“The international community must act swiftly and forcefully to defend Palestinian civilians against the genocide that Israel has been committing in the Strip for the past six months. The international community must also work together to ensure that Israel complies with international law and the ruling of the International Court of Justice, and is held responsible for all its crimes, including the massacre conducted in Al-Shifa Medical Complex,” Euro-Med said in its report, which also calls for a mobilization of workers to try to save any people who may still be alive under the rubble.

—Truthout, April 11, 2024

https://truthout.org/articles/rights-group-13000-palestinians-in-gaza-are-missing-in-addition-to-34000-dead/
A doctor at an Israeli field hospital inside a notorious detention center where hundreds of Palestinian prisoners are temporarily held is sounding the alarm about torture and horrific conditions at what some human rights defenders—including Israelis—are calling “Israel’s Guantánamo Bay” and even a “concentration camp.”

In a letter to Israel’s attorney general and defense and health ministers viewed by Haaretz—which reported the story on April 4, 2024—the anonymous physician describes likely war crimes being committed at the Israel Defense Forces’ Sde Teiman base near Beersheva. Palestinian militants captured by IDF troops, as well as many civilian hostages ranging in age from teenagers to septuagenarians, are held there in cages, 70-100-per-cage, until they are transferred to regular Israeli prisons or released.

“From the first days of the medical facility’s operation until today, I have faced serious ethical dilemmas,” the doctor wrote. “More than that, I am writing to warn you that the facility’s operations do not comply with a single section among those dealing with health in the Internment of Unlawful Combatants Law.”

Gazans arrested and detained by Israeli forces are not legally considered prisoners of war by Israel because it does not recognize Gaza as a state. These detainees are mostly held under the Internment of Unlawful Combatants Law, which allows the imprisonment of anyone suspected of taking part in hostilities against Israel for up to 75 days without seeing a judge.

Human Rights Watch has warned that the law “strips away meaningful judicial review and due process rights.”

Sde Teiman detainees are fed through straws and forced to defecate in diapers. They’re also forced to sleep with the lights on and have allegedly been subjected to beatings and torture. Other Palestinians taken by Israeli forces have described being electrocuted, mauled by dogs, soaked with cold water, denied food and water, deprived of sleep, and blasted with loud music at temporary detention sites.

The whistleblowing Sde Teiman physician said that all patients at the camp’s field hospital are handcuffed by all four limbs, regardless of how dangerous they are deemed. In December, Israeli Health Ministry officials ordered such treatment after a medical worker at the facility was attacked. Now the camp’s estimated 600-800 prisoners are shackled 24-hours-a-day.

At first, the cuffs were plastic zip ties. Now they’re metal. The doctor said that more than half of his patients at the camp have suffered cuffing injuries, including some that have required “repeated surgical interventions.”

“Just this week, two prisoners had their legs amputated due to handcuff injuries, which unfortunately is a routine event,” he told Haaretz.

The whistleblower also alleged substandard medical care at the facility, where there is only one doctor on duty, who is sometimes a gynecologist or orthopedist.

“This ends in complications and sometimes even in the patient’s death,” he said. “This makes all of us—the medical teams and you, those in charge of us in the Health and Defense ministries, complicit in the violation of Israeli law, and perhaps worse for me as a doctor, in the violation of my basic commitment to patients, wherever they are, as I swore when I graduated 20-years-ago.”

The doctor claims in his letter that he warned the Health Ministry’s director-general about the appalling conditions at Sde Teiman, but that there have been “no substantial changes in the way the facility operates.”

An ethics committee visited the camp in February; the physician said that its members “are worried about their legal exposure and coverage in view of their involvement in a facility that is operated contrary to the provisions of the existing law.”

Last month, Haaretz revealed that 27 detainees have died in custody at the Sde Teiman and Anatot camps or during interrogation in Israel since
October 7. While some were Hamas or other militants captured or wounded while fighting IDF troops, others were civilians, including some with preexisting health conditions like the diabetic laborer who was not suspected of any offense when he was arrested and sent to his death at Anatot.

One former Sde Teiman detainee claims that he personally witnessed Israeli troops execute five prisoners in separate incidents.

Responding to the 27 detainee deaths and invoking the U.S. military prison in Cuba known for torture and indefinite detention, the Haaretz editorial board wrote last month that “Sde Teiman and the other detention facilities are not Guantánamo Bay and...the state has a duty to protect the rights of detainees even if they are not formally prisoners of war.”

“Israel’s indifference to the fate of Gazans, at best, and desire for revenge against them, at worst, are fertile ground for war crimes,” the editors said. “Indifference by Israelis and desire for revenge must not constitute license to shed the blood of detainees....The fact that Hamas is holding and abusing Israeli hostages cannot excuse or justify the abuse of Palestinian detainees.”

In December, the Geneva-based advocacy group Euro-Mediterranean Human Rights Monitor—which has also accused IDF troops of allowing Israeli civilians to witness the torture of Palestinian prisoners—demanded an investigation of what it called the “new Guantánamo.”

Israeli rights groups and individuals have also condemned the abuses at Sde Teiman, which, like Guantánamo, has been described as a “concentration camp.”

“Enough, just enough. We have to stop this gallop into the abyss,” urged Hebrew University senior lecturer Tamar Megiddo on April 3, 2024. “This war has to end. This government needs to end.”

—Common Dreams, April 4, 2024

https://www.commondreams.org/news/gaza-detainees

“Keir Starmer,¹ this one is for Gaza” were the first defiant words of George Galloway’s acceptance speech having just won the Parliamentary by-election in Rochdale on February 29, 2024.

George Galloway, a maverick of British left-wing politics has won a landslide victory in a Parliamentary by-election in Rochdale, near Manchester, overturning a Labour Party majority of over 9000,² standing as a candidate for the Workers’ Party of Britain (WPB), which he co-founded. With the campaign slogan “Galloway for Palestine” he always appeared with a backdrop of the Palestinian flag, all the while calling for an immediate ceasefire in Gaza. In defiance of the Tory government, Starmer’s Labour Party, and the mass media, he obtained 40 percent of the vote marginalizing the main political parties. This shock result has provoked outrage in the Tory-supporting news media labelling Galloway as divisive, antisemitic and many other epithets.

Condemnation has come from Prime Minister Rishi Sunak and Keir Starmer both who have refused to call for a ceasefire in Gaza.

Galloway is one of the most charismatic and eloquent of British politicians whose speeches are engaging, funny, politically incisive and an irritation to the hacks of the political establishment. He was first elected to parliament as a Labour MP in the general election of 1987 for the constituency of Hillhead in Glasgow. In the early 2000s he campaigned vigorously against the impending Iraq war, resulting in his expulsion from the Labour Party by Tony Blair in 2005. Since then, he has stood and won three Parliamentary by-elections on left-wing and antiwar platforms.

Galloway was born in 1954 into a working-class socialist family in Dundee in Scotland. He joined the Labour Party while still at school and later became involved in left-wing student politics in the 1970s when he obtained a place at Glasgow University.
During that time, he visited refugee camps in Lebanon where he resolved to dedicate his political life to the Palestinian liberation cause which he has made the focus of this and all of his election campaigns.

In the 2005 general election Galloway beat the Labour Party candidate in Bethnal Green standing for the Respect Party. That party had grown out of the campaign against the war in Iraq and was a broad alliance which ranged from Trotskyists to Islamists. Bethnal Green in east London has a large Muslim community which has historically supported Labour but there was much anger with Blair’s government and his lies. With constituency boundary changes Galloway lost that seat in 2010 but won a by-election in Bradford in 2012 which he lost at the general election of 2015. Galloway returns to Parliament having won the Rochdale seat as a candidate for the Workers’ Party of Britain which he co-founded in 2019 and is the leader of. Each of these constituencies has a large Muslim population who supported his stance on Palestine.

With his outspoken socialist views, his public support for trades unions, for Irish nationalism and other radical causes he has attracted support from left-wingers disillusioned with Labour and quite a few within the Party.

The right-wing press has consistently vilified Galloway calling him divisive, accusing him of antisemitism and one time claiming that he had pocketed money from oil given to him by Saddam Hussain. He obtained substantial damages when he won a libel case against several newspapers. He defended himself before the U.S. senate and refuted charges they had made about the oil scandal.

When Galloway is accused of antisemitism, he argues that he stands for a Palestine where Jews, Muslims and Christians can live peacefully in a democratic secular republic.

George Galloway is one of the mavericks of British left-wing politics. He is a great public speaker and debater, always meticulously prepared and can outwit most opponents, and he has retained his working-class Scottish accent which he uses to great effect. Starmer has warned Labour MPs not to engage with him as he will wipe the floor with any of them. While supporting the Palestinian cause he opposes Scottish independence and supported the Brexit campaign and accuses NATO of provoking the war in Ukraine. Above all he is a great self-publicist and opportunist who attracts fiercely loyal support which is consolidated by the incessant vilification from the right-wing press and despite his embarrassing behavior on a reality TV program. Galloway’s election has provoked hysterical responses from Sunak, Starmer and their acolytes. Sunak now calling those peacefully demonstrating for a ceasefire in Gaza, “a mob” with extremist views.

When Galloway is accused of antisemitism, he argues that he stands for a Palestine where Jews, Muslims and Christians can live peacefully in a democratic secular republic. This by-election has given a boost to the Palestine solidarity movement in Britain and to the voices calling for a ceasefire in Gaza. Tory Prime Minister Sunak is trying to suppress this antiwar movement calling the mass peaceful demonstrations “mob rule.” Even the most senior police chiefs have rejected his claims. Keir Starmer was almost apoplectic with the result but still refuses to call for the ceasefire that many Labour Party members and supporters want. Galloway’s public appearances and speeches will now attract a lot more attention and news coverage which will give Palestine, Gaza, and the call for a ceasefire more publicity and help to mobilize even more support.

Whatever one’s personal view of Galloway and all those campaigning about Palestine, this by-election result is a cause for celebration.

---

1 Keir Starmer is the leader of the British Labour Party. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Keir_Starmer
2 Starmer withdrew Labour Party support for their selected candidate who was recorded making what he is deemed was an antisemitic remark. Any criticism of Israel (even by Jews) is labeled “antisemitic” in Starmer’s Labour Party.
The State of Genocide

Remarks by Linda Loew speaking on behalf of Chicago for Abortion Rights

A 24-hour vigil in Chicago for Gaza on March 7th and 8th was called “The State of Genocide.” It was organized by a broad coalition of Palestinian, Jewish, antiwar, anti-racist, feminist groups and activists. The event, as both an act of mourning and a call to action, was part of a nationwide protest to demand an end to U.S. funding of the slaughter of Palestinians and timed with the hollow words of Biden’s State of the Union address. Since then, the number of Palestinians slaughtered by Israel continues to climb, Ramadan began and ended, the invasion of Rafah remains imminent, and more Gazans are starving.

Names from the lists of the more than 30,000 slaughtered were read by the speakers—more meaningful than a statistic on the nightly news.

Linda Loew represented Chicago for Abortion Rights which stands solidly behind the demand for immediate and permanent ceasefire. Her words honored the resistance of the Palestinian people and the women who fought for human rights in the historic organization of the first International Women’s Day over a century ago. Her remarks were delivered on the morning of March 8, 2024, International Women’s Day.

Chicago For Abortion Rights is one of a growing number of feminist organizations that are embracing Palestinian liberation—the only way to achieve reproductive justice everywhere across the globe, including here in the belly of the beast!

More and more people are uniting to oppose genocide, ethnic cleansing, and our government being its chief enabler.

We must name the state of genocide for what it is and keep fighting to have our voices heard—Stop funding Israel’s genocide, apartheid, and occupation. Do not do it in my name as a Jewish person, not in my name as a feminist and fighter for abortion rights and full reproductive justice.

Today is International Women’s Day, when millions celebrate the role of women in the worldwide struggle for freedom and justice.

Our nation suffers the highest infant and maternal mortality rates in the “advanced world.”

We must remember and reclaim the fighting spirit at the roots of International Women’s Day—among the toiling women of Europe and Russia: fighting war, famine, and horrible working conditions, taking to the streets, to demand peace and bread, and also in the U.S., the right to vote. They brought many male comrades into action with them. More than a century later we are still fighting the barbarism of more war, genocide, famine, and environmental catastrophes.

From France, where the legislature has now enshrined the constitutional right to abortion for all, to the green wave of Latin America, to Iran, Ireland, and Poland, women have been holding the banner of resistance to oppression, fighting for bodily autonomy, and freedom from the plundering and displacement by war and environmental catastrophes. Women also continue to fight violence against them, as well as against LGBTQ populations in their countries. All are victims of a system of greed, that puts billionaire profits over human needs, and tries to divide us in the process.

What could be more violent than the bombs and bullets raining down on the women, children, and all people in Gaza? The current genocidal slaughter intensifies the crisis brought by decades of occupation and siege.

We must embrace our Palestinian sisters and brothers. An immediate and permanent ceasefire must be the first step!

We know that mobilizing in massive numbers, taking to the streets, with bodies on the line, is the way fun-
damental change comes about. That’s what Chicagoans have been doing day after day, month after month. That’s how collectively we finally won the ceasefire resolution, passed by Chicago’s City Council.

But for a small and precious child who has lost both parents and possibly all of their family, or faced an amputation on their young bodies, without anesthesia, our resolutions do not save them from unfathomable pain and tragic abandonment. Or a mother facing childbirth with no care available, no food, no power, and growing risks of miscarriage. For them the sun rises in Gaza to despair. More lives and dreams have been shattered every single night.

Each name we’ve read during this vigil is for a precious life cut short, many less than a year old to ten years old. Many whose entire family was on that list next to them.

The same government funding this mass destruction of lives and land is responsible for deep assaults on abortion rights and bodies, here at home, hitting hardest the uninsured, poor, and people of color, especially across the American south. Our nation suffers the highest infant and maternal mortality rates in the “advanced world.” There’s nothing advanced about it—it is barbaric, shameful, and criminal.

The billions of our tax dollars funding Israel’s genocide could fund reproductive healthcare for all; full abortion access with no bans or restrictions, including abortion medication/mifepristone; maternal and infant care throughout the U.S., and with resources left to be a true world leader in healthcare, and preventing further climate catastrophes.

But Biden and company do not take responsibility for the terror they have unleashed. They will never be able to wash the blood from their hands.

The victims here and in Palestine are portrayed as criminals and terrorists. But the real criminals and terrorists are in our very own government!

Biden and Harris boast of air drops—too little too late—a band aid on an open wound that has slaughtered more than 32,000 and left more than million displaced and on the brink of famine.

A temporary ceasefire is not enough—although any relief from bombardment is welcome. Nothing short of permanent ceasefire, and an end to all Israeli control of Palestinian land and lives, will bring a successful end to this global struggle for peace and liberation, and a genuine opportunity to rebuild, under total Palestinian control.

In closing, on this International Women’s Day, we rededicate ourselves to the struggles of working women and allies here and around the world.

We will be part of the resistance until all are free between the river and the sea!

From the river to the sea, Palestine will be free!

---

Pro-Palestinian Student Protests Spread

By Erum Salam

Tuesday, April 23, 2024—Police arrested dozens of people at pro-Palestinian demonstrations at Yale University in Connecticut and New York University in Manhattan, as student protests over Israel’s war in Gaza continue to roil U.S. campuses.

On the Yale University campus in New Haven, Connecticut, authorities arrested at least 47 protesters on Monday evening, the university said in a statement. Students who were arrested will be referred for disciplinary action.

The police crackdowns came after Columbia University canceled in-person classes on Monday in response to protesters setting up tent encampments at its New York City campus last week.

Several hundred people had been protesting on the Yale university campus, demanding the university divest from military weapons manufacturers. Yale said it had repeatedly asked students to leave and warned them they could face law enforcement and disciplinary action if they didn’t.

“We will not stop, we will not rest. Disclose. Divest.”

In New York, officers moved on an encampment at Gould Plaza near New York University shortly after nightfall. There, too, hundreds of demonstrators had defied university warnings that they faced consequences if they failed to vacate the plaza.

Video on social media showed police taking down tents in the protesters’ encampment in a tense and at times chaotic scene. Some officers tossed tents, and others grappled with demonstrators.

Protesters tussled with officers and chanted, “We will not stop, we will not rest. Disclose. Divest.”

A New York police spokesperson said arrests were made after the university asked police to enforce trespassing violations, but the total number of arrests and citations would remain unknown until much later.

The Washington Square News, the student newspaper, reported that the NYPD said over a loudspeaker announcement that students were being arrested for “disorderly conduct” and that protesters were unlawfully blocking traffic.
The law enforcement actions at Yale and NYU came after a tense few days on campuses across the U.S.

Columbia University president, Nemat Minouche Shafik, called in New York police last week to clear a tent encampment on its main lawn of students demanding the university divest from companies with ties to Israel.

More than 100 students were arrested on Thursday on charges of trespassing and the university, and the affiliated Barnard College have suspended dozens of students involved in the protests.

On Monday, Columbia University announced it was canceling in-person classes on its New York City campus to try to “reset” the situation and “deescalate the rancor.”

A new encampment has now emerged, and hundreds of faculty members have held a mass walkout to protest against the president’s handling of the situation.

Bassam Khawaja, an adjunct lecturer at Columbia law school and supervising attorney at the school’s human rights clinic, told the Guardian she was “shocked and appalled that the president went immediately to the New York police department.”

“This was by all accounts, a non-violent protest,” she said. “It was a group of students camping out on the lawn in the middle of campus. It’s not any different from everyday life on campus.”

After the crackdown at Columbia, students across the U.S. launched their own protests in solidarity, many of them calling for their universities to back a ceasefire in Gaza and divest from companies with ties to Israel.

Students at Brown, Princeton and Northwestern held protests on Friday and over the weekend.

We Need an Exodus from Zionism

By Naomi Klein

I’ve been thinking about Moses, and his rage when he came down from the mount to find the Israelites worshipping a golden calf.

The ecofeminist in me was always uneasy about this story: what kind of God is jealous of animals? What kind of God wants to hoard all the sacredness of the Earth for himself?

But there is a less literal way of understanding this story. It is about false idols. About the human tendency to worship the profane and shiny, to look to the small and material rather than the large and transcendent.

What I want to say to you tonight at this revolutionary and historic Seder in the Streets is that too many of our people are worshipping a false idol once again. They are enraptured by it. Drunk on it. Profaned by it.

It is a false idol that takes our most profound biblical stories of justice and emancipation from slavery—the story of Passover itself—and turns them into brutalist weapons of colonial land theft, roadmaps for ethnic cleansing and genocide.

It is a false idol that has taken the transcendent idea of the promised land—a metaphor for human liberation that has traveled across multiple faiths to every corner of this globe—and dared to turn it into a deed of sale for a militaristic ethnostate.
Political Zionism’s version of liberation is itself profane. From the start, it required the mass expulsion of Palestinians from their homes and ancestral lands in the Nakba.

From the start it has been at war with dreams of liberation. At a Seder it is worth remembering that this includes the dreams of liberation and self-determination of the Egyptian people. This false idol of Zionism equates Israeli safety with Egyptian dictatorship and client states.

From the start it has produced an ugly kind of freedom that saw Palestinian children not as human beings but as demographic threats—much as the pharaoh in the Book of Exodus feared the growing population of Israelites, and thus ordered the death of their sons.

Zionism has brought us to our present moment of cataclysm, and it is time that we said clearly: it has always been leading us here.

It is a false idol that has led far too many of our own people down a deeply immoral path that now has them justifying the shredding of core commandments: thou shalt not kill. Thou shalt not steal. Thou shalt not covet.

It is a false idol that equates Jewish freedom with cluster bombs that kill and maim Palestinian children.

Zionism is a false idol that has betrayed every Jewish value, including the value we place on questioning—a practice embedded in the Seder with its four questions asked by the youngest child.

Including the love we have as a people for text and for education.

