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# SocialistViewpoint

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

MAY/JUNE 2026 VOL. 26 NO. 3



***No Kings—A Socialist Viewpoint Editorial - Page 2***

***Guns vs. Butter—It's Our Choice - Page 4***

***Israel Isn't Driving the Iran War - Page 10***

***Washington's Conquest in Venezuela - Page 22***

***We Are Willing to Give Our Lives for the Revolution- Page 31***

# No Kings

*A Socialist Viewpoint Editorial*

BY CAROLE SELIGMAN

An estimated eight million people attended the March 28, 2026, No Kings protest demonstrations that took place in over 3,100 towns and cities across the United States as well as in some other countries. This was probably the largest mass demonstration in U.S. history, and it was a profound rebuke to President Trump and the government as a whole, especially the Republicans who have supported Trump's reactionary agenda wholeheartedly. But the Democrats did not escape the ire of masses of the millions of demonstrators who were angry about the new war on Iran as well as the attacks, arrests, and deportations of immigrants, the killings of Renee Good, Alex Pretti, Keith Porter Jr. and Silverio Villegas Gonzalez, the deaths in immigrant detention jails, the heavily armed occupations by ICE agents in L.A., Chicago, and especially Minneapolis, and the threats to continue these occupations in other cities.

It is critically important that a mass movement in the streets to oppose this war on Iran is built, and the No Kings protests were a good start for that endeavor. Likewise, the massive, localized response to the arrests, detentions, and deportations of thousands of immigrants by masses of mobilized people