Today, this false idol justifies the bombing of every university in Gaza; the destruction of countless schools, of archives, of printing presses; the killing of hundreds of academics, of journalists, of poets—this is what Palestinians call scholasticide, the killing of the means of education.

Meanwhile, in this city, the universities call in the NYPD and barricade themselves against the grave threat posed by their own students daring to ask them basic questions, such as: how can you claim to believe in anything at all, least of all us, while you enable, invest in and collaborate with this genocide?

The false idol of Zionism has been allowed to grow unchecked for far too long.

So, tonight we say: it ends here.

Our Judaism cannot be contained by an ethnostate, for our Judaism is internationalist by nature.

Our Judaism cannot be protected by the rampaging military of that state, for all that military does is sow sorrow and reap hatred—including against us as Jews.

Our Judaism is not threatened by people raising their voices in solidarity with Palestine across lines of race, ethnicity, physical ability, gender identity and generations.

Our Judaism is one of those voices and knows that in that chorus lies both our safety and our collective liberation.

Our Judaism is the Judaism of the Passover Seder: the gathering in ceremony to share food and wine with loved ones and strangers alike, the ritual that is inherently portable, light enough to carry on our backs, in need of nothing but each other: no walls, no temple, no rabbi, a role for everyone, even—especially—the smallest child. The Seder is a diaspora technology if ever there was one, made for collective grieving, contemplation, questioning, remembering, and reviving the revolutionary spirit.

So look around. This, here, is our Judaism. As waters rise and forests burn and nothing is certain, we pray at the altar of solidarity and mutual aid, no matter the cost.

We don’t need or want the false idol of Zionism. We want freedom from the project that commits genocide in our name. Freedom from an ideology that has no plan for peace other than deals with murderous theocratic petrostates next door, while selling the technologies of robo-assassinations to the world.

We seek to liberate Judaism from an ethnostate that wants Jews to be perennially afraid, that wants our children to be afraid, that wants us to believe the world is against us so that we go running to its fortress and beneath its iron dome, or at least keep the weapons and donations flowing.

That is the false idol.

And it’s not just Netanyahu, it’s the world he made and that made him—it’s Zionism.

What are we? We, in these streets for months and months, are the exodus. The exodus from Zionism.

And to the Chuck Schumers of this world, we do not say: “Let our people go.”

We say: “We have already gone. And your kids? They’re with us now.”

That false idol is called Zionism.

—The Guardian, April 24, 2024

April 1, 2024—New Yorkers will take to the polls on April 2, 2024, for the Democratic primary. Many groups on the left are encouraging people to “vote blank” in the New York Democratic primary against “Genocide Joe” Biden, following in the footsteps of the Vote Uncommitted campaign in Michigan and other states. While challenging the unconditional support for Biden as a supposedly “lesser evil” candidate is certainly progressive, this strategy ultimately serves to uphold that logic, as it drives people back into the arms of the Democratic Party and feeds illusions that we can vote our way out of the genocide underway in Palestine. The way forward is class independence, organizing independently of both capitalist parties in our workplaces, on campuses, and in the streets.

“Genocide Joe” is increasingly unpopular, and his low approval ratings are especially stark among Arab American and young voters. The large Arab American population in swing-state Michigan is one reason why Democrats are concerned about the election. In 2020, Biden only won Michigan by about 540,000 votes, and Trump in 2016 only won the state by about 11,000 votes. Thus, the Democrats are desperately searching for a way to bring these disaffected voters back into the fold. A late February poll shows that 67 percent of voters want a permanent ceasefire regardless of party affiliation and a majority of Biden voters oppose weapons shipments to Israel. Furthermore, Biden’s image has been damaged by the resignation of three officials from his administration and the refusal of Arab-American leaders in Michigan to meet with Biden’s campaign manager.

The Leave It Blank NY campaign is explicitly a pressure campaign on Biden, stating, “New Yorkers have a chance to send a strong message that Democratic voters care about Palestine and contribute to the nationwide effort to pressure the President and the party to change course and push for a ceasefire.” [emphasis added]. Many prominent figures and media are explicitly calling Vote Uncommitted and Leave It Blank pressure campaigns on Biden, as Medhi Hasan laid out on Pod Save America—a podcast of former Obama-administration officials. While the impulse is progressive, this strategy misses the point.

Israel is the outpost of U.S. and Western imperialism in the Middle East. The bipartisan regime—including Biden himself—is pro-Israel for material and geopolitical reasons, not merely because of ideological and personal commitments. Biden explicitly said in a 1986 speech:

“Were there not an Israel, the United States of America would have to invent an Israel to protect her interest in the region. The United States would have to go out and invent an Israel.” [emphasis added]

“Genocide Joe” has been very blatant about his support of Israel throughout his political career. But it’s not merely a problem of Biden himself or the “establishment” wing of the Democratic party. Rather, it’s crucial to understand that the Democrats (and Republicans) are a party of and for the capitalists. The progressive wing of the Democratic Party exists to funnel progressive and social movements back into its arms and away from self-organization of workers and the oppressed. That is because our collective power threatens the capitalists, whom the bipartisan regime serves to protect.
The imperialist nature of the state cannot be solved just by electing the “right” person to office.

These pressure campaigns are a way for the Democratic Party and nonprofits to co-opt the movement for Palestine, especially in a presidential election year. This is nothing new. After all, the Democratic Party is “the graveyard of social movements.” In 2020, the Democrats were able to co-opt the Black Lives Matter movement into voting for Biden. In 2018, the Women’s March undertook a “power to the polls” campaign for the midterm election. In 2022, Planned Parenthood and other nonprofits funneled discontent and anger about the Dobbs decision’s attacks on bodily autonomy into voting for the Democrats. Voting for Democrats is not using our collective power as workers and oppressed to organize against the U.S.-backed Israeli genocide on Palestinians. It takes the powerful movement of the past nearly six months out of the streets, our workplaces, and campuses and funnels it back into the ballot box.

In the censure of Rashida Tlaib, the Democrats have shown that they will do anything to “punish” those who don’t fall in line behind Israel or go beyond very tepid criticisms. When Democrats have launched mild criticisms of Israel’s genocide in response to growing popular opposition, they make sure to signal that they still support Israel, that they themselves are Zionists, and that “Israel has a right to defend itself.” Chuck Shumers’ recent speech is a great example of this. Even as he criticized Netanyahu, he made sure to mention the attacks of October 7 before even mentioning Israel’s war on the Palestinians—and he certainly didn’t characterize it as a genocide. This speech and similar statements by Democrats in recent days gives illusions that Netanyahu himself is the problem, not the whole settler-colonial project of Zionism. Even Andy Levin, who was part of the Vote Uncommitted campaign in Michigan, is a liberal Zionist and said that the campaign was a way to help Biden win. Liberal Zionists propose a two-state solution and are critical of settlers in the post-1967 occupied lands, without recognizing that the whole project of Zionism is the problem, with all the violence and displacement that it entails, even before 1948.

**Voting for Democrats is not using our collective power as workers and oppressed to organize against the U.S.-backed Israeli genocide on Palestinians.**

Biden and the Democrats are aligning themselves to this framing as they posture themselves more and more against Netanyahu, with Harris and Biden (in his recent State of the Union speech) now calling for a six-week ceasefire. Biden says he is working to sway Netanyahu behind the scenes, while at the same time sending weapons to Israel every 36 hours. Biden also wants to avoid further entanglement in the Middle East, as his desired focus is on containing China’s growing influence.

Republicans and Trump offer nothing progressive for the working class, much less for the people of Palestine. But this doesn’t mean we should vote for Biden. The reason Biden is even posturing toward a “ceasefire” shows the strength of the movement in the streets and on college campuses. But these shifts do not fundamentally change the United States’ unyielding support for the state of Israel and its genocidal campaign in Palestine. Let’s not forget that this rhetorical shift comes after Israel has almost fully destroyed Gaza, with more than 32,000 killed by the Zionist state.

Lesser-evilism is explicit in the strategy of Leave It Blank NY, who say it is necessary to give Biden a wake-up call “precisely because of how much is at stake in November.” Trump and the Far Right are a genuine threat and people have legitimate fears of a second Trump term. But the way to fight Trump and the far right is self-organization, independent of capitalists and their parties—not voting for Democrats.

The last eight years have been proof enough of this failed strategy. During Biden’s presidency, not only have we lost the limited protections of Roe, but the Far Right has made many advances, such as the countless bills attacking trans adults and children, workers’ rights, and more. Meanwhile, Biden has moved to the right on many issues, including immigration and militarization of the Southern border. While the lesser-evil push for Biden may have kept Trump from office in 2020, it still has not defeated Trumpism.

The Vote Blank campaign undoubtedly reflects a progressive phenomenon; it creates political problems for Biden and expresses the generalized disgust towards his complicity in genocide, which may lead many to refuse to vote for him in November. However, it ultimately remains a symbolic gesture because it doesn’t build working-class power, instead sowing illusions that U.S. foreign policy can be fundamentally influenced at the ballot box. Encouraging working people to take such actions, as New York City Democratic Socialists of America (DSA), Party of Socialism and Liberation (PSL), and Socialist Alternative are doing, only creates confusion among the working class about where our real power lies.

We cannot be fooled into believing that Biden will change course on Israel simply because Democratic voters in a deeply blue state raise a symbolic objection to his support for the genocide in Gaza. Biden is bound by and
enthusiastically supports more than 75 years of U.S. imperialist support for Israel. That can only be broken by a movement that is capable of forcing a crisis by directly confronting the regime and U.S. capitalism, using our power as workers—the source of capitalists’ profits—to shut it down. While rejecting Biden’s complicity to Israel’s atrocities reflects growing dissatisfaction with a bipartisan regime that only represents the bloody interests of the ruling class at the expense of the lives and livelihoods of millions of people in the United States and across the world, campaigns to push him to the left are not our best option: we must organize independently of the Democrats and build a working-class party with a socialist program to organize in our workplaces and in the streets against the genocide in Gaza.

—*Left Voice*, April 1, 2024

https://www.leftvoice.org/the-way-to-end-genocide-is-class-independence-not-voting-blank/

The progressive wing of the Democratic Party exists to funnel progressive and social movements back into its arms and away from self-organization of workers and the oppressed.

---

**German University Rescinds Jewish American’s Job Offer Over Pro-Palestinian Letter**

**By Kate Connolly**

A leading Jewish American philosopher has been disinvited from taking up a prestigious professorship at the University of Cologne after signing a letter expressing solidarity with Palestinians and condemning the killings in Gaza carried out by Israeli forces.

Nancy Fraser, professor of philosophy and politics at the New School for Social Research in New York, said she had been cancelled by the university, which has withdrawn its invitation to the Albertus Magnus Professorship 2024, a visiting position, which she had been awarded in 2022. The letter was written in November 2023 following the October 7 attacks on Israel by Hamas, prompting Israel’s attack on Gaza.

Fellow academics have written a letter to the university in protest against the ban. In it, they call the withdrawal of the invitation “another attempt to limit public and academic debate on Israel and Palestine by invoking supposedly clear, distinct, governmentally sanctioned red lines.”

They said the letter, titled “Philosophy for Palestine,” which was signed by Fraser and several hundred other academics, was separate from Fraser’s work as a scholar and that her guest professorship had nothing to do with the Israel-Palestine conflict.

Cologne University said in a statement its decision to cancel the invitation had been made “with great regret.” It said the reason was that in the letter signed by Fraser, “Israel’s right to exist as an ‘ethno-supremacist state’ since its foundation in 1948 is called into question. The terror attacks by Hamas on Israel of October 7, 2023, is elevated to an act of legitimate resistance.”

It said that the signatories’ demand for the academic and cultural boycott of Israeli institutions was at odds with the university’s close ties to Israeli partner institutions and the views in the letter were not in line with its own statements from October 2022 on the situation in the Middle East region.

In an interview with the *Frankfurter Rundschau*, Fraser called herself a victim of “philosemitic McCarthyism” alongside a number of other academics such as Masha Gessen who have been cancelled in Germany over their views regarding the Middle East conflict amid growing criticism that a dominating pro-Israel political consensus has shut down any proper debate.

“After all, I was canceled in the name of German responsibility for the Holocaust. This responsibility should also apply to Jewish people. But in Germany it is narrowed down to the state policy of the currently ruling Israeli government. Philosemitic McCarthyism sums it up quite well. A way to silence people under the pretext of supposedly supporting Jews,” Fraser said.

In an interview with *Die Zeit* addressing the issue of Germany’s responsibility as perpetrator of the Holocaust for protecting Jewish life,
Fraser said this duty was being wrongly applied to exclude criticism of the Israeli government.

“I completely agree that Germans have a special responsibility towards the Jews in light of the Holocaust. But to equate criticism of the Israeli government with antisemitism is simply wrong. And may I add that as a Jew I also feel a special responsibility. But… that doesn’t mean giving this government carte blanche. What is happening in Gaza should not happen—and especially not in my name. I strongly reject the equation of Israel and Judaism. Judaism has a rich secular and, above all, universalist tradition. It pains me when it is reduced to Israel’s current hyper-ethno-nationalist politics.”

Asked why she thought the philosopher, Judith Butler, had been allowed to assume the same professorship in 2016, despite having been highly critical of Israel, Fraser said: “In Germany, the panic of doing something wrong has increased. In addition, the war in Gaza is now rekindling the feverishness.”

Fraser has said she will continue to hold the lectures she had planned to deliver in Cologne, both at the New School and at another location in Germany.

I strongly reject the equation of Israel and Judaism. Judaism has a rich secular and, above all, universalist tradition.

“It has been suggested that I give the lectures elsewhere in Germany under the slogan: ‘This is what you weren’t allowed to hear in Cologne.’”

In a letter to Joybrato Mukherjee, the rector of Cologne University, the interim president of the New School, Donna E. Shalala, described his decision as “simply outrageous and insulting,” and asked him to reconsider. She commented that Albertus Magnus, the 13th-century free-thinking philosopher, scientist, and bishop after whom the professorship is named, “would have been appalled.”

In the 1930s, the New School, she pointed out, had “rescued intellectuals seeking refuge from the Nazis”—including the political theorist Hannah Arendt, the psychologist Erich Fromm, and the composer Hanns Eisler.

“We continued the body of critical thought that had been wiped out—promoting the remarkable traditions of the German academy,” she wrote.

—The Guardian, April 10, 2024
https://www.theguardian.com/education/2024/apr/10/nancy-fraser-cologne-university-germany-job-offer-palestine

Israel’s Illegal Attack on Iran

By Marjorie Cohn

On April 1, Israel mounted an unprovoked military attack on a building that was part of the Iranian Embassy complex in Damascus, Syria, killing seven of Iran’s senior military advisers and five additional people. The victims included General Mohamad Reza Zahedi, head of Iran’s covert military operations in Lebanon and Syria, and two other senior generals.

Although Israel’s attack violated the United Nations Charter, the UN Security Council refused to condemn it because the United States, the U.K. and France exercised their vetoes on April 4.

Iran considered this attack on its consulate “an act of war,” Trita Parsi wrote at Foreign Policy.

On April 11, the Permanent Mission of the Islamic Republic of Iran to the United Nations stated: “Had the UN Security Council condemned the Zionist regime’s reprehensible act of aggression on our diplomatic premises in Damascus and subsequently brought to justice its perpetrators, the imperative for Iran to punish this rogue regime might have been obviated.”

Then, on April 13, in response to Israel’s attack, Iran fired more than 300 drones and missiles at the Israeli air base from which the April 1 attacks had emanated. Only two of them landed inside Israel and no one was killed; a Bedouin girl was injured. The U.S., U.K., France, Jordan, and Israel intercepted the remaining Iranian missiles and drones. A senior U.S. military official said, “there’s no significant damage within Israel itself.”

The Iranian mission to the UN wrote in an April 13 letter to the UN secretary-general that Iran’s action was conducted “in the exercise of Iran’s inherent right to self-defense” under Article 51 of the UN Charter “and in response to the Israeli recurring military aggressions, particularly its armed attack” on April 1 “against Iranian diplomatic premises, in the defiance of Article 2(4) of the Charter of the United Nations.”

The April 1 attack was not the first time Israel had attacked key Iranian personnel. In 2020, Israel killed Iran’s leading nuclear scientist on Iranian soil. Since December, Israel has assassinated at least 18 Iranian military commanders and staff. Iran suspects that Israel played a role in the assassination of nuclear scientists in 2010 and 2012.

Also, “Israel carried out covert attacks on two major natural gas pipelines inside Iran” in February, “dis-
rupturing the flow of heat and cooking gas to provinces with millions of people,” The New York Times reported. “The level of impact was very high because these are two significant pipelines going south to north,” according to Homayoun Falakshahi, a senior energy analyst at the data analytics firm Kpler. “We have never seen anything like this in scale and scope.”

Iran’s April 13 letter said the Security Council “has failed in its duty to maintain international peace and security, allowing the Israeli regime to transgress red lines and violate the fundamental principles of international law” which “exacerbated tensions in the region and threatened regional and international peace and security.”

Besides “warning about any further military provocations” by Israel, Iran pledged to “defend its people, national security and interests, sovereignty and territorial integrity against any threat or acts of aggression and to respond to any such threat or aggression vigorously and in accordance with international law.”

Iran defends its right of self-defense

Iran added that it “will not hesitate to exercise its inherent right of self-defense when required.” It warned that if Israel commits “any military aggression again, Iran’s response will assuredly and decisively be stronger, and more resolute.”

In addition, Iran made clear that it seeks to avoid further escalation that could spark a widespread regional war. An April 13 social media post from Iran’s permanent mission to the UN stated, “The matter can be deemed concluded. However, should the Israeli regime make another mistake, Iran’s response will be considerably more severe. It is a conflict between Iran and the rogue Israeli regime, from which the U.S. MUST STAY AWAY!”

At a Security Council meeting on April 14, Iran’s UN Ambassador Saeid Iravani defended the lawfulness of the missile and drone attack on Israel. He noted the hypocrisy of the U.S. and its allies that claim Israel is acting in self-defense as it conducts its genocide of the Palestinian people:

“These countries, especially the United States, have shielded Israel from any responsibility for the Gaza massacre. While they have denied Iran’s inherent right to self-defense against the Israeli armed attack on our diplomatic premises, at the same time they shamefully justify the Israeli massacre and genocide against the defenseless Palestinian people under the pretext of self-defense.”

Israel’s attack on Iranian Consulate violated the UN Charter and Vienna Conventions

Iran’s April 13 attack on Israel was a lawful exercise of self-defense in response to Israel’s unlawful April 1 attack on the Iranian consulate. The Israeli attack was an illegal act of aggression.

Article 2 (4) of the UN Charter states, “All Members shall refrain in their international relations from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any state, or in any other manner inconsistent with the Purposes of the United Nations.”

An act of aggression is inconsistent with the purposes of the UN. Article 39 of the Charter says, “The Security Council shall determine the existence of any threat to the peace, breach of the peace, or act of aggression.”

An “act of aggression’ means the use of armed force by a State against the sovereignty, territorial integrity, or political independence of another State, or in any other manner inconsistent with the Charter of the United Nations,” under the Rome Statute for the International Criminal Court. Aggression includes “the invasion or attack by the armed forces of a State of the territory of another State.”

Moreover, “Consular premises shall be inviolable,” according to Article 31 of the 1963 Vienna Convention on Consular Relations. Article 1 defines consular premises as “the buildings or parts of buildings and the land ancillary thereto, irrespective of ownership, used exclusively for the purposes of the consular post.”
The 1961 Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations likewise provides in Article 22.1 that, “The premises of the mission shall be inviolable. The agents of the receiving State may not enter them, except with the consent of the head of the mission.”

During Israel’s bombing of Iran’s consulate in Syria, it targeted and killed very senior Iranian officials. The attack constituted an act of aggression, which triggered Iran’s right to self-defense.

Iran’s April 13 attack on Israel constituted lawful self-defense

Article 51 states, “Nothing in the present Charter shall impair the inherent right of individual or collective self-defense if an armed attack occurs against a Member of the United Nations, until the Security Council has taken the measures necessary to maintain international peace and security.”

An armed attack includes not just an attack against the territory of a state, including its airspace and territorial sea, but also attacks directed against its armed forces or embassies abroad.

On April 13, Iran’s aircraft struck two air bases in the Negev desert, where the April 1 attack on Iran’s consulate had been launched. “Iran retaliated against those targets in Israel directly related to the Israeli attack on Iran,” former U.S. weapons inspector Scott Ritter wrote.

Nevertheless, the Security Council has failed to adopt a resolution condemning Israel’s attack on Iran’s consulate, as Iran pointed out in its April 13 letter to the UN secretary-general.

At an April 14 meeting of the Security Council, the Israeli representative declared that Iran is the number one global sponsor of terrorism and the world’s worst human rights violator. It is Israel, however, that has killed nearly 34,000 Palestinians—two-thirds of them women and children—during its campaign of genocide in Gaza that has now entered its seventh month.

Iran’s self-defense action was the natural outcome of Israel’s violations of international law—both on Syrian territory and elsewhere—the representative from the Syrian Arab Republic said at the April 14 council meeting. Israel is trying to cover up its genocide and military failures in Gaza, the Syrian representative added.

These countries, especially the United States, have shielded Israel from any responsibility for the Gaza massacre

Iran’s attack satisfied the principles of proportionality, distinction and precautions

Although Iran’s attack on Israel was conducted in lawful self-defense, it was also carried out in compliance with international humanitarian law, which requires that the use of military force satisfy the principles of distinction, proportionality, and precautions.

Distinction means that the attack must distinguish between combatants and civilians. Iran’s attack targeted military installations and no civilians were killed.

Proportionality means that the attack cannot be excessive in relation to the military advantage sought. Iran didn’t strike Israeli headquarters, barracks or targets that would result in casualties. The attack was limited and “appeared calculated not to escalate the situation,” according to Murtaza Hussain of The Intercept.

Precautions means that steps must be taken to minimize harm to civilians. Iran telegraphed its intention to attack Israel for over a week and announced it had launched the drones hours before they reached Israel. This provided substantial notice to Israel and enabled it to assemble the defenses.

Iran’s measured attack complied with the requirements of international humanitarian law.

Netanyahu is gunning for war with Iran

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu would like nothing better than to start a war with Iran. Netanyahu considers Iran an “existential threat” to Israel. He persuaded former President Donald Trump to pull out of the Iran nuclear deal, which was working to prevent Iran from developing nuclear weapons.

As the world waits for Israel’s response to the Iranian attack, President Joe Biden said the U.S. would not assist Israel in an offensive military action against Iran but it would give Israel defensive support if Iran attacks Israel. “But the distinction between offensive or defensive support becomes meaningless the second a war breaks out,” wrote Trita Parsi.

Today, the U.S. and U.K. imposed additional punishing sanctions on Iran. Unilateral coercive measures, levied without the imprimatur of the Security Council, are illegal and generally harm only the general population.

“The president’s been very clear we don’t seek a war with Iran,” White House National Security Council spokesperson John Kirby said on NBC’s “Meet the Press.” “We’re not looking for escalation here. We will continue to help Israel defend itself.”

Biden, according to Parsi, “has committed himself to two contradictory goals: preventing a regional war while proclaiming ironclad support for Israel in the case of war, even if Israel initiates it.”

Although Biden levels mild criticism at Israel for its genocidal campaign, he continues to send weapons and other support to enable it under the guise of self-defense.

The Council on American-Islamic Relations, the largest Muslim civil rights group in the U.S., stated that
“the Biden administration emboldened the far-right Israeli government to manufacture this crisis by repeatedly giving it carte blanche to violate international law without any accountability—from murdering journalist Shireen Abu Akleh, to expanding illegal settlements, to committing a genocide in Gaza, to bombing an Iranian Embassy complex in Syria.”

“For decades, the United States has sought to destabilize Iran, a critical Asian power situated at the intersection of three major continents and multiple waterways,” the Committee of Anti-Imperialists in Solidarity with Iran (CASI) said in a statement.

In 1953, the CIA engineered the overthrow of the democratically elected Iranian Prime Minister Mohammad Mosaddegh, who had nationalized British oil interests. The U.S. effectively installed the vicious Mohammad Reza Shah Pahlavi, who ruled Iran with an iron fist until he was overthrown in the 1979 Iranian Revolution and replaced with the Ayatollah Khomeini’s theocracy.

“Since then, Iran has weathered both the direct and indirect effects of U.S. imperialism, culminating in a brutal devastating eight-year military aggression (1980-88) and a devastating sanctions regime that has denied Iranians’ access to basic medical supplies, infrastructure, foodstuffs, and led to astronomical inflation,” the CASI statement said. “Over the last few decades, Iran has suffered assassinations of its scientists and generals, bombings of critical infrastructure, and repeated violations of its sovereignty and attacks on its national development.”

—Truthout, April 18, 2024

https://truthout.org/articles/under-charter-irans-attack-was-a-legal-response-to-israels-illegal-attack/?utm_source=feedotter&utm_medium=email&utm

1 Trita Parsi is the co-founder and executive vice president of the Quincy Institute for Responsible Statecraft, as well as the founder and former president of the National Iranian American Council.


The Coming Israeli Attack on Iran

By Gilbert Achcar

Note: This article was written April 16, 2024, before the Israel attack on Iran April 19, 2024.

The fact is that the leader of the “axis of resistance,” as Iran likes to describe itself, has been greatly embarrassed in recent years by its inability to translate its repeated threats into actions commensurate with its words. The most dangerous blow that it suffered before the attack on its consulate was the assassination by U.S. forces of the commander of the Quds Force of Iran’s Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC), Qasem Soleimani, at the very beginning of 2020 near Baghdad airport. The Iranian response was lackluster: it consisted in launching twelve missiles at American forces at the Ain al-Asad Air Base in the Iraqi Anbar Governorate, after giving a warning of the attack so that no U.S. soldier was injured (the only injuries were traumatic brain concussions.) Donald Trump was thus able to dispense with a response, as it was clear that the assassination of Soleimani was more serious than the Iranian reaction, which was clearly the outcome that Tehran expected.

Everything indicates that Iran’s intention in its recent attack April 13, 2024, on the Zionist state was similar: that is, to save face by responding, but keeping the response’s effectiveness limited so that it does not lead to a counter-response. Thus, Iran launched 170 drones and 30 cruise missiles from its territory, that is, from a distance of 1,500 kilometers, knowing that it will take a few hours for these missiles to cross that distance, so that Israel can prepare for their arrival in order to shoot down a large number of them even before they enter its airspace, especially since it enjoys the help of allies, led by the United States. Tehran even says that it informed Washington of the timing of the attack, while Washington denies this, its sources claiming that it learned of the attack’s timing in advance thanks to intelligence (it is not clear whether U.S. or Israeli intelligence.)

Whatever the case, the result is that none of those missiles exploded on the territory of the Zionist state. What is worse still is that, of the 120 ballistic missiles launched by Tehran, only four
It is no secret to anyone that Israel has been planning for years a strike inside Iran’s territory aimed at destroying the nuclear facilities of its arch enemy. This strike has become urgent for Israel due to Iran’s great strategic loss. Worse still, it would have looked legitimate and not have entitled Israel to escalate in the eyes of the world.

It is therefore possible to doubt the sincerity of Joe Biden’s calls for restraint, knowing that the U.S. position remains in the balance. It would be extremely difficult for the United States to risk a full confrontation with Iran without the guarantee of protection provided by its U.S. godfather. Israel has the capability to strike Iran’s nuclear facilities and destroy its nuclear potential at will—only a few days away from the momentous moment when it is estimated that Tehran now possesses sufficient enriched uranium with the technological capabilities to make at least three nuclear bombs within a few days. This puts Israel in a state of high alert, as the loss of its regional monopoly on nuclear weapons would constitute a great strategic loss. Worse still, it would stir its fears of annihilation as a small country facing enemies calling for its destruction, and whose ideology is based on intensive exploitation of the memory of the Nazi genocide of the European Jews. This strengthens the hypothesis that Iran’s attack on the Israeli consulate was a deliberate provocation that was part of an escalation aimed at creating an opportunity for the Zionist state to strike inside Iranian territory—first through an attack on its nuclear potential, and then by striking the Iranian territory itself.

The U.S. position remains in the balance. It is therefore possible to doubt the sincerity of Joe Biden’s calls for restraint, knowing that the U.S. position remains in the balance. It would be extremely difficult for the United States to risk a full confrontation with Iran without the guarantee of protection provided by its U.S. godfather. Israel has the capability to strike Iran’s nuclear facilities and destroy its nuclear potential at will—only a few days away from the momentous moment when it is estimated that Tehran now possesses sufficient enriched uranium with the technological capabilities to make at least three nuclear bombs within a few days. This puts Israel in a state of high alert, as the loss of its regional monopoly on nuclear weapons would constitute a great strategic loss. Worse still, it would stir its fears of annihilation as a small country facing enemies calling for its destruction, and whose ideology is based on intensive exploitation of the memory of the Nazi genocide of the European Jews. This strengthens the hypothesis that Iran’s attack on the Israeli consulate was a deliberate provocation that was part of an escalation aimed at creating an opportunity for the Zionist state to strike inside Iranian territory—first through an attack on its nuclear potential, and then by striking the Iranian territory itself.
his predecessor Trump in supporting the Zionist state to the point of full participation in the genocidal war that it has waged and is still waging against Gaza. Biden called for patience and de-escalation while confirming on the other hand that the United States, even if it won’t participate in an Israeli strike inside Iranian territory, will remain committed to protecting its regional ally, which is exactly what the latter needs in order to carry out its attack. Israel realizes that the U.S. administration cannot take the risk of participating in an attack whose outcome is uncertain, and whose failure could reflect on it and cause the defeat of Joe Biden in the presidential elections next fall. The conclusion from all the above is that strategic logic incites Tehran to speed up its acquisition of nuclear weapons and make it known once done, as it is the most effective means of deterrence that it can acquire.

Gilbert Achcar grew up in Lebanon and has lived and taught in Paris, Berlin, and London. He is currently professor of Development Studies and International Relations at SOAS, University of London.

— New Politics, April 17, 2024
https://newpol.org/the-coming-israeli-attack-on-iran/

The U.S. fear is certainly not out of concern for peace, but rather primarily a fear of seeing a closure of the Strait of Hormuz and a hike in oil prices leading to a new crisis in the global economy.

Haiti Regime Collapses
BY ROB LYON

A gang-led coup in Haiti has led to the resignation of Prime Minister Ariel Henry. U.S. imperialism is scrambling to regain control of the situation and has organized negotiations to create a transitional council to take power. But with the Haitian state in utter disarray, the gangs are moving to solidify their control of the capital, Port-au-Prince.

There had been a brief decline in gang-driven killings and kidnappings after the emergence of the Bwa Kale movement in April last year. Bwa Kale was a spontaneous uprising of neighborhood self-defense groups that erupted across the country to defend against the gangs.

But the Bwa Kale movement was decentralized and very heterogeneous. The movement did not manage to coalesce into a national movement with a united political program. Some neighborhoods, such as Canape Vert, remained relatively peaceful after the armed people had driven out the gangs. But in other areas, the neighborhood self-defense groups got caught up in the gang wars and allied with this or that gang to drive out other rival groups. In other areas, some of the neighborhood self-defense groups have transformed into gangs themselves.

Some of the gangs have threatened and retaliated against Bwa Kale. Other gangs have taken a different approach, such as G9, the most powerful gang alliance led by Jimmy “Barbecue” Chérizier. Since May of last year, he has tried to co-opt Bwa Kale, and has been seen in public wearing Bwa Kale t-shirts and has even encouraged people to join and support the movement. He would love nothing more than to bind the Bwa Kale movement to his own powerful gang.

By the end of summer last year, the gangs had recovered from the shock of the Bwa Kale movement. Gang violence was on the rise again. In August, an armed protest against gang violence organized by a church was attacked by a major gang in broad daylight. A prominent prosecutor was then assassinated in September.

Gang members in Haiti.
In late September 2023, as plans were being solidified to send Kenyan paramilitary police to Haiti as part of a United Nations mission, Chérizier, the most prominent gang leader, called for an uprising, and announced that his gang was “launching the fight to overturn Ariel Henry’s government in any way,” adding that “our fight will be with weapons.”

By January 2024, the gangs were in control of around 80 percent of Port-au-Prince. The gangs launched an attack against the Solino neighborhood in Port-au-Prince. This was seen as a major offensive by the gangs. Controlling Solino would give them easy access to Canape Vert and other neighborhoods that had previously driven gangs out.

**Henry overthrown**

Henry’s regime had become increasingly weak and isolated. He had assumed power in the wake of the assassination of Jovenel Moïse, but had never been elected. His regime had no legitimacy in the eyes of the people—or really in anyone’s eyes, with the exception of the imperialists of course.

Henry repeatedly promised elections that were never held. The Haitian police and the military are outmanned and outgunned by the gangs. While the Haitian police tried to launch some operations against them, the state was not in a position to do anything substantial to stem the rising tide of gang violence.

The last lifeline of the Henry regime was a potential international force organized by the United Nations. U.S. imperialism has been trying to organize a UN force to support and stabilize the Henry regime for years.

Kenya had agreed in October 2023 to lead a UN force to Haiti, but Kenya’s High Court had declared the UN operation unconstitutional. In February 2024, Henry travelled to Kenya to sign an agreement designed to meet the objections of the Kenyan Courts.

A new gang alliance, “Viv Ansannm,” emerged and quickly launched a coordinated assault on the Haitian state while Henry was out of the country. Within days, the gangs had attacked and torched some 30 state institutions, more than 600 homes, and over 500 vehicles. Thousands were left homeless and tens-of-thousands were forced to flee the capital in the wake of the attack.

Chérizier announced his plans to capture the chief of police and government ministers to prevent Henry’s return. Attacks by gangs at the country’s main airport and cargo port had more or less shut the country down. On March 2 and 3, gangs attacked numerous police stations and stormed two of the largest prisons in Haiti, with some 5,000 prisoners escaping. Many of these prisoners were former or current gang members, who promptly swelled the ranks of the gangs.

**The problem of the gangs and the social collapse in Haiti cannot be resolved through police and military action. There is no solution to the problem of the gangs under capitalism.**

With the airport shut down, Henry was unable to return to Haiti and was stranded abroad. At this point, U.S. imperialism had concluded that the situation with Henry in power was untenable. Thus, Henry announced his resignation on March 12, 2024.

**Transitional council**

U.S. imperialism, along with other Caribbean countries, announced a plan for the creation of a transitional council to replace Henry and take power. The plan was to create a nine-member council with seven voting positions. As reported by France 24: “Votes were offered to Pitit Desalin, Jean-Charles’ party; EDE/RED, a party led by former Prime Minister Claude Joseph; the Montana Accord, a group of civil society leaders, political parties and others; Fanmi Lavalas, Aristide’s party; the January 30 Collective, which represents parties including that of former President Michel Martelly; the December 21 Agreement, a group that backed Henry; and members of the private sector. The remaining two nonvoting positions would go to a member from Haiti’s civil society and its religious sector.”

It seems unlikely that this transitional council will ever be in a position to take power. Even if the imperialists are able to announce such a council, it is even less likely that it will be able to stabilize the situation. The proposed council would be composed of the establishment political parties. These parties are all discredited, and along with the Haitian state in general have next to no legitimacy in the eyes of the people. Moreover, in terms of special armed bodies of men (the real basis of political power) the gangs are more powerful than the forces of the state.

The proposed transitional council in Haiti would be immediately faced with attacks from gangs. In fact, the plans for the transitional council are already falling apart. The final composition of the council was to be determined by Wednesday, March 14. But many of the political parties refused to participate and Jean Charles Moïse, a prominent member of Pitit Desalin, has allied with Guy Philippe, who helped lead the coup against Jean-Bertrand Aristide in 2004. They have announced their own three-person council.

On March 14, Chérizier also issued a message threatening to attack the leaders and political parties that were to form the transitional council. Gangs then launched an attack on a police academy, and the national police chief’s house was attacked and set on fire. Chérizier also said that Henry’s resignation was only “a first step in the battle.”
**Hands off Haiti!**

The situation in Haiti rests on a knife’s edge. The gangs have essentially taken control of the capital. The gangs already outnumber and outgun the police and military and are spreading their reign of terror throughout the rest of the country.

Following Henry’s resignation, Kenya has announced that its plan to send paramilitary police as part of a UN security force is now on hold. U.S. imperialism is still looking to organize a force, but doesn’t want to send its own troops. Canada and France, along with a number of other countries, have already rejected the idea of sending police or troops.

As the situation in Haiti continues to deteriorate, U.S. imperialism will find it increasingly difficult to organize this international force. Everybody can see that a UN security force would face an impossible situation in Haiti. There is little financial reward and plenty of risk for the imperialists.

A UN force would be forced to go to war with the gangs and prop up a non-existent regime. The United Nations has zero legitimacy in Haiti. UN troops involved in the MINUSTAH (The United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti) mission left in their wake a sex abuse scandal and a cholera outbreak. Thus, a UN mission in Haiti would not be well received by the Haitian people and is a not viable option for the imperialists.

The imperialists are particularly concerned about getting bogged down in a long-term occupation of Haiti. The gangs are well-armed and entrenched in Haiti’s cities, especially the capital. Breaking the gangs means urban warfare against an enemy that is difficult to identify, with no clear front lines. Such a conflict could easily escalate and mean opposition at home. Open warfare with the gangs on the streets of Haitian cities could also spark mass opposition in Haiti. Foreign military support would likely also mean conflicts with the mass movement.

However, a UN mission to Haiti cannot yet be entirely ruled out. The imperialists also worry that the political instability in Haiti could spread throughout the region. The Biden regime and other governments in the region are concerned about a mass exodus of refugees from Haiti. The Biden regime has already announced that it is prepared to use the navy to counter any such wave of refugees.

The more the situation deteriorates, the more the gangs threaten to take absolute control, the more pressure the imperialists will feel to do something about it, despite the risks and lack of rewards.

---

**What is needed is a total revolutionary sweeping away of all the corruption and rot of Haitian capitalism.**

**Overthrow capitalism to fight the gangs**

The problem of the gangs and the social collapse in Haiti cannot be resolved through police and military action. There is no solution to the problem of the gangs under capitalism. The general sickness of capitalism in Haiti has allowed the gangs to grow and metastasize like a cancer.

Politicians and the bourgeoisie have funded and employed the gangs to further their own interests. The corruption runs so deep that the entire capitalist system, including the state and the police, has become criminalized and gangsterized.

Imperialist troops might be able to defeat the gangs militarily, at great cost to the Haitian masses. However, even this will provide no long-term solution to the problem. An occupation by imperialist troops will do nothing to solve the root causes that have given rise to the gangs. An occupation by imperialist troops will not provide jobs, decent wages, housing, education, or healthcare.

Meaningful and significant improvements to living conditions are the only way to deal with the problem of the gangs in the long term. Even if an imperialist military intervention leads to the breaking of the G9 blockade and the defeat of the gangs, with no fundamental change in Haiti’s economic and political situation, with the same conditions of poverty and misery, the gangs would arise all over again, and the Haitian masses would quickly find themselves in the exact same situation. This would mean a potentially long-term and brutal occupation by imperialist forces to keep the gangs in check.

Chérizier is the leader of the most prominent gang alliance and appears to be the most powerful figure on the ground. It is possible that Chérizier’s gang will take control of the capital, although the establishment of a national regime based on the power of the gangs seems unlikely at the moment. Chérizier has presented himself as a sort of “revolutionary” strongman who can save the country from the crisis. It is clear, however, that Chérizier is no savior and that no stable regime will ever be established under the control of the gangs.

Capitalism has utterly failed in Haiti. What is needed is a total revolutionary sweeping away of all the corruption and rot of Haitian capitalism. The Haitian ruling class must be expropriated, and their failed regime overthrown. The expropriation of the ruling elite will be a key step in overcoming the powerful connections of the gangs.

An insurrectionary mass movement in Haiti must develop an economic, political, and social program that can eradicate the poverty and misery that
leads many to join the gangs. Good jobs, decent housing, adequate food, water, and healthcare are the political weapons that can be used to fight the gangs.

Moreover, in terms of special armed bodies of men (the real basis of political power) the gangs are more powerful than the forces of the state.

There is no way forward under capitalism. No solution will be found under an imperialist occupation. Imperialist troops will defend the status quo of capitalism and the continued rule of the elites and their imperialist allies. The economic and social crisis will continue and worsen. This means condemning the masses to continued poverty and misery, with no end in sight.

Overthrowing the entire capitalist system in Haiti is the task of the Haitian workers and poor themselves. The time is now to build a united revolutionary organization and to develop a revolutionary program. This is the only way out of the crisis for the Haitian masses.

—In Defence of Marxism, March 18, 2024


The Grim High-Tech Dystopia on the U.S.-Mexico Border

By Petra Molnar

This excerpt has been adapted from The Walls Have Eyes: Surviving Migration in the Age of Artificial Intelligence by Petra Molnar (The New Press, 2024).

The wall bleeds rust. As I put my palm on the vast stretch of metal bisecting the Sonoran Desert, the wall seems to pulsate as it stretches into the horizon, painted black in parts to make it extra hot in the sun. And yet, for all its spectacular length and ability to dominate the news, at a particular point along El Camino del Diablo, or “the Devil’s Highway,” on the U.S.-Mexico border, the rusted metal arbitrarily ends in the middle of the desert.

This is one of the longest stretches of the wall, but many smaller walls—some as short as a few meters—litter the Sonora, a vast area in the state of Arizona and a frequent crossing point for refugees and people on the move from Central and South America. Late one night in February 2022, we are driving along the perimeter in probably the biggest truck I’ve ever been in, and at the wheel, James Holeman is talking nonstop. A tall, white former marine with a neon orange cap emblazoned with a green cross, James is the founder of Battalion Search and Rescue, a volunteer organization that combs the Sonora for bodies and survivors. After a mandatory stop at an ice cream shop in Dateland, Arizona, for “the best—and probably only—date shake you’ve ever had,” he is taking us along the sections of the border where people have been crossing for years, entering military territory where rusted tanks and helicopters have been planted for target practice, competing with cholla cacti for space.

Search and rescue

Speaking a mile a minute, James may be the most energetic person I have ever met. After leaving the military, the lifelong Arizonan could not bear to, in his own words, “just sit at home and do nothing.” He and his
group of volunteers go into the desert at least twice a month, sometimes overnight, donning reflective orange vests and carrying walking sticks and short-wave radios.

“Sometimes you are chasing ghosts,” he says as he takes us down a winding arroyo, a dried riverbed full of short shrubs, sand, and rocks, a path people use to make their treks through the desert slightly easier. Battalion Search and Rescue goes out at least a couple times a month, sometimes more. Often the long and grueling searches are overnight. Sometimes they find people clinging to life. Often, they find only bones.

I also don an orange vest and hat and struggle to keep up with James. The desert is beautiful and sharply inhospitable. Giant saguaro cacti dot a landscape of muted blues, greens, and purples. The smell of creosote lingers in the air, and I can hear the wind make percussive sounds among the ribs of old saguaros.

The desert quietly pulses with life—cryptobiotic earth, we’re told, teeming with tiny microorganisms like algae, cyanobacteria, and fungi. But it also kills. “The desert makes people disappear—just like the ocean,” says James. “People get rubbed out and their families never know what happened.”

**Death in the desert**

After about two hours in the intense February heat, we arrive at a small delta in the arroyo. This is where Elias Alvarado, a husband and father in his thirties, perished in the summer of 2021. He had several IDs with him, including a Salvadoran passport with a stamp from Texas, along with a cell phone and a COVID mask. He had left his wife and son to try to get a job in California. They contacted his family, and at their request, the following month, César drove back overnight and made a modest orange cross to mark the spot where Mr. Alvarado was found. But now, we arrive to find the cross missing, washed away by the winter rains.

We walk farther into the desert, spreading out to see if we can spot a flash of orange in the landscape. Mr. Alvarado must have been walking for days, if not weeks, and died just three miles (five kilometers) from a major highway that would have connected him to the town of Gila Bend in Arizona.

James, César, and a few other volunteers held a small funeral for Mr. Alvarado after his body was taken by Customs and Border Protection (CBP). They recited a few hymns and called Mr. Alvarado’s family. His son, who was never able to see him again, could only leave a scratchy voice recording saying, “I love you, Papa, thank you for everything.”

We finally find the bright orange cross stuck in a pile of spiky bramble. It is sturdy and undamaged. We walk back and dig a new hole, adding a small bouquet of desert flowers and pouring some water on the ground, as a blessing. Water is life in this environment, so we also leave two packs of bottles near the memorial site for people who might make their way through in the future.

**The new border tech**

I meet Samuel Chambers and Geoffrey Boyce in Tucson, Arizona, in February 2022. They are researchers looking into the ways that border walls and technology intersect. Sitting in a quiet corner of the University of Arizona’s geography building, a cavernous architectural marvel somehow blending rippled-yet-rusted-out metal with green vines and cacti, Sam pulls out his phone and shows me a map with the various locations of the surveillance towers dotted throughout the Sonora corridor, their coordinates creating a strange type of Morse code.

These towers are part of an expanding network of fifty-five towers equipped with cameras, heat sensors, motion sensors, radar systems, and a GPS system along the U.S.-Mexico border. Following Sam’s map, I drive to see a few.

Winding our way down dusty Arizona roads, I notice that the towers are not exactly hidden. You can drive right up to one, but before you get too close, an electrified fence with a solar panel stands as a warning. “Restricted Area: Enforced by Intrusion Detection. Authorized Personnel Only,” reads one sign, in both English and Spanish. Another sign right next to it: “No Hay Agua / No Water Here.”

Stretching up to one hundred sixty feet (fifty meters) high, they are live surveillance towers powered by artificial intelligence (AI), able to make autonomous decisions, without the aid of human personnel, about where to focus their cameras and sensors over vast stretches of the Sonora that would be otherwise invisible to the human eye, and when to alert border authorities if something in their field of vision arouses suspicion. Some are fixed and rooted, not unlike the saguaro, while others are mobile and can be wheeled around.

CBP has described these towers as “a partner that never sleeps, never needs to take a coffee break, never even blinks.” These autonomous, AI-powered surveillance towers are, in fact, the creation of Elbit Systems, a controversial Israeli company that routinely tests out its technology on occupied Palestinian territory in the West Bank, as well as on dissidents, journalists, and critics.

This vast border enforcement system also surveils the Tohono O’odham Nation’s reservation, located in Arizona approximately one mile from the border. According to Boyce, the securitization of the border rubs up against issues of indigenous land rights.
and sovereignty. Not all members of the Tohono O’odham were in support of the creeping power of tech companies and of these towers being placed on their land. Consequently, disputes have arisen, as some had serious misgivings about the deal, which opened up the reservation to surveillance in exchange for land rights.

These surveillance towers—along with the cacti—are not the only tall things in the desert. Driving at night along the El Camino del Diablo with the also-tall James in his massive search-and-rescue truck, we cut into the desert near the Organ Pipe Cactus National Monument, a protected natural area. We stop in the darkness to look at the stars and to take in the vastness of the Sonora. It’s so quiet you can hear your own heartbeat. So much natural beauty in an exceptionally inhospitable environment. The temperature is dropping with each hour’s passing.

I can’t help but think how terrifying it must be to be here in the dark, exhausted in an arroyo waiting for daybreak. “Look there,” says James, pointing to a blue dot in the distance. A rescue beacon, like a lighthouse in the desert. We drive to see one with the number twenty-five on it, stopping off for James to explain that these eight-foot-tall (2.5-meter) rescue beacons glow in different colors depending on which area of the Sonora you are—some blue, some red, some green. Some beacons even have water for you. However, any relief you may feel upon seeing one of these is short-lived. There are motion-detection sensors placed along the beacon, setting off an alert to CBP.

**Drone surveillance**

Looking up into the sky and praying to the heavens is also not a good idea, because patrolling the sky are drones designed to detect human presence and alert border enforcement officials. A growing aerial arsenal includes radar-equipped aerostat blimps operating from fifteen thousand feet (forty-five hundred meters) in the air, and the aptly named Predator B drone, enabled with video and radar sensors. Its predecessor, the MQ-1 Predator, was used extensively by the U.S. military, initially serving as a surveillance tool in the Balkan Wars in the 1990s.

Using geospatial analysis, Samuel Chambers, Geoffrey Boyce, and their colleagues Sarah Launius and Alicia Dinsmore have found that deaths have more than doubled with the increasing use of new surveillance technologies over the past two decades, creating what anthropologist Jason De León calls a “land of open graves.”

Drones are unpiloted aerial surveillance aircraft, some small enough to hold while others, like the Predator B, are hulking behemoths that are thirty-six feet (eleven meters) and nearly five thousand pounds (twenty-two hundred kilograms). According to their manufacturer, they can fly nearly thirty hours at a time and can read something as small as a license-plate number from a height of two miles.

These drones are also multipurpose—when they are not busy at the border, they are sometimes lent to other government agencies, including for the surveillance of protesters. Makes sense to share, since they each cost $17 million and the Department of Homeland Services (DHS) estimates that each flight costs $12,255 to operate.

Drones and surveillance towers are complemented by inland surveillance, comprising technologies such as remote license-plate readers, facial-recognition cameras at checkpoints along highways, and various fiber-optic sensor systems—an ever-tightening net. This surveillance in hostile desert environments is also complemented by various physical barriers across the border, from shipping container barricades to newly proposed floating walls across the Rio Grande, with netting and barbed wire intended to snag and drown. All the while, journalists like Patrick Strickland have been documenting the rise of armed vigilante groups in places like Arivaca, Arizona, “a magnet for the far right” across the increasingly lawless borderlands.

**A human alternative?**

Various U.S. governments, including the Obama and Biden administrations, have presented so-called smart-border technologies as a more humane alternative to other border-enforcement methods, such as building walls or putting children in cages, yet scholars have documented that such technologies along the U.S.-Mexico border have increased people’s deaths. Using geospatial analysis, Samuel Chambers, Geoffrey Boyce, and their colleagues Sarah Launius and Alicia Dinsmore have found that deaths have more than doubled with the increasing use of new surveillance technologies over the past two decades, creating what anthropologist Jason De León calls a “land of open graves.”

In fact, deaths at the U.S.-Mexico border in 2021 were estimated to be the highest ever recorded, with the International Organization for Migration finding that at least 650 people died in the Sonora. Actual numbers may be much higher.

Chambers and colleagues have shown that all this surveillance has failed to prevent undocumented border crossings, but instead shifted people’s routes through more inhabited terrain around urban centers toward more dangerous terrain in the Arizona des-
ert, in places like Altar Valley, “increasing [their] vulnerability to injury, isolation, dehydration, hyperthermia and exhaustion,” leading to deaths of people like Elias Alvarado. According to James, “it is a slow-motion genocide.”

Just days after we returned from Elias’s memorial site, in February 2022, DHS announced that military-grade “robo-dogs” were going to be deployed along this deadly frontier. These quadruped autonomous machines were originally designed for combat and tactical training operations. Often painted a cheery bright yellow, with four legs and a boxy body, they look more like mobile toasters than dogs. But they are very strong and very fast, sometimes armed, and able to break down doors and even right themselves when kicked with full force by a human.

Robots

Robo-dogs have been used in active deployment by the U.S. military. Able to navigate rugged terrain and equipped with two more legs than a human has, they are the perfect addition, their joints bending in an uncanny jerky way as they run like little Frankensteins across the sands. They are semi- or fully autonomous and obey human commands; in fact, the Australian army has experimented with using headsets to read brain signals and control robot dogs via a brain-robotic interface, or telepathy. And with the addition of generative AI, robo-dogs are developing their own voices and personalities: “a debonair British gentleman, a sarcastic and irreverent American named Josh, and a teenage girl who is so, like, over it.” (Will one of them have a fondness for human rights?)

These machines have also been used by various law-enforcement departments, such as in Honolulu and New York City. In Hawaii, the program was cut short after a public outcry when it came to light that the robodoogs were targeting houseless people during the COVID-19 pandemic, reading their temperature. But the New York Police Department announced in May 2023 that it was reintroducing robo-dogs for law enforcement and rescue operations in the city, proudly unveiling a unit painted with black and white spots, like a dalmatian.

In 2019, the newspaper Le Monde reported that the European Union had also quietly announced various robo-dog pilot projects: a “bio-mimicry enabled artificial sniffer” called SNIFFER, with a research and development budget of 3.5 million, and DOGGIES, or the “Detection of Olfactory traces by orthoGonal Gas identification technologIES,” whose logo is a dog with a CCTV camera in place of its head.

There was also Sniffles and Snoopy, which had multimillion-euro budgets and were the projects of consortiums between state entities including the Hellenic (Greek) Ministry of Public Order and Citizen Protection; the EU’s border force, Frontex; and Thales and various other private companies. What exactly happened to these border canine companions is not clear. Some are listed in the EU-wide project database as “closed projects,” while others were never made public at all.

DHS took a very different approach, proudly announcing the planned roll-out of the robo-dogs across social media with its start-up partner, Ghost Robotics, a company well known for its viral videos of robots jumping up on boxes, standing up after being violently kicked, and, more recently, for being outfitted with guns. It is also a darling of the U.S. military, with various contracts for robo-dogs and other tools.

It was surreal to be in the middle of the hauntingly beautiful yet deadly Sonoran Desert as the rollout of these “robo-dogs” was announced. I messaged James when we heard the news, and he was alarmed but not surprised: “As former military, the idea that these machines are going to be running around the desert hunting people is so dark.”

The border is already a war zone for CBP, a frontier to be managed and controlled, with prizes to be won. While driving to the Mexico border, we passed one of the CBP trucks that rounds people up when they are apprehended, stuffing up to eight people into the back, windows obscured by black mesh as it speeds away from Tucson toward the border.

Military technology vs. the most vulnerable

The complicity of the military and national defense in normalizing the use of these types of tools in border enforcement is not lost on us, especially a former marine like James. “We are using military-grade technology against the most vulnerable,” James had told me earlier, “and this is a failure of the state’s forced humanitarians to make up for it.” Standing in the rolling sands of the Sonora, I already feel overwhelmed by the vastness and hostility of the environment—it’s terrifying to imagine a not-so-distant future in which people like Elias Alvarado will be pursued by high-speed, military-grade technology designed to kill.

These robo-dogs are not yet widely used. But they are part of a growing arsenal of other, more seemingly mundane, and perhaps less shocking technology that is becoming more and more normal at the border. The use of military, or quasi-military, autonomous technology like robo-dogs and AI-powered surveillance towers legitimizes the connection between immigration and national security, and the growing push toward the criminalization of migration through increasingly hardline tools. People on the move are presupposed to be criminals unless proven otherwise.

—Jacobin, March 28, 2024

https://jacobin.com/2024/03/high-tech-ai-mexico-border
March 27, 2024—Yesterday’s Supreme Court session was a loud and persistent warning: America needs to pay attention.

During oral arguments, the Comstock Act was invoked repeatedly by Justice Samuel Alito, Justice Clarence Thomas, and Erin Hawley, the wife of Republican Senator Josh Hawley, who was arguing before the court that the abortion drug, Mifepristone, should be banned nationwide.

Now that it’s fairly clear the “sad doctors” argument before the court yesterday was so pathetically weak, they can’t use it to ban Mifepristone, anti-abortion activists are talking about finding a case they can push up to the court next year that will allow it to ban all abortions in the nation, and most birth control pills and devices as a bonus.

How do they plan to do it? With the Comstock Act. You could see and hear the set-up of this future court case in Yesterday’s arguments.

Justice Sam Alito said:

“This [Comstock Act] is a prominent provision. It’s not some obscure subsection of a complicated, obscure law. Everybody in this field knew about it.”

Erin Hawley was emphatic:

“We don’t think that there’s any case of this court that empowers FDA to ignore other federal law.

The Comstock Act says that drugs should not be mailed... either through the mail or through common carriers.”

And Clarence Thomas laid out the possibility of future litigation when he essentially threatened the lawyer for Danco Laboratories, the manufacturer of Mifepristone:

“How do you respond to an argument that mailing your product and advertising it would violate the Comstock Act? He went onto note that the law ‘is fairly broad, and it specifically covers drugs such as yours.”

In other words, they want the act enforced today.

Bloomberg news laid it out yesterday:

“Do we think the Supreme Court majority is going to rule on the Comstock Act in this case? The answer to that is no,’ said Mary Ziegler, a law professor at the University of California at Davis who specializes in reproductive rights. ‘Do we think that the Comstock Act is going to come up again at some point in the future? The answer to that is definitely.’

So, what the heck is the Comstock Act and why are Republicans trying to revive it before the Supreme Court and in threatening letters to pharmacy chains?

You’ve probably never heard of Anthony Comstock, a Civil War Union soldier and New York postmaster, who died in 1915. You need to learn about him and his legacy, however, as his long fingers are about to reach up out of the grave and wrap themselves around the necks of every American woman of childbearing years.

Anthony Comstock was a mama’s boy who hated sex. His mother died when he was ten-years-old, and the shock apparently never left him; women who didn’t live up to her ideal were his open and declared enemies, as were pornography, masturbation, and abortion. He was so ignorant of sex and reproduction that he believed a visible human-like fetus developed “within seconds” of sexual intercourse.

If Hawley’s interpretation is ultimately adopted by the Supreme Court in another case more specifically tailored to it next year—which the anti-abortion movement is working on as you’re reading these words—all abortions in the United States would be ended when drugs and suction and surgical devices designed specifically for the procedure can no longer be shipped to hospitals, clinics, or physicians’ offices.

Comstock spent decades scouring the country collecting pornography, which he enthusiastically shared with men in Congress, and harassing “loose women.” For example, when he visited a belly-dancing show (then a new craze) in Chicago at the Cairo Theatre during the World’s Fair of 1893, he demanded the show be shut down.

As Amy Sohn, who wrote a brilliant Comstock biography titled The Man Who Hated Women, noted:

“Despite national controversy and Comstock’s intervention, ultimately the only alteration made to the fair’s belly dancing was costum-
ing: The dancers swapped their gauze blouses for thin woolen undershirts. The vice hunter had lost in Chicago. But he would not forget the dancers, and would have four of them arrested and fined when they came to New York that winter. New York, after all, was Comstockland."

Comstock lobbied for and shepherded through Congress a law passed on March 3, 1873 titled “An Act for the Suppression of Trade in, and Circulation of, Obscene Literature and Articles of Immoral Use.” Today we refer to it as the Comstock Act.

It’s language with regard to abortion is not at all ambiguous:

“Every obscene, lewd, lascivious, indecent, filthy, or vile article, matter, thing, device, or substance...designed, adapted, or intended for producing abortion, or for any indecent or immoral use; and

“Every article, instrument, substance, drug, medicine, or thing which is advertised or described in a manner calculated to lead another to use or apply it for producing abortion, or for any indecent or immoral purpose; and

“Every written or printed card, letter, circular, book, pamphlet, advertisement, or notice of any kind giving information, directly or indirectly, where, or how, or from whom, or by what means any of such mentioned matters, articles, or things may be obtained or made, or where or by whom any act or operation of any kind for the procuring or producing of abortion will be done or performed, or how or by what means abortion may be produced, whether sealed or unsealed; and

“Every paper, writing, advertisement, or representation that any article, instrument, substance, drug, medicine, or thing may, or can, be used or applied for producing abortion, or for any indecent or immoral purpose; and

“Every description calculated to induce or incite a person to so use or apply any such article, instrument, substance, drug, medicine, or thing—is declared to be nonmailable and shall not be conveyed in the mails or delivered from any post office or by any letter carrier.

The penalty is also not ambiguous. Persons mailing information about abortion, or drugs or devices to produce an abortion:

“Shall be fined under this title or imprisoned not more than five years, or both, for the first such offense, and shall be fined under this title or imprisoned not more than ten years, or both, for each such offense thereafter.”

The Biden administration argues that the Comstock Act of 1873 was set aside almost a century ago.

And, indeed, in 1930, the Appeals Court for the Second Circuit ruled in Youngs Rubber Corp. v. C.I. Lee & Co that the law couldn’t apply to things sent through the mail that are legal, even if they were illegal at the time of the passage of the Comstock Act. (The case involved condoms manufactured by Youngs Rubber.)

“Such a construction,” the court wrote, “would prevent mailing to or by a physician of any drug or mechanical device ‘adapted’ for contraceptive or abortifacient uses, although the physician desired to use or to prescribe it for proper medical purposes.”

The law has been amended by Congress four times (in 1955, 1958, 1971, and 1994,) but the language above was never struck because legislators figured the 1930 appeals court’s ruling rendered it nugatory, i.e., of no value or importance.

But don’t tell that to Trump’s appointee, Texas District Judge Matthew Kacsmaryk of Amarillo, who ruled last year that Mifipristone was to be banned nationwide: He based a large part of his decision on the plain language of the Comstock Act.

And don’t tell it to the three right-wing judges who heard the appeal of Kacsmaryk’s decision before the Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals on its way to SCOTUS.

When the Biden administration’s attorney argued before the Fifth Circuit that Kacsmaryk’s decision, based largely on the Comstock Act, was “unprecedented,” Circuit Judge James Ho—also a Trump appointee, who personally swore his good friend Kacsmaryk into his office, and whose wife is a paid anti-abortion activist—interrupted her with a curt snap, saying:

“I guess I’m just wondering why not just focus on the facts of this case rather than have this sort of ‘FDA can do no wrong’ theme.”

That appeals court, made up of a George W. Bush appointee and two Trump appointees, earlier had ruled in their preliminary finding to hear the case that they disagreed with the Biden administration’s assertion that, to quote the three judges, “the [Comstock] law does not mean what it says it means.”

When the Biden interpretation of the Comstock Act was brought up in oral arguments, the Bush appointee, Judge Jennifer Walker Elrod, said there is “some disagreement” about whether previous court rulings actually invalidated the law. After all, it’s never been adjudicated before the Supreme Court and is still on the books.

This battle promises to be long and hard-fought, and the only solution will be for Congress to take this gun out of Republicans’ hands by overturning the Comstock Act itself.

Republican members of Congress agree and want the Comstock Act enforced nationwide now. They think they don’t even need a ruling from the Supreme Court: They just need a Republican president.
In a letter sent to CVS (among other pharmacy chains), Mississippi Republican Senator Cindy Hyde-Smith and eight other Republican senators (Lankford, Daines, Braun, Rubio, Marshall, Risch, Crapo and Blackburn) wrote that the Biden interpretation (and that of Congress in 1955, 1958, 1971, and 1994) is wrong.

They explicitly asserted that the Comstock Act is still in effect, and they want it enforced:

"We write to express our support and agreement with 21 [Republican] state attorneys general," they wrote 'who have reminded you that Federal law in 18 U.S.C. 1461-1462 [the Comstock Act] criminalizes nationwide using the mail, or interstate shipment by any express company or common carrier, to send or receive any drug that is 'designed, adapted, or intended for producing abortion.'"

The 1930 court ruling that lawmakers and judges had, for over 90 years, believed only applied the Comstock Act to items that were illegal (like child porn), Senator Hide-Smith wrote:

"Does not protect CVS or any other individual or entity from being prosecuted within the five-year statute of limitations for the illegal mailing or interstate shipment of abortion drugs...even for conduct that occurs today."

Keep in mind, under the plain language of the Comstock Act this could also apply to birth control pills, IUDs, and other things used to prevent pregnancy. And, of course, pornography.

The lawyer for Republicans defending Kacsmaryk’s ruling, Erin Hawley, went so far as to assert before the Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals that even physicians and pharmacies shouldn’t be able to receive Mifipristone or other drugs that could produce an abortion via the mail, FedEx, or UPS:

"What the Comstock law says is that it is improper to mail things that induce or cause abortions, which is precisely the action the FDA took in 2021 when it permitted the mailing of abortion drugs."

If Hawley’s interpretation is ultimately adopted by the Supreme Court in another case more specifically tailored to it next year—which the anti-abortion movement is working on as you’re reading these words—all abortions in the United States would be ended when drugs and suction and surgical devices designed specifically for the procedure can no longer be shipped to hospitals, clinics, or physicians’ offices.

This is no idle threat.

As Washington Post reporter Dan Diamond wrote for his Substack newsletter, anti-abortion activist Mark Lee Dickson, who’s helped several cities around the country put into law local versions of the Comstock Act, told him:

“If a future president were to enforce these federal statutes, then they could shut down every abortion facility in America.”

This is the specific goal of these mostly Catholic religious fanatics: to completely outlaw all abortion and radically restrict access to birth control. And they are not going to give up just because it looks like the Supreme Court isn’t going to ban Mifepristone this year.

Such a case would, based on what they said yesterday, have Republicans in the Senate, Clarence Thomas, and Sam Alito gleefully rubbing their hands in anticipation.

This battle promises to be long and hard-fought, and the only solution will be for Congress to take this gun out of Republicans’ hands by overturning the Comstock Act itself.

And that’s unlikely to happen unless or until Democrats take back the House, hold the White House, and gain a filibuster-proof majority in the Senate (or kill the filibuster.)

The stakes this fall couldn’t be higher.

—Common Dreams, March 27, 2024

https://www.commondreams.org/opinion/abortion-rights-comstock
The World Turned Upside Down

LYRICS BY LEON ROSELLON

Sung to the tune of “When the King enjoys his own again”

In sixteen forty-nine to Saint George’s Hill
A ragged band they called the Diggers came to show the people’s will
They defied the landlords, they defied the law
They were the dispossessed, reclaiming what was theirs

“We come in peace,” they said, “to dig and sow
We come to work the land in common and to make the waste ground grow
This earth divided we will make whole
So it can be a common treasury for all

The sin of property we do disdain
No man has any right to buy and sell the earth for private gain
By theft and murder they steal the land
Now everywhere the walls rise up at their command

They make the laws to chain us well
The clergy dazzle us with heaven or they damn us into hell
We will not worship the god they serve
The god of greed who feeds the rich while poor folk starve

We work, we eat together, we need no swords
We will not bow to the masters or pay rent to the lords
Still we are free men though we are poor
You Diggers all, stand up for glory, stand up now

From the men of property the order came
They sent the hired men and troopers to wipe out the Diggers’ claim
Tear down their cottages, destroy their corn
They were dispersed, but still the vision carries on

You poor, take courage, you rich, take care
This earth was made a common treasury for everyone to share
All things in common, all people one
We come in peace, the order came to cut them down
You Diggers all, stand up for glory, stand up now

Note: The diggers were religious and political dissidents in 1649 England who believed in economic equality and made attempts to farm on common land. They were driven from one county to another by the authorities. They were among the founders of early utopian communists.
The Israeli military has reportedly implemented a facial recognition dragnet across the Gaza Strip, scanning ordinary Palestinians as they move throughout the ravaged territory, attempting to flee the ongoing bombardment and seeking sustenance for their families.

The program relies on two different facial recognition tools, according to the New York Times: one made by the Israeli contractor Corsight, and the other built into the popular consumer image organization platform offered through Google Photos. An anonymous Israeli official told the Times that Google Photos worked better than any of the alternative facial recognition tech, helping the Israelis make a “hit list” of alleged Hamas fighters who participated in the October 7 attack.

The mass surveillance of Palestinian faces resulting from Israel’s efforts to identify Hamas members has caught up thousands of Gaza residents since the October 7 attack. Many of those arrested or imprisoned, often with little or no evidence, later said they had been brutally interrogated or tortured. In its facial recognition story, the Times pointed to Palestinian poet Mosab Abu Toha, whose arrest and beating at the hands of the Israeli military began with its use of facial recognition. Abu Toha, later released without being charged with any crime, told the paper that Israeli soldiers told him his facial recognition-enabled arrest had been a “mistake.”

Putting aside questions of accuracy—facial recognition systems are notoriously less accurate on nonwhite faces—the use of Google Photos’s machine learning-powered analysis features to place civilians under military scrutiny, or worse, is at odds with the company’s clearly stated rules. Under the header “Dangerous and Illegal Activities,” Google warns that Google Photos cannot be used “to promote activities, goods, services, or information that cause serious and immediate harm to people.”

Asked how a prohibition against using Google Photos to harm people was compatible with the Israel military’s use of Google Photos to create a “hit list,” company spokesperson Joshua Cruz declined to answer, stating only that “Google Photos is a free product which is widely available to the public that helps you organize photos by grouping similar faces, so you can label people to easily find old photos. It does not provide identities for unknown people in photographs.” (Cruz did not respond to repeated subsequent attempts to clarify Google’s position.)

It’s unclear how such prohibitions—or the company’s long-standing public commitments to human rights—are being applied to Israel’s military.

“It depends how Google interprets ‘serious and immediate harm’ and ‘illegal activity,’ but facial recognition surveillance of this type undermines rights enshrined in international human rights law—privacy, non-discrimination, expression, assembly rights, and more,” said Anna Bacciarelli, the associate tech director at Human Rights Watch. “Given the context in which this technology is being used by Israeli forces, amid widespread, ongoing, and systematic denial of the human rights of people in Gaza, I would hope that Google would take appropriate action.”

Doing good or doing Google?

In addition to its terms of service ban against using Google Photos to cause harm to people, the company has for many years claimed to embrace various global human rights standards.

“Since Google’s founding, we’ve believed in harnessing the power of technology to advance human rights,” wrote Alexandria Walden, the company’s global head of human rights, in a 2022 blog post. “That’s why our products, business operations, and decision-making around emerging technologies are all informed by our Human Rights Program and deep commitment to increase access to information and create new opportunities for people around the world.”

This deep commitment includes, according to the company, upholding
the Universal Declaration of Human Rights—which forbids torture—and the U.N. Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights, which notes that conflicts over territory produce some of the worst rights abuses.

The Israeli military’s use of a free, publicly available Google product like Photos raises questions about these corporate human rights commitments, and the extent to which the company is willing to actually act upon them. Google says that it endorses and subscribes to the U.N. Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights, a framework that calls on corporations to “to prevent or mitigate adverse human rights impacts that are directly linked to their operations, products or services by their business relationships, even if they have not contributed to those impacts.”

Walden also said Google supports the Conflict-Sensitive Human Rights Due Diligence for ICT Companies, a voluntary framework that helps tech companies avoid the misuse of their products and services in war zones. Among the document’s many recommendations are for companies like Google to consider “Use of products and services for government surveillance in violation of international human rights law norms causing immediate privacy and bodily security impacts (i.e., to locate, arrest, and imprison someone).” (Neither JustPeace Labs nor Business for Social Responsibility, which co-authored the due-diligence framework, replied to a request for comment.)

“Google and Corsight both have a responsibility to ensure that their products and services do not cause or contribute to human rights abuses,” said Bacciarelli. “I’d expect Google to take immediate action to end the use of Google Photos in this system, based on this news.”

Google employees taking part in the No Tech for Apartheid campaign, a worker-led protest movement against Project Nimbus, called their employer to prevent the Israeli military from using Photos’s facial recognition to prosecute the war in Gaza.

“That the Israeli military is even weaponizing consumer technology like Google Photos, using the included facial recognition to identify Palestinians as part of their surveillance apparatus, indicates that the Israeli military will use any technology made available to them—unless Google takes steps to ensure their products don’t contribute to ethnic cleansing, occupation, and genocide,” the group said in a statement shared with The Intercept. “As Google workers, we demand that the company drop Project Nimbus immediately, and cease all activity that supports the Israeli government and military’s genocidal agenda to decimate Gaza.”

**Project Nimbus**

This would not be the first time Google’s purported human rights principles contradict its business practices—even just in Israel. Since 2021, Google has sold the Israeli military advanced cloud computing and machine learning-tools through its controversial “Project Nimbus” contract.

Unlike Google Photos, a free consumer product available to anyone, Project Nimbus is a bespoke software project tailored to the needs of the Israeli state. Both Nimbus and Google Photos’s face-matching prowess, however, are products of the company’s immense machine-learning resources.

The sale of these sophisticated tools to a government so regularly accused of committing human rights abuses and war crimes stands in opposition to Google’s AI Principles. The guidelines forbid AI uses that are likely to cause “harm,” including any application “whose purpose contravenes widely accepted principles of international law and human rights.”

Google has previously suggested its “principles” are in fact far narrower than they appear, applying only to “custom AI work” and not the general use of its products by third parties. “It means that our technology can be used fairly broadly by the military,” a company spokesperson told *Defense One* in 2022.

How, or if, Google ever turns its executive-blogged assurances into real-world consequences remains unclear. Ariel Koren, a former Google employee who said she was forced out of her job in 2022 after protesting Project Nimbus, placed Google’s silence on the Photos issue in a broader pattern of avoiding responsibility for how its technology is used.

“It is an understatement to say that aiding and abetting a genocide constitutes a violation of Google’s AI principles and terms of service,” Koren, now an organizer with No Tech for Apartheid, told *The Intercept*. “Even in the absence of public comment, Google’s actions have made it clear that the company’s public AI ethics principles hold no bearing or weight in Google Cloud’s business decisions, and that even complicity in genocide is not a barrier to the company’s ruthless pursuit of profit at any cost.”

—*The Intercept*, April 5, 2024
https://theintercept.com/2024/04/05/google-photos-israel-gaza-facial-recognition/?utm_medium=email&utm_source=The%20Intercept%20Newsletter
Niran Al-Agba, M.D. and Rebekah Bernard, M.D. dedicated this book to the memory of Alexus Jamel Ochoa-Dockins, a 19-year-old college honor student, who died September 28, 2015, of a pulmonary embolus—a blood clot in the lungs more fatal if not treated in time. Alexis Jamel Ochoa-Dockins was on birth control pills. Pulmonary embolus is a known rare side effect that can stem from birth control pill use. Alexus spent 11 hours in the Mercy El Reno Hospital emergency room under the care of a Nurse Practitioner Antoinette Thompson. After fumbling about with misdiagnosis, Antoinette Thompson sent Alexus to the University of Oklahoma Medical Center, where she finally received a correct diagnosis and was administered the necessary blood thinners too late. The grim details of her life-ending ordeal are interwoven throughout Al-Agba and Bernard’s book.

Medical Doctor’s Al-Agba and Bernard take on the U.S. Healthcare system’s replacement of medical doctors by nurse practitioners and physician assistants. It was an act of great courage to write this book, risking backlash from the healthcare profiteers. As an example, in the introduction of “Patients at Risk,” Al-Agba and Bernard explain the reason why doctors dare not speak out:

“Steven Maron, MD, a pediatrician with 31 years’ experience, was fired from United Community Health Center in southern Arizona after writing a newspaper article explaining the difference in training between a physician and a nurse practitioner. As Maron pointed out in his op-ed, while there are excellent and experienced nurse practitioners and physician assistants, their education and training are not the same as that of a physician. He suggested that to make an informed decision about medical care, the public should know who is treating them and the critical differences in the training of clinicians. Although Maron had worked for the community health center serving socioeconomically depressed children for ten years without any disciplinary actions, he was terminated just days after the op-ed appeared in the Green Valley News. Steven Maron MD explained, ‘I was told that my article stood in opposition the principles of the organization, specifically the principle of mutual respect.’” (Introduction, Page xiii)

Al-Agba and Bernard summarize that “Maron’s firing likely stemmed not from a lack of respect, but from a vested interest in keeping patients in the dark about the difference in training between clinicians, After all, if patients begin to demand a doctor, organizations like United Community Health Center, which currently employs twice as many non-physician practitioners as physicians, would be forced to restructure their entire staffing model.”

Medical Doctors Al-Agba and Bernard write in their dedication, “Alexus Jamel Ochoa-Dockins and the countless others who have been harmed by a healthcare system corrupted by greed. May the telling of her story give a voice to those who have been silenced and lead to changes in healthcare policy that will ensure that all patients receive equitable, high quality medical care.”

Training

Our human bodies are complex organisms. This complexity requires highly trained medical personnel to keep us maintained and alive. It really does take years of study and hands on practice. The American healthcare system is based on driving down costs, quality, and access so that corporations can reap huge profits.

On page 1, in the introduction, the authors inform us, “The cost of the 15,000 hours of training required of physicians before being permitted to practice medicine is much higher than the minimum 500 hours required of nurse practitioners.”

In the Appendix for Patients at Risk (page 183) a comparison of clinical and residency hours is laid out, showing how much risk American patients are submitting to the care of far less trained Physician Assistants and Nurse Practitioners:

“Nurse Practitioner: clinical hours—500-1,500; residency not required; total clinical hours—500-1,500.”
“Physician Assistant: clinical hours—2,000; residency not required; total clinical hours—2,000.

“Physician: clinical hours—6,000 (medical school); residency hours—9,000-10,000; total clinical hours—15,000-16,000.

“By 2019 legislators in 23 states and Washington, D.C. were convinced. Despite opposition from physician and patient advocacy groups, lawmakers in these states granted nurse practitioners the right to provide medical care to patients without physician supervision. Corporations and private equity markets were delighted. Instead of paying top dollar for fully trained physicians, these organizations now had the green light to hire less expensive nurse practitioners.”

In 1904, the American Medical Association commissioned Abraham Flexner, an American educator, to travel the world touring and assessing medical schools. Flexner was a non-physician who was most impressed with the Germanic approach to teaching. Flexner’s report was published in 1910 and included the following recommendations to improve and standardize the education of medical doctors:

- Increase medical school admission requirements to include a minimum of two years of college study, primarily devoted to science.
- Increase the length of medical education to four years.
- Incorporate all medical schools into colleges or universities.
- Focus on standardized scientific training and research.
- Appoint full time clinical professors at medical schools.

**Medical school training**

Most medical schools in Europe and Cuba train medical doctors on a six-year model. There is no waste of time forcing medical doctors into four-year bachelor programs. According to a February 10, 2022, *Forbes* report, authored by Brianna McGurran and Alicia Hahn, U.S. medical school students pay $265,617-$337,584. Most medical school students walk away with their certifications owing $100,000. Cuba trains their doctors, encouraging international student enrollment, for $69,300.

The authors breakdown the U.S. healthcare systems lack of doctors compared to Europe:

...continuity of care with a regular doctor is associated with lower rates of death...

“Americans enjoy a better quality of life than ever before, and until recently, mortality rates have steadily declined over the last thirty years. Despite this good news, studies show that the U.S. lags behind many other industrialized nations in certain health quality measures, including mortality. Why does the U.S. fare worse than similar nations?

“One possibility is that Americans have less access to expert physician care. There are far fewer physicians *per capita* in our country compared to other industrialized nations. Here are the facts: In 2013, the U.S. ranked 24th of 28 countries in the number of practicing physicians, with only 2.56 physicians for every 1000 people. The only countries ranking worse than the U.S. were Canada (2.46 physicians per 1000), Poland (2.24), Mexico (2.17), Korea (2.16). For contrast, the top physician ratios occur in Austria (4.99 doctors per 1000), Norway (4.31), Sweden (4.13), Germany (4.04), Switzerland (4.04), Italy (3.81), Spain (3.69)”

“This is important because continuity of care with a regular doctor is associated with lower rates of death. Increasing the number of specialists by ten physicians per 100,000 people led to a 19.2 day increase in life expectancy over ten years. Even more benefit occurs by increasing the number of primary care physicians by the same proportion, increasing life expectancy by 51.5 days over ten years.”

“The designation of ‘nurse practitioner’ was first described in 1964, when pediatrician Henry Silver and nursing professor Loretta Ford created a pediatric nurse practitioner program at the University of Colorado. The program opened its doors in 1965 with the goal of graduating advanced nurses who would work alongside physicians to provide ‘well childcare.’”

“The first physician assistant training program was opened in 1965, the same year that the first nurse practitioner program began. Eugene Stead MD, a physician at Duke University, invited four Navy corpsmen who had served during the Vietnam War and were returning home to civilian life.”

“Physicians created both the nurse practitioner and physician assistant professions. The roles were designed for the two to work side by side to provide complimentary care, with physicians providing careful supervision and mentoring, and treating the most complex patients.”

“Quack” is a popular term we are all familiar with, describing an incompetent medical doctor. There are inept doctors unfortunately, yet strict licensing, malpractice suits, and the rigors of their education keeps the numbers of “quacks” from infesting the U.S. healthcare system. As of 2024, the American public is becoming victim of a long-term ruling class quack scam, forcing patients to submit to under-qualified, unsupervised care of nurse practitioners and physician assistants. Following are nurse Practitioner and physician assistant misdiagnosis accounts:
“On Sunday, November 5, 2017, ten-year-old Mya-Louise Perrin began vomiting. Two days later, she vomited again and had trouble standing up, so her parents brought her to Cromwell Primary Care Centre on the coast of England where nurse practitioner Ruth Loveday evaluated her. When she arrived at the clinic, the previously healthy child could barely walk down the hall. Despite the severity of her symptoms, this nurse practitioner diagnosed a urinary tract infection. That same night, Mya-Louise died of an appendicitis.” (Page 142)

“Sixty-nine-year-old John Dalman experienced this type of unnecessary treatment. After enduring ten skin lesion biopsies by a physician assistant during one visit, John was told that other lesions would require radiation and surgery. Worried that a physician assistant would be performing the surgery, he fled from the waiting room of the dermatology office. A second opinion from a dermatologist proved his instinct correct: not only did not need radiation or surgery, but the physician assistant had missed a malignant melanoma on his shoulder. (Page 142)

“Henry Travers, MD, a clinical professor of pathology at the university of South Dakota, Sanford School of Medicine, describes this type of thinking as ‘foreclosure of the diagnoses’ (pertaining to the above examples of misdiagnosis.) He notes that the novice thinker often limits diagnoses possibilities very quickly, latching on to the first diagnosis that occurs to them and failing to consider other potential causes. “Furthermore, novice thinkers fail to incorporate additional evidence to support or reject their preliminary reasoning.” (Page 68)

“The perils of ‘foreclosing the diagnosis’ include the chance of jumping to conclusions about which diagnosis ‘seems right’ while overlooking rarer, life threatening conditions with deadly consequences.’ ‘Physicians do not diagnose this way. Instead, through the process of forward reasoning, physicians learn to pick out salient clinical details to determine which conditions should be included on the extensive list of diagnostic possibilities.’ ‘This skill is not about being smart or good; rather, it is about internalizing a methodology that requires at least 10,000 clinical hours to master.’” (Page 69)

Patients at Risk claims that over booking patients with doctors can diminish the doctor’s effectiveness in providing more “thought time” in rendering solid diagnosis and treatment follow-up. Al-Agba and Bernard, lay out ways that individual patients can navigate the U.S. healthcare system. The appendix of Patients at Risk, explains the abbreviations that healthcare workers wear on their name tags, enabling a patient to understand the caregiver’s title. In chapter 8, Doctor’s Al-Agba and Bernard give tips empowering patients to see a medical doctor.

Doctors Al-Agba and Bernard present their ideas for reforms such as government funding for more residencies in hospitals, increasing the numbers of medical doctors, a return to physician-centered care without dictatorial interference from corporations. Doctors Al-Agba and Bernard’s altruism is conveyed by this anecdote:

“When Bill Clinton and Arnold Schwarzenegger had open-heart surgery, you can be sure that a physician anesthesiologist oversaw their care rather than a certified nurse anesthetist. These politicians signed legislation that allowed nurse anesthetists to provide anesthesia without physician supervision, but when their own lives were at stake, they wanted nothing but the best. Why should any other patient deserve less?” (Page 157)

Patients at Risk. The Rise of the Nurse Practitioner and Physician Assistant in Healthcare has not been reviewed by the biggest ruling class papers, neither the New York Times nor the Wall Street Journal. It shows that this book takes on a lucrative, entrenched aspect of the U.S. economy that the rulers and owners of this country do not want called out and compromised.

In the March 15, 2012, New England Journal of Medicine, an article entitled, “Major Trends in the U.S. Health Economy,” the author, Victor R. Fuchs, PhD, writes, “In 1950, health expenditures accounted for only 4.6 percent of the Gross Domestic Product. In 2009 they accounted for more than 17 percent, a larger share than all of manufacturing, wholesale and retail trade, finance, and insurance.”

A colorful chart called “Visualizing U.S. GDP by Industry in 2023,” by Govind Bhutada rates the contributing industries and services to the U.S. Gross Domestic Product. Health, social, and educational services rank five-out-of-13 contributors to this country’s colossal wealth and productivity, generating $2.3 trillion a year. Health, social, and educational services beat out finance and insurance at $2 trillion; wholesale at $1.7 trillion; retail at $1.5 trillion; construction at $1.1 trillion; arts, food, hospitality at $1.2 trillion.

The United States capitalist class’s for-profit healthcare system is now a massive contributor to the GDP. The Democrats and Republicans will never tackle this crisis with any meaningful reforms that strike at the heart of healthcare profits. What the Democrats and Republicans will do is reform Medicare and Medicaid, reducing the payouts to the healthcare for-profit titans for services rendered.

Unscrupulous physicians, albeit a minority, are starting to quietly not see Medicare/Medicaid patients because the payouts are unreasonably stingy for care provided. Wall Street is already bellowing like cattle crying for feed:

“Federal payment rates to Medicare insurers next year will come in lower than Wall Street had expected. A decision that weighed down shares in the sector.” —Wall Street Journal, April 2, 2024, “Health Stocks Fall on Medicare Rate Surprise” by Anna Wild.
Boris Kagarlitsky is in Prison!

Russian anti-terrorism legislation misused to punish activist Kagarlitsky

Introduction

Reacting to the sentencing on the prosecution’s appeal of renowned Russian sociologist and Marxist activist Boris Kagarlitsky to five years in a penal colony, on spurious charges of “justification of terrorism,” Natalia Zviagina, Amnesty International’s Director for Russia, said:

“This verdict is a blatant abuse of vague anti-terrorism legislation, weaponized to suppress dissent and punish a government critic. By targeting Boris Kagarlitsky, a distinguished sociologist known for his critical stance against government policies, the Russian authorities are showing, once again, their relentless assault on all forms of dissent.”

“This conviction, and the closed nature of his trial, provide another stark example of the treatment of political dissenters in Russia. It is an overt attack on freedom of expression with the aim of silencing critical voices through fear and repression.

“This case is not an isolated incident but part of a broader, systematic effort to stifle opposition and control what can and cannot be said in Russia. Amnesty International calls for the immediate release of Boris Kagarlitsky and urges the international community to stand in solidarity against the silencing of critics and the ongoing erosion of human rights in Russia.”

Background

In December 2023, Boris Kagarlitsky, a Soviet dissident, sociologist, and editor-in-chief of the Marxist online publication Rabkor, was found guilty of “public justification of terrorism” for a video published on Rabkor commenting on the blast attack on the Crimean Bridge in October 2022. According to the prosecution, “the video was aimed at recognizing and emulating the practice of intimidation as the right move to stop the special military operation.” The prosecution’s main complaint, however, was the title of the video, “Explosive Congratulations for Mostik the Cat […]” which refers to a real cat named Mostik (Bridge), who lived on the Crimean Bridge and whose image was used by state media to promote the idea of Crimea belonging to Russia.

Boris Kagarlitsky was issued a fine of 609,000 roubles (approximately $6,700.00).

The prosecution appealed this sentence, and, on February 13, Russia’s Military Court of Appeal sentenced him to five years in a penal colony. He was also banned from administering websites for two years after his release. The Russian authorities’ treatment of Boris Kagarlitsky has grown increasingly hostile in recent years. In May 2022, the activist was declared a “foreign agent.” —Amnesty International

Petition in Support of Boris Kagarlitsky

We, the undersigned, were deeply shocked to learn that on February 13 the leading Russian socialist intellec-
tual and antiwar activist Dr. Boris Kagarlitsky (65) was sentenced to five years in prison.

Dr. Kagarlitsky was arrested on the absurd charge of ‘justifying terrorism’ in July last year. After a global campaign reflecting his worldwide reputation as a writer and critic of capitalism and imperialism, his trial ended on December 12 with a guilty verdict and a fine of 609,000 roubles.

The prosecution then appealed against the fine as ‘unjust due to its excessive leniency’ and claimed falsely that Dr. Kagarlitsky was unable to pay the fine and had failed to cooperate with the court. In fact, he had paid the fine in full and provided the court with everything it requested.

The reversal of the original court decision is a deliberate insult to the many thousands of activists, academics, and artists around the world who respect Dr. Kagarlitsky and took part in the global campaign for his release. The section of Russian law used against Dr. Kagarlitsky effectively prohibits free expression. The decision to replace the fine with imprisonment was made under a completely trumped-up pretext. Undoubtedly, the court’s action represents an attempt to silence criticism in the Russian Federation of the government’s war in Ukraine, which is turning the country into a prison.

On February 13 a military court of appeal sent him to prison for five years and banned him from running a website for two years after his release.

It begs the question as to whether seniors are going to have to pay out of pocket or go without the care. Healthcare providers from doctors to nurse practitioners will withhold care if they are not reimbursed adequately.

A good article to read on physician refusal of Medicare patients is found on the AMA Journal of Ethics website. “Should Physicians Be Able to Refuse Care for Patients Insured by Medicare” by Kaarkuzhali Krishnamurthy.

Patients at Risk: The Rise of The Nurse Practitioner and Physician Assistant in Healthcare, is a handbook for navigating the complexities and understanding the origins of merging medicine with super profits.

Wresting healthcare away from the profiteers and corporate parasites is going to require mass action and the building of a mass socialist party led by the working classes that can contest for power, with intelligence, belligerence, and strength in numbers to restore quality and affordability back to healthcare.

The sham trial of Dr. Kagarlitsky is the latest in a wave of brutal repression against the left-wing movements in Russia. Organizations that have consistently criticized imperialism, Western and otherwise, are now under direct attack, many of them banned. Dozens of activists are already serving long terms simply because they disagree with the policies of the Russian government and have the courage to speak up. Many of them are tortured and subjected to life-threatening conditions in Russian penal colonies, deprived of basic medical care. Left-wing politicians are forced to flee Russia, facing criminal charges. International trade unions such as International Transport Workers Federation are banned and any contact with them will result in long prison sentences.

There is a clear reason for this crackdown on the Russian left. The heavy toll of the war gives rise to growing discontent among the mass of working people. The poor pay for this massacre with their lives and wellbeing, and opposition to war is consistently highest among the poorest. The left has the message and resolve to expose the connection between imperialist war and human suffering.

Dr. Kagarlitsky has responded to the court’s outrageous decision with calm and dignity: “We just need to live a little longer and survive this dark period for our country,” he said. Russia is nearing a period of radical change and upheaval, and freedom for Dr. Kagarlitsky and other activists is a condition for these changes to take a progressive course.

We demand that Boris Kagarlitsky and all other antiwar prisoners be released immediately and unconditionally.

We also call on the authorities of the Russian Federation to reverse their growing repression of dissent and respect their citizens’ freedom of speech and right to protest.

**Sign to Demand the Release of Boris Kagarlitsky**

[https://freeboris.info](https://freeboris.info)

The petition is also available on Change.org

---


2 The International Transport Workers’ Federation (ITF) is a democratic, affiliate-led federation recognized as the world’s leading transport authority. [https://www.itfglobal.org/en](https://www.itfglobal.org/en)
April 6, 2024—The 1980 Philadelphia homicide conviction and life sentence of William Franklin was overturned by Philadelphia Court of Common Pleas by Judge Tracey Brandeis-Roman on February 28, 2024. Franklin was granted bail and able to rejoin his family after 44 years of imprisonment.

Franklin was charged as a co-conspirator with Major Tillery in a 1976 pool hall shooting that resulted in the death of one man and severe injuries to another. William Franklin and Major Tillery are actually innocent of the charges. The surviving victim gave a statement from the hospital, naming and describing two men—not Tillery or Franklin—as the shooters. Physical evidence in the pool hall led to potential suspects, but was not followed up.

In the spring of 1980, homicide detectives sought out jail house snitch Emanuel Claitt to provide evidence to close “cold cases.” Homicide detectives threatened Claitt, who faced 28 pending felony charges with an unrelated murder charge and granted him special treatment including bail and plea deals as well as “Sex for Lies.”

This was a practice frequently used in the 1980s by homicide detectives of unlawfully bringing girlfriends, prostitutes, and wives into homicide detective interview rooms in the Police Administration Building for sexual encounters with jail house snitches as part of the quid pro quo for their fabricated testimony.

In 2016, Emanuel Claitt recanted his police statement and trial testimonies at the trials of Franklin (November 1980) and Tillery (May 1985). Claitt’s recantation statement was videotaped and was the central new evidence of actual innocence and police and prosecution misconduct in the post-conviction challenges made by Major Tillery and William Franklin in 2016.

Eight years later, after an initial court dismissal, a successful appeal, and several evidentiary hearings, Judge Brandeis-Roman concluded that the “Sex for Lies” scandal was used by the prosecution to obtain William Franklin’s conviction. “Taking Claitt’s video statements to be true, it is concerning that Claitt was offered sexual favors in exchange for false testimony at Franklin’s trial.” Her ruling rejected prosecution arguments against the credibility of Claitt’s recantation, stating that to accept them would allow the prosecution to “essentially ‘rig the game’ against the defendant who later brings a claim.”

The Philadelphia District Attorney’s office of Larry Krasner is appealing the ruling vacating Franklin’s conviction because it opens the doors to reversals of numbers of 1980s homicide convictions that were also secured by using the illegal, unconstitutional tactic of “Sex for Lies” to obtain false testimony. (District Attorney Krasner is also upholding Mumia Abu-Jamal’s conviction contravening the overwhelming evidence of Abu-Jamal’s innocence.)

At the top of the impacted cases is that of Major Tillery, best known for his advocacy for Mumia Abu-Jamal, severely ill and needing hospitalization in February 2015. For that Tillery was penalized by being transferred, falsely charged with a violation, and spent four months in “the hole.” It was the investigation spearheaded by Major Tillery with the assistance of attorney Rachel Wolkenstein that led to Emanuel Claitt’s written and videotaped recantation. That new evidence was sent to his co-defendant William Franklin. Tillery’s case is now in the federal court waiting a decision from a Magistrate Judge. The ruling in William Franklin’s case is not precedent in federal court but is a validation of the credibility of Claitt’s recantation, which is a key to a favorable ruling in Major Tillery’s case.

1 video: https://www.justiceformajortillery.org/claitt.html

Major Tillery
No Virginia prison gangs before 2004

With the prevalence of youth lumpen organizations (so called street gangs) in Virginia today, it’s hard to believe that there were actually no gangs (especially no Black ones) in Virginia’s prisons prior to 2004. The culture never took root because of Virginia’s own culture of prisoners bonding based upon the cities they were from, prevented it. The few gang members who did surface were mocked as bringing alien cultures into Virginia’s own local culture. Virginia had always had a highly territorial culture against those from other states.

I witnessed the birth and clash of gangs in Virginia prisons and how officials at Virginia’s remote Red Onion State Prison (ROSP) and Wallens Ridge (WRSP) manufactured the entire situation almost overnight beginning in 2005. This all happened for a reason.

Inventing justifications for two unneeded supermaxes

The gangs were created and played against each other by these officials because they needed to create justifications for ROSP and WRSP to remain open in light of both being repeatedly exposed as unneeded, and previous justifications proving to be lies. Particularly where the expensive construction and operation of these prisons contributed to a state recession.

When ROSP and WRSP opened in 1998 and 1999 respectively, the Virginia Department of Corrections (sic!) (VDOC) director Ron Angelone fed the public the lie that these two 1,200 bed super-maximum security prisons were needed to safely house Virginia’s huge number of chronically violent and dangerous prisoners and those never going home.

In response to a flood of prisoner complaints about racism and abuse at ROSP, Human Rights Watch (HRW) investigated conditions at the prison and in 1999 issued a scathing report.1 The report not only exposed extreme racism and abuse in the prison, but also that Angelone’s claimed justifications for these prisons were outright lies. HRW found that the vast majority of prisoners assigned to these facilities were soon to be released back to society while very few met the VDOC’s own criteria for supermax housing, and the VDOC never had enough chronically disruptive prisoners to fill even a fraction of one, let alone the two, 1,200-bed supermax facilities. Officials then repeatedly rewrote VDOC classification policies attempting to make more prisoners qualify for housing at ROSP and WRSP yet failed miserably.

They ended up having to transfer most ROSP and WRSP prisoners to lower-level facilities. Then began an unprecedented move of contracting to hold waves of prisoners from other states and territories.

Out-of-state transfers

Large groups of prisoners were suddenly brought to ROSP and WRSP from Washington D.C., Connecticut, New Mexico, The Virgin Islands, Wyoming, and many other states in efforts to fill beds that the Virginia prisoners couldn’t. This scheme quickly backfired as these out-of-state prisoners experienced the same racist abuse as had Virginia prisoners at the hands of ROSP and WRSP staff, and reported these mistreatments to loved ones, the media, and organizations in their home states, where they had strong advocacy networks and groups unlike Virginia prisoners.

Prisoners from Connecticut were being murdered by WRSP officials, like Laurence Frazier, a Black man who died from repeatedly being electrocuted by multiple guards while he was strapped down to a steel bedframe. There was the attempted murder (staged to look like a suicide) of another Connecticut prisoner, Michael Austin, a white man who WRSP guards disliked because he grew up around and embraced Black urban culture and clashed with WRSP rural white guards who ridiculed him and tried to influence him with racist values. Dozens of the New Mexico prisoners were systematically beaten upon intake at WRSP as were the Connecticut prisoners. The killing of Lawrence Frazier was also featured in the documentary Up The Ridge and an Amnesty International report on U.S. law enforcement officials’ abuses of electric weapons.2

The pushback from advocates in their states was immediate! Large assemblies of families and groups from New Mexico and Connecticut protested in the WRSP parking lot and nearby town of Big Stone Gap, Virginia. Pressure was brought to bear on officials in these prisoners’ home states. Several came to
Virginia and toured WRSP. Lawsuits were filed and the media was awash with critical reports, especially about the abuses of the New Mexico and Connecticut prisoners at WRSP.

One by one these states terminated their contracts to house their prisoners at ROSP and WRSP, and Virginia was once again left with huge numbers of empty beds at these supermaxes.

With no one to fill them and the need to give public justification for these prisons continued expensive operations while facing waves of bad publicity, VDOC had once again to change the security classification of these prisons.

In 2005 WRSP had downgraded from supermax (security level six) to maximum security (security level five) prison, and for the first time WRSP became a predominantly general population (GP) prison. Meantime ROSP’s population was cut in half from 1,200 to a little over 600 prisoners. A large number of minimum-security prisoners were then moved to ROSP ostensibly as custodial maintenance and other workers (called “cadre workers.”) They were really just bed fillers.

But still other measures had to be taken to bring in more prisoners and fill more beds and justify these prisons. This is where the gang situation arises.

Creating gangs to justify these prisons

At ROSP, the newly appointed warden, Tracey Ray, promoted a sergeant named Tony Adams who previously worked in the prison’s dog kennel to the position of lead investigator and gang specialist (Adams was ROSP’s first gang officer.) Ray became warden in latter 2004 and appointed Adams as investigator/gang specialist in early 2005. A low-ranking guard, James Bentley who still works as an investigator and gang specialist at ROSP today, was selected as Adams’ assistant.

This new gang-busting duo hit the ground running alongside their WRSP counterpart Sergeant Steele. These men from rural white America with no prior exposure to Blacks or Browns became self-proclaimed experts in urban Black and Brown culture and street organizations overnight. Everywhere they went and looked they saw gang activity. And this wasn’t accidental. They set out to deliberately create an organized gang problem and culture at these prisons where none existed before—this to validate their own jobs as “gang busters” and justify the continued operation of these prisons.

Before this period, the VDOC had no gang officials, no so-called STG (Security Threat Group) units nor task force, no policies on controlling gangs or gang activities, and so on, because there were no gangs in Virginia prisons.

At both ROSP and WRSP they created cellblocks in GP and solitary confinement exclusively for gang members unofficially called “gang pods.” Those assigned to these pods were people they documented and labeled as gang members. In most cases, they targeted people who were, in fact, not in gangs. There had developed a small but insignificant gang presence at ROSP and WRSP under the influence of prisoners from other states like Connecticut and New York. But by placing prisoners who weren’t gang members in blocks and cells with those who were, this led to waves of prisoners joining gangs for protection from those in these blocks who actually were gang members. It also created an isolated environment—like a hot house—where the gang culture took root and proliferated without resistance from Virginia’s local culture. Most who weren’t gang members when they entered these pods, were active gang members when they left. This created a steady cycle of non-members entering these pods and leaving as active members, so that the gang presence in these prisons multiplied overnight.

There were also some members of Central American gangs in the prisons (a result of large Salvadoran migrant communities in Alexandria, Virginia) who had traditional rivalries with certain Black gangs. Initially these Blacks stayed to themselves, but in the gang pods they clashed with those Blacks who had been profiled as members of the rival Black gangs. This also prompted Blacks who weren’t initially in gangs to join them for protection or support-in-numbers against these Brown gangs.

In violation of VDOC policy, which required screening for gang affiliations and forbade housing documented gang rivals in cells together, Adams, Bentley, and their WRSP counterparts also deliberately put rivals in the same cells, especially Blacks and Browns. Which predictably led to fights and stabbings, and cycles of revenge that they used as “proof” of organized gang violence. In fact, at WRSP administrators created a GP gang pod in a 44-cell cellblock, then moved documented rivals into the cells together. An hour later a large group of guards invaded the block and had all the prisoners stand outside their cells as they inspected their faces and hands for signs of fights. Those with marks on their faces or hands were written disciplinary infractions for being involved in “gang-related” fights—fights that officials themselves engineered. These and similar “documentations” were then used as “evidence” of a “problem with organized gang violence in Virginia prisons,” for which WRSP and ROSP were now said to be needed to contain and control.

At ROSP and WRSP officials were manufacturing a gang presence and gang wars using a prison version of what Crips co-founder Stanley “Tookie” Williams observed “hood” cops and gang units did on the streets with the same outcome and purpose of justifying unneeded and abusive police and gang units. As Tookie described it in his book, Blue Rage Black Redemption:

“Yes America, as unbelievable as it may seem, had cops with impu-

nity commit drive-bys and other lawless acts. It was common prac-
tice for them to abduct a Crip or Bounty Hunter and drop him off in hostile territory, and then broadcast it over a loudspeaker. The predictable outcome was that the rival was either beaten or killed on the spot, which resulted in a cycle of payback. Cops would also inform opposing gangs where to find and attack a rival gang, and then say, “Go handle your business.” Like slaves, the gangs did exactly what their master commanded. Had they not been fueled by self-hatred, neither Crips, Bounty Hunters, nor any other Black gang would have been duped.

“The hood cops were pledged to protect and serve, but for us they were not there to help, but to exploit us—and they were effective. With the cops’ Machiavellian presence, the gang epidemic escalated. When gang warfare is fed and fueled by law enforcement, funds are generated for anti-gang units. Without gangs their units would no longer exist.”

In an effort to isolate me since I’m not in any gangs and it was presumed that the gangs wouldn’t interact with me, I was put in A-3, one of the solitary confinement gang pods at ROSP, where I witnessed the whole scheme play out. I watched the rivalries fester in that block, often under the direct instigation of guards who played sides with the gangs, then Adams, Bentley, and others would release rivals to the progressive housing gang pods where they were put in cells together and violence immediately erupted. Guards were openly amused by the stabbings and fights they were setting up.

When gangs become conscious

I pointed out to those in the gang pod with me what was being done to them and how they were being used to justify the continued operations of ROSP and WRSP. Most agreed with what I pointed out and some refused to play into it. In 2010 I wrote an article, “Kill Yourself Or Liberate Yourself,” documenting the history of the U.S. government instigating and manipulating rivalries and wars between street gangs in just this manner and calling on them to unite and return to many of their original missions of serving our communities instead of preying on them. I also discussed the uses of the gang pods at ROSP in that article.3

My efforts began paying off as many of those in the cellblock with me embraced the views I shared with them and joined in the historic 2011 and 2013 hunger strikes led by thousands of California prisoners protesting solitary confinement. I was then transferred out of state in early 2012, followed the next year by several who participated in the 2013 strike.

One of the gang leaders, Kofi Dankur aka L.I., who was a victim of the ROSP gang pods and out of state transfer where Virginia officials tried to set him and others up with racist white gangs in the other states (which they also did with me), wrote an article in 2022, “Blood In The Clenched Fist Alliance” (to which I wrote an introduction), where he bore witness to all of this. He opened the article stating:

“I’ve read Rashid’s 2010 article ‘Kill Yourself Or Liberate Yourself’, and found it to contain perspectives which I also share. It also gives a true account of the scheme employed by Virginia officials at Red Onion State Prison to manufacture rival gang conflicts to create new justification for continuing to operate Virginia’s two supermax prisons in remote southwestern Virginia—ROSP and WRSP, after both had been repeatedly discredited for racist abuse by their almost totally white staff against a predominantly Black prisoner population and exposed as unneeded. I was one of the numerous prisoners being housed at ROSP’s so-called gang pods where these rivalries were manipulated by Virginia officials. I am an identified east coast Blood leader.”4

While in the “gang pod” in 2010, I circulated a random survey to which 18 of the 22 prisoners in the cellblock immediately responded. The responses were telling, especially concerning the systemic false labeling of prisoners as gang members by “gang specialist” Sergeant Adams and others at ROSP and his role in putting rival gang members in cells together. I wrote an article discussing that survey and what it revealed about abuses at ROSP in the victims’ own words.5 Victims who mostly didn’t communicate or get along with each other, but spoke with one voice about conditions and mistreatments at ROSP. As the gang wars became more deeply entrenched at ROSP and WRSP, many were transferred to other VDOC prisons across the state where the gang presence and conflicts followed and grew. From this process, I and others witnessed the literal creation of a huge gang presence and rivalries in Virginia’s prisons where none previously existed, which also spread to the streets. All manufactured by officials at ROSP and WRSP, some of whom still work at these prisons like James Bentley. The gang presence became so large and the resulting rival violence so extreme across Virginia’s entire prison system that prisoners had to be separated and assigned to specific prison units based upon gang affiliations.

I was sent into domestic exile (transferred out of state) in early 2012 and returned to the Virginia prison system in late 2021. Upon my return, I found a different culture, whereas in most states, violent bangin’ between rival gangs had largely stopped, while the local Virginia culture and gang culture have somewhat merged. Now there was still bonding based upon what city one is from but also a bonding across territories based upon gang affiliation. In many cases bonds based upon one’s city of origin take priority over gang affiliation, while in other cases it’s the reverse. The culture is still evolving.

If the public could have seen and known that prison officials caused the development and proliferation of
gangs and gang wars in Virginia and the consequent violence and suffering endured by those in these prisons that spilled over into our outside communities, there definitely would have been a massive push back against ROSP and WRSP. And there still should be push back now demanding that these places be closely scrutinized by the public and closed. These remote prisons are a danger not a benefit to their prisoners and the outside communities.

Dare To Struggle Dare To Win!
All Power To The People!

Note from author: This article began as part of a larger article on abuses in Virginia’s two remote supermax prisons, Red Onion and Wallens Ridge State Prisons. But a number of readers felt the subject of the development of gangs and spread of gang wars in Virginia’s prisons at the prompting of Virginia prison officials warranted an article of its own.

Write to Rashid:
Kevin Rashid Johnson #1007485
Greensville Correctional Center
901 Corrections Way
State Farm, Virginia 23160

Write to Mumia at:
Smart Communications/PADO
Mumia Abu-Jamal #AM-8335
SCI Mahanoy
P.O. Box 33028
St. Petersburg, FL 33733


Gwynn Gets a Win
By Mumia Abu-Jamal

Daniel Gwynn, a death row prisoner for almost 30 years, is now leaving death row and prison itself after his case was finally dismissed after the case fell apart.

For almost 30 years Gwynn was subject to decades of solitary confinement under threat of imminent death and soul-aching loneliness.

Gwynn’s conviction stems from both a false confession and apparently tampering with witnesses by police and the prosecutor. He was charged and convicted of murder, and aggravated assault, for the death of Marsha Smith of the 4500-block of Chestnut Street in West Philadelphia in November 1994. The woman died from smoke inhalation, and several others were injured after jumping out of a three-story window. Gwynn was charged with setting the fire.

Why was the confession suspect? Because Gwynn, then in his twenties, was a serious drug fiend. His so-called confession was quite divergent from the facts at issue.

How did he survive almost 30 years on death row with his sanity intact? Art.

Specifically, he learned how to paint and made sunny works of art. When I was on death row at SCI Greene the prison aired shots of art works on its closed-circuit TV channel. I remember seeing a memorable painting of a Jazz pianist deep into his music. The keyboard undulated like a wave seemingly dancing to the music. That work of beauty was painted by Daniel Gwynn.

Gwynn, now 54 years old, is really free.

—Prison Radio, March 15, 2024
https://www.prisonradio.org/commentary/gwynn-gets-a-win/

Write to Mumia at:
Smart Communications/PADO
Mumia Abu-Jamal #AM-8335
SCI Mahanoy
P.O. Box 33028
St. Petersburg, FL 33733
Isaac Deutscher had a flair for going to the dialectical point. That discernment was superbly displayed in his analysis of the non-Jewish Jew—a contradiction in terms. His study of that fascinating social type heads the articles posthumously published under that title by his wife, Tamara. She has also supplied a sketch of her husband’s childhood which illuminates his preoccupation with this subject.

Deutscher defined the non-Jewish Jew as the heretic who went beyond the boundaries of Jewry and yet remained part of the Jewish tradition. It might even be said paradoxically that Jewish’s most valuable contribution to world culture since the 17th century has come from those iconoclasts who shook off its trammels. “They all found Jewry too narrow, too archaic, and too constricting. They all looked for ideals and fulfillment beyond it, and they represent the sum and substance of much that is greatest in modern thought.”

These men and women “…dwelt on the boundaries of various civilizations, religions, and national cultures. They were born and brought up on the boundaries of various epochs. Their minds matured where the most diverse cultural influences crossed and fertilized each other… It was this that enabled them to rise in thought above their societies, above their nations, above their times and generations, and to strike out mentally into wide new horizons and far into the future.” All were persecuted or exiled for their opposition to prevailing ideas and institutions.

Their central theme is the irreconcilable contest between nationalism and internationalism which counterposes Marxism to capitalism, Zionism and Stalinism.

In East Europe these non-Jewish Jews were part of and spoke for the Jewish workers in the ghettos. The Jews of East Europe were largely workers and impoverished middle-class elements. In the ghettos they were forced into, they were often the victims of bloody racist pogroms.

These Jewish ghetto dwellers sought to wage a revolutionary struggle against their anti-Semitic capitalist society and had a high degree of socialist consciousness. They rejected the utopian notion of Zionism, taking the stand that they would win their liberation by overthrowing capitalism and thereby tearing down the walls of the ghetto. They saw the October Russian Revolution as the first great step toward their liberation as Jews and as workers.

The East European Jewish intellectuals were at one with the radicalized workers. They were regarded by the workers as their spokesmen and they in turn regarded themselves as part of the workers’ movement.

Deutscher’s representative roster of non-Jewish Jews includes such titans of revolutionary thought and action as Spinoza, Heine, Marx, Rosa Luxemburg, Trotsky, and Freud. These Jews were united not only by their transcendence of Judaism but by their shared beliefs in the lawfulness of the universe and history, in the unceasing changefulness of all things, in the relativity of good and evil, in the idea that true and effective knowledge is inseparable from practice, and in the ultimate solidarity of humanity.

The traits of these uncompromising rationalists were likewise characteristic of Deutscher, who saw his own views, values and destiny mirrored in their lives. These essays are, among other things, an effort at understanding not only the historical phenomenon and its finest exemplars but his own self. They are by-products of a lifelong search for the secret of his own identity. For he belonged to that category of the non-Jewish Jew and was one of its most eminent representatives in our generation.

Isaac had reason to ponder the question: Who and what am I? His
own career spanned incredible extremes. He started out in life as a Hassidic child prodigy in a Polish shtetl [a small Jewish village in eastern Europe] who became a rabbi at 13; he ended it sixty years later as an atheist, a revolutionary Marxist, a writer of world renown. From immersion in the archaic atmosphere of the East European ghetto, he mounted to a mastery of the most advanced and cosmopolitan knowledge of his time.

He, too, “lived on the borderlines of various national cultures and was in society—Polish, Jewish, German, English—and yet not of it. In this he was in the Jewish tradition, and he never denied it.” The tension of the sharp contrast between his Jewish childhood and his secular Marxist maturity vibrates like harp strings, imparting emotional resonance to these essays.

Their central theme is the irreconcilable contest between nationalism and internationalism which counterposes Marxism to capitalism, Zionism and Stalinism. Deutscher staunchly adhered to the positions of scientific socialism on the Jewish question, which he ably expounds and defends in these pages.

Marxism takes issue with the mystique of the chosen people in reference to the Jews or any other nationality. It gives a historical and materialist explanation for the exceptional endurance and peculiar characteristics of the Jews since their dispersion. The Jews have maintained existence and individuality as a nationality primarily because of the special role they played as a people-class in precapitalist society, where they were agents of the money economy among peoples living in a natural economy. Judaism and anti-Semitism had common roots in the distinctive functions which marked off the commercial Jew from the rest of the nations.

**Capitalism and nationalism**

The coming of capitalism eliminated the necessity and changed the possibilities and prospects for perpetuating Jewry as a people apart, since its special function became the general condition of the social economy. During the 19th century both liberals and Marxists held the view that the Jews would shed their distinctive traits and separate identity through gradual absorption into an enlightened bourgeois or a future socialist society. Progressive capitalism did institute a certain degree of assimilation in Western Europe and North America, although it failed to complete it there. The process of social and cultural homogenization was barely begun in Eastern Europe because of its backwardness.

The development of world capitalism in this century upset this perspective. Imperialistic, crisis-torn capitalism swung over to an exacerbated nationalism of its own. One of its most malignant manifestations was the resort to anti-Semitism, a readymade means for diverting the wrath of despairing and deluded people away from the real authors of their misery by making the Jews a scapegoat for the crimes of a decaying capitalism. This relapse into barbarism was consummated in Germany, the most highly developed capitalist country of Europe, through the frenzied chauvinism of the Nazis capped by Hitler’s extermination of six million Jews.

The degeneration of capitalism coupled with the failure of the socialist movement to replace it in time gave the Jewish question an acuteness and urgency unanticipated by the first generations of Marxists. Hitlerism served to spur and fortify the feelings of national solidarity among the Jews which, for different reasons, had been fading in both East and West Europe. The harried Jews had to defend and define themselves anew in reaction to the menace to their very physical existence.

For the sake of self-preservation and national perpetuation, the survivors of East European Jewry who, especially among the workers, had been widely won over to the Marxist ideals of socialism, turned toward Zionism as the last hope of salvation. The project of seeking and securing refuge in a new Jewish state located in Palestine pushed aside the internationalist program and perspective.

There were dreadful pitfalls in this forced decision. “The world has driven the Jew to seek safety in a nation-state in the middle of this century when the nation-state is falling into decay,” Deutscher pointed out. The Jewish people, which was denied the benefits of bourgeois nationalism in its best days, was compelled to embrace a bourgeois nationalism of its own and constitute a separate Jewish state at a time when the progressive potential of that form of political organization within the capitalist framework had been reduced to a minimum.

**Building a state occupied by another people**

To heap up their ill fortune, the Zionists chose to build their state in a tiny, poor, and unfavorable terrain already occupied by another people, slowly awakening to its own national consciousness, which they then displaced by economic and military pressures.

Deutscher agreed that the Jews had the same right to self-determination as any other people on this planet. Indeed, because of their massacre during the second world war, European Jews had a special claim upon the generosity of
the civilized world. He had been shaken to the marrow by the holocaust which he considered a unique historical tragedy almost defying explanation. (Here his feelings got the better of his reason, since Marxism cannot place the tragedy of the Jews in a category different from the long list of other genocidal acts committed under capitalist barbarism.) In his youth he had experienced pogrom terror in his native Poland. He had lost his beloved father and other members of his family in Auschwitz.

He was fully aware of the predicament of the Jews—in which he was so intimately implicated—and he was sensitive to the aspirations behind the Zionist dream. Yet he rose above his individual sympathies and antipathies to take a broad view of the complex and exacerbating problem from the vantage point of historical materialism, as a Marxist was obliged to do.

He was sure that Zionism held out no real hope of resolving the Jewish problem in the long run. He compared the Israelis to a man who managed to save his life by jumping from a burning building in which many members of his family had already perished. Unfortunately, he landed upon a neighbor and broke his limbs. Instead of behaving rationally and fairly toward the unintended victim of the unavoidable fall the Zionists have treated the Palestinian Arabs abominably and made them into a bitter foe.

Zionist chauvinism has had a deadly logic. By expelling the Arabs from their own land and conducting warfare against them for 20 years, the Zionist Jews have transformed themselves from a persecuted minority in other lands into an oppressor nation in their present habitat.

The deadly logic of Zionist chauvinism

The tragic irony does not end there. The original Zionist experiment was inspired by agrarian socialist ideals embodied in the Kibbutz—small communal settlements which seek to make “the desert blossom like the rose.” After several decades, these Utopian colonies are hemmed in by capitalist relations which overshadow their admirable features. The kibbutzim have been converted into armed strong points in the national defense system and, because of the expansionist and militarist course of the Zionist government, take on an aggressive character.

During World War II the democratic imperialist governments did not lift a hand to deter Hitler from consigning the Jews to the gas ovens.

The deformation of the most equalitarian sector of Israeli society is magnified a thousandfold in the country as a whole. Israel does not have an independent, strong, and viable economic base; it must live from hand to mouth, depending on the largesse of wealthy Jews abroad—above all, the generosity and business investments of American millionaires. In the pinch, its economic well-being, territorial integrity, and national security all hang on what military and financial aid is forthcoming from Washington. Thus, Israel must willingly serve as an outpost of imperialist strategy in the Middle East, and so it is regarded throughout the Arab world.

Deutscher gave his final appraisal of the plight and the policies of Zionist Israel in an interview after the Six Day War of June 1967. He condemned the preemptive strike that brought quick victory to Israeli arms. “Paradoxically and grotesquely, the Israelis appear now in the role of the Prussians of the Middle East. They have now won three wars against their Arab neighbors. Just so did the Prussians a century ago defeat all their neighbors within a few years, the Danes, the Austrians, and the French. The succession of victories bred in them an absolute confidence in their own efficiency, a blind reliance on the force of their arms, chauvinistic arrogance, and contempt for other peoples. I fear that a similar degeneration—for degeneration it is—may be taking place in the political character of Israel.”

The lightning victory was worse than a defeat, he argued, because it paves the way for an eventual disastrous confrontation with the Arab states and the Arab masses. “They [the Jews] now appear in the Middle East once again in the invidious role of agents not so much of their own, relatively feeble, capitalism, but of powerful western vested interests and as proteges of neocolonialism. This is how the Arab world sees them, not without reason. Once again, they arouse bitter emotions and hatreds in their neighbors, in all those who have ever been or still are victims of imperialism. What a fate it is for the Jewish people to be made to appear in this role! As agents of early capitalism, they were still pioneers of progress in feudal society; as agents of the late, over-ripe, imperialist capitalism of our days, their role is altogether lamentable; and they are placed once again in the position of potential scapegoats. Is Jewish history to come full circle in such a way? This may well be the outcome of Israel’s ‘victories’; and of this Israel’s real friends must warn it.”

The way forward

What is the way out? If the Israelis are not to be caught in a bloody trap of Zionist devising, they will have to abandon the exclusive and aggressive Jewish state and opt for a Middle East federation of the Arab and Jewish peoples. It is true that the Jewish bourgeoisie-chauvinists and their Anglo-American patrons, as well as demagogues and reactionaries among the Arabs, are
equally opposed to such a solution. That is why this desirable political goal cannot be realized except through the joint struggle against imperialism and capitalism in that area under revolutionary socialist leadership.

By a circuitous route, lined by six million dead, which has led from Eastern Europe to Palestine, the Jewish masses today face the same alternative as their fathers and grandfathers: either alliance with the forces of socialist revolution or a bloody catastrophe. There is no third way.

Deutscher addressed a sober warning about the fate awaiting them if they clung to capitalism and chauvinism, not only to the Israelis, but to those Jews in the imperialist metropolises who placidly live under the mistaken impression that anti-Semitism is a spent force there. They are blind to the fact that such prejudice festers in many crevices of the Western countries and, in the event of acute insecurity: can burst forth with sudden ferocity, as it did in crisis-ridden Germany between the wars.

“Let this society suffer any severe shock, such as it is bound to suffer; let there be again millions of unemployed, and we will see the same lower-middle-class alliance with the Lumpenproletariat, from whom Hitler recruited his following, running amok with anti-Semitism,” he wrote. “As long as the nation-state imposes its supremacy and as long as we have not an international society in existence, as long as the wealth of every nation is in the hands of one national capitalist oligarchy, we shall have chauvinism, racialism, and, as its culmination, anti-Semitism.”

Such a prediction may seem far-fetched and unduly alarmist to those privileged and short-sighted Anglo-American Jews who have been sunning in the prolonged prosperity and social stability of the postwar decades. Yet is based upon a keen insight into the ultimate direction of the main motive forces of capitalist development in our time. The warning has direct relevance for American Jews, young and old, who regard the Jewish problem as something remote from them and confined to Israeli-Arab relations or to the recurrence of anti-Semitism in East Europe and the Soviet Union.

**African-Americans and Jews**

They forget that the Jewish question is as pertinent to the United States as to Israel. More than twice as many Jews live in this country as in Israel. (According to the 1967 estimates of the Jewish Statistical Bureau, 5,721,000 live in the United States to 2,669,000 in Israel.) Like many other crucial questions of our era, the fate of the main body of Jewry will ultimately be settled by what happens on American soil. At the present time there is a deadly symmetry between the attitude of the Israelis toward the Arabs and that of the American Jews toward the Afro-Americans and their liberation struggle. Many liberal and radical Jews have the same difficulty in comprehending why Afro-Americans are hostile to them as they do in grasping why the Palestinian Arabs are enemies of Israel. Are we not also an oppressed people, they anxiously ask; have we not also suffered from discrimination, even faced extermination?

They overlook the actual state of affairs. The amount of discrimination and prejudice encountered by Jews in the United States today is inconsiderable compared to the endemic racism which victimizes the Blacks in so many ways. Furthermore, the upper and middle ranges of American Jewry, comfortably ensconced in bourgeois America, some of them bankers, landlords, big and little businessmen, participate in the system of oppressing and exploiting the Black masses, just as the Zionists have become oppressors of the Palestinian Arabs. Jewish teachers in New York, reluctant to give up their small privileges, resist the Afro-American demand for control of the schools in their own communities.

Protestations of good-will do not change the decisive factors in the situation. Because of the social positions they occupy and the economic functions some of them perform, the Jews appear in the eyes of the Black masses as an integral constituent of the white capitalist power structure which has held them down for centuries.

“But,” Jewish liberals expostulate, “are not the militant Blacks also nationalistic, even practicing ‘racism in reverse?”’ They fail to distinguish between the progressive nationalism of an oppressed minority and the reactionary chauvinism of an oppressive power. Black nationalism is justified because it aims at the self-determination and social liberation of 22 million people. It is revolutionary in its implications because the movement is not only fighting against racism, discrimination and brutality but is objectively directed against the foundations of U.S. monopoly and militarism. If the aggrieved national feelings of Afro-Americans are sometimes expressed in embittered prejudice toward the Jewish people as such, this misguided attitude must be understood as an excessive defense reaction to the injustices constantly inflicted upon the Blacks by the present structure of society. But such
utterances should not be allowed to stand in the way of supporting the Black struggle for emancipation.

While they misjudge the real nature of their relations with the Afro-American community and its nationalism, patriotic Jews cherish the illusion that American big business is constitutionally different from the German industrial and financial establishment that pressed Hitlerism into its service. The grounds for such confidence are very flimsy. The past record of the American ruling class in protecting the Jews from harm is shameful.

During the 1930s Roosevelt's liberal Democratic administration did not heed the cries of the victims of Nazism and refused to open the doors guarded by the Statue of Liberty to more than a handful of Jewish refugees who were lucky enough to find sponsors here. In the last manifesto he drafted for the Fourth International in 1940, Leon Trotsky wrote: "The world of decaying capitalism is overcrowded. The question of admitting a hundred extra refugees becomes a major problem for such a world power as the United States...In the epoch of its rise, capitalism took the Jewish people out of the ghetto and utilized them as an instrument in its commercial expansion. Today decaying capitalist society is striving to squeeze the Jewish people from all its pores; seventeen million individuals out of the two billion populating the globe, that is, less than one percent, can no longer find a place on our planet!"

During World War II the democratic imperialist governments did not lift a hand to deter Hitler from consigning the Jews to the gas ovens.

White racism, not anti-Semitism, is by far the most pervasive and powerful current of discrimination and source of persecution in the United States today. But if, with Deutscher, we look beyond the present conjuncture, there is danger for the Jews lurking over the horizon. Should there be a grave social crisis and a strengthening of ultra-reaction, anti-Semitism could experience a frightening growth here.

The American ruling class, whose agents dropped the first atom bombs on the Japanese, conduct genocidal warfare in Vietnam, stood ready to use the H-bomb in the Caribbean confrontation of 1962 and maltreat their minorities at home, has shown itself capable of monstrous crimes. In case the survival of its power and profits hangs in the balance, why should it consider the six million American Jews to be less expendable than the six million European Jews it let Hitler exterminate? Inconceivable? So assimilated German Jews of the 1920s thought, too.

Conservative and liberal Jewry in the West has been given a handy excuse for continued adherence to Zionism and democratic capitalism by the recurrence of anti-Semitism in the Soviet bloc which fed the prejudices against socialism. Deutscher deals with this phenomenon in a discussion of The Russian Revolution and the Jewish Problem. Unlike the conscienceless apologists for Stalinism, he acknowledged that the Soviet Union had not succeeded in solving the Jewish question after 50 years.

In explaining the reasons for this default, he recalls that in the Lenin era the Bolsheviks tried to make good, as best they could under hard circumstances, the pledge contained in their program of equal treatment of national minorities. Under their auspices Yiddish culture and the Yiddish theater flourished. Zionist ideas were not suppressed and the Left Paole Zion, the Socialist Zionist Party, legally existed up to 1925-1926.

Those years witnessed the beginnings of a tremendous retrogression of the Russian Revolution. In an article on "Thermidor and Anti-Semitism," written in 1937, Trotsky explained how the revival of anti-Semitism was one of the vicious aspects of the Great Russian chauvinism that attended the rise and triumph of bureaucratic despotism.

"The omnipotent bureaucracy stifles the development of national culture just as it does the whole of culture. Worse still, the country of the great proletarian revolution is passing through a period of profound reaction," he wrote. "If the revolutionary wave revived the finest sentiments of human solidarity, the Thermidorean reaction has stirred up all that is low, dark, and backward in the agglomeration of 170 million people. To reinforce its domination, the bureaucracy does not even hesitate to resort in a scarcely camouflaged manner to chauvinistic tendencies, above all to anti-Semitic ones. The latest Moscow trial, for example, was staged with the hardly concealed design of presenting internationalists as faithless and lawless Jews who are capable of selling themselves to the German Gestapo."

Since then, the virulence of anti-Semitism has waxed or waned according to its covert encouragement or public restraint by the Soviet authorities. Re-aroused by the factional conflict with the anti-Stalinist opposition, it reached a crescendo in the Great Purge of 1936-38. Anti-Semitic sentiments were reinforced by the Nazi penetration of the Ukraine and West Russia. They were propelled to the verge of tragedy by the "Doctors' Plot" in January 1953, the last of Stalin's sinister frameups which was nullified by his death.

On the other side, Deutscher notes the following facts. Under Stalin two and a half million Jews were saved from the Nazis by being transported into the interior from the invaded territories of Russia. In 1948, for its own diplomatic reasons at the time, Moscow helped bring the state of Israel into being.

The protests from outspoken Soviet intellectuals testify that official and unofficial anti-Semitism is still rife and surreptitiously shielded in the Soviet Union. Like many of the major prob-
lems of the USSR, the struggle against anti-Jewish prejudice must be an integral part of the slowly maturing movement of the Soviet masses to throw off bureaucratic domination and undertake a thorough housecleaning of Soviet society.

What does this survey of the vicissitudes of the Jewish problem come down to? Deutscher maintained that it confirmed the essential validity of the Marxist program, even though developments have taken a more complicated course than its original adherents foresaw.

The salvation of the Jewish people cannot come from reliance upon Zionist chauvinism, American imperialism or Stalinist bureaucratism. Every expedient short of the struggle for socialism, any substitute for that, will end in calamity for the Jews. They cannot achieve security for themselves or anyone else so long as the root causes of discrimination, racism and reactionary nationalism continue to exist.

Indeed, the Zionists have dealt fatal blows to themselves by succumbing to these practices. These curses can be removed only by abolishing capitalism, as the East European Jewish workers formerly believed and the non-Jewish Jews of the Marxist school taught the Jews have to link themselves with those forces in their own country and on a world scale that are fighting to overthrow imperialism and striving to building the new society. The solution of the Jewish question is indissolubly bound up with the complete emancipation of humanity that can be brought about only along the road of international socialism.

Note: This article first appeared in The Militant, the newspaper of the Socialist Workers Party, February 7, 1969. It was published in pamphlet form by Pathfinder Press in July 1969 and again in July 1970. It is no longer in print. This digital version was available from The Holt Labor Library. The library has vital labor and revolutionary socialist historical and contemporary material available. (Contact information for the Holt Labor Library is elsewhere in this magazine.)

2 The October Revolution, also known as the Great October Socialist Revolution, was a revolution in Russia led by the Bolshevik Party of Vladimir Lenin that was a key moment in the larger Russian Revolution of 1917-1923. It was the second revolutionary change of government in Russia in 1917. It took place through an armed insurrection in Petrograd (now Saint Petersburg) on November 7, 1917 [O.S. 25 October]. It was the precipitating event of the Russian Civil War.
3 In the historiography of the French Revolution, the Thermidorian Reaction is the common term for the period between the ousting of Maximilien Robespierre on July 27, 1794, and the inauguration of the French Directory on November 2, 1795.

Continued from page 67

Ralph if he could throw these “rock snowballs” at the trucks that stood in front of the mill and hit their front windows, you could almost guess young Ralph’s response: “Of course.” Ralph threw for most of the day and hit exactly what he aimed for. That night the union organizer went to Ralph’s home and told his father that Ralph was very instrumental to the union’s success at striking against the mill.

Ralph Poynter helped the union before he even became a teenager. When he went to the local elementary school’s third grade, he learned what his older brothers had learned years before: that colored boys, well, that’s what they called them back then, couldn’t go to school without encountering violence as there were so few colored people in the town. Ralph was beaten, and his new hat and jacket made by his mother got messed up. When he saw how sad his mother was at seeing his state, he resolved to end it the next time it occurred. The next day when his attackers came at him, he didn’t run. Instead, he stood his ground and fought back vigorously. Before long, his attackers began to flee. He learned a life lesson about self-defense that would, years later, inform his political position.

Now the words of Ralph Poynter: “Black lives have never mattered except during slavery and other circumstances where money is being made by our labors for others. The modern death penalty, 80 percent Black, moved lynching indoors. The police as the army of occupation, have taken lynching outdoors again.”

Ralph Poynter, steel worker, elementary school teacher, investigator for his lawyer-wife, union brother, and revolutionary, returns to his ancestors after 89 winters in America.

—Prison Radio, March 25, 2023
https://www.prisonradio.org/commentary/ralph-poynter-revolutionary-life/
The Socialist Viewpoint Publishing Association publishes *Socialist Viewpoint* in the interests of the working class.

The editors take positions consistent with revolutionary Marxism. Within this context the editors will consider for publication articles, reviews or comments. The editors may publish comments to accompany these articles. Photographs and cartoons will be appreciated.

*Socialist Viewpoint* reprints articles circulated on the Internet when we deem them of interest to our readers.

No limitation will be placed on the author(s) use of their material in their subsequent work provided acknowledgment is made of its publication in *Socialist Viewpoint*. The Socialist Viewpoint Publishing Association retains for itself rights to reprint articles as collections, educational bulletins, and similar uses. With the inclusion of an acknowledgment and a notice of the copyright ownership, permission is hereby given educators to duplicate essays for distribution gratis or for use in the classroom at cost. The author(s) retain all other rights.

Signed articles do not necessarily represent the views of *Socialist Viewpoint*. These views are expressed in editorials. *Socialist Viewpoint* is printed by members of Local 61, Allied Printing Trades Council, San Francisco, California.

---

**Note to Readers:**

*Socialist Viewpoint* magazine has been edited and distributed by revolutionaries who share a common political outlook stemming from the old Socialist Workers Party of James P. Cannon, and Socialist Action from 1984 through 1999.

After being expelled from Socialist Action in 1999, we formed Socialist Workers Organization in an attempt to carry on the project of building a nucleus of a revolutionary party true to the historic teachings and program of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Trotsky.

What we have found is that our numbers are insufficient for this crucial project of party building. This problem is not ours alone; it is a problem flowing from the division and fragmentation that has plagued the revolutionary movement in capitalist America and the world since the 1980s.

What we intend to do is to continue to promote the idea of building a revolutionary Marxist working class political party through the pages of *Socialist Viewpoint* magazine. We continue to have an optimistic outlook about the revolutionary potential of the world working class to rule society in its own name—socialism. We are optimistic that the working class, united across borders, and acting in its own class interests can solve the devastating crises of war, poverty, oppression, racism, sexism and environmental destruction that capitalism is responsible for.

We expect that revolutionaries from many different organizations, traditions, and backgrounds will respond to the opportunities that will arise, as workers resist the attacks of the capitalist system and government, to build a new revolutionary political party. Just as we join with others to build every response to war and oppression, we look forward to joining with others in the most important work of building a new mass revolutionary socialist workers’ party as it becomes possible to do so.
Ralph Poynter: Revolutionary Life

BY Mumia Abu-Jamal

Poynter, a member of the Black Panther Party and the Black Liberation Army is perhaps best known, at least in recent days, as the man who fought hardest for the freedom of his imprisoned radical wife, lawyer Lynne Stewart. He stood alone in the sweltering Washington D.C. summer sun for hours with a sign in front of the White House demanding her freedom.

But a reflection on his youth shows an unusual child, one of six children of the Poynter family in a small steel town in Western Pennsylvania called Vandergriff, a few miles from Pittsburgh. His father, George Poynter, was a union organizer there, and little Ralph would actually accompany him when he was just six years old. At twelve years old, he took pleasure at playing in the snow, making snowballs, and throwing them as far as he could.

One day another union organizer saw the boy throwing snowballs and said to Ralph, “You’re pretty good with that snowball, aren’t you?” Ralph replied, “Of course. I can hit anything I aim for, no matter how far.” The union organizer asked him to climb a hill overlooking the steel mill and explained to the boy that the union was on strike against the mill and that the guys being driven there were “scabs,” or men trying to take union jobs. He then asked Ralph to pack his snowballs with big rocks. Ralph did so. When he asked

Continued on page 65

Iyaluua Ferguson, 91 Years of Life, Love, and Struggle

BY Mumia Abu-Jamal

The long-term activist and educator Iyaluua Ferguson, wife of former political prisoner Herman Ferguson, has finally reached her rest. Born Constance Josephine Swan on June 28, 1932, in Brooklyn, her father, Chieftain Swan, and mother Mary Koch gave her a brother Charles and her sisters Julia and Gloria.

When she graduated summa cum laude with an Education Degree from Hunter College in 1965, she began a long and distinguished career as a teacher at P.S. 40. She found a partner in Herman Ferguson as both opposed the racism they found in the public school system in New York.

In 1967, Herman Ferguson got arrested and she helped begin a defense committee for him and other members of the Black Brotherhood Improvement Association. In 1972, Herman went into exile in Guyana in South America, where she would join him. On June 29, 1972, the two were married, and she would take the name Iyaluua.

Iyaluua Ferguson would continue her passion for education by becoming Executive Editor of the Guyana National Service Publishing Office, where she edited, wrote, and published educational materials for Guyanese students and teachers.

When the couple returned to America, Iyaluua would fight again for Herman’s freedom. Herman would work with the late Safia Bukhari and Jalil Muntaqim to found the Jericho Movement, a group fighting for the freedom of Black political prisoners.

Iyaluua and Herman would begin the Annual Political Prisoners Tribute Dinner to bring together the families of such prisoners to demonstrate that they were not alone and isolated.

Iyaluua and Herman retired in July 2000 to go home to North Carolina. Iyaluua is survived by ten grandchildren and thirteen great grandchildren. After 91 winters, she returns to her ancestors.

—Prison Radio, March 6, 2024


Banner held at The State of Genocide 24-hour vigil in Chicago during Biden’s State of the Union address, March 7, 2024. Read The State of Genocide on page 25.

Attention Prison Mail Room:

Prisoners retain their free speech rights under the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution. That means you cannot legally suppress the expression and consideration of ideas. Prison walls do not form a barrier separating prisoners from the protection of the Constitution, according to the Turner v. Safley ruling. [482 U.S. 78, 107 Sct 2245 (1987)] If you exclude printed matter on an improper basis, or give a false pretext or rationale for its exclusion, because of the ideas expressed in it, you are breaking the law. The prisoner denied access to material he wants to read can bring a civil rights lawsuit against you with cause for seeking punitive damages. In the case of Police Department Chicago v. Mosley, 408 U.S. 92, 95, 92 Sct 2286, 2290 (1972) the court found that “[A]bove all else, the First Amendment means that government has no power to restrict expression because of its message, subject matter or content.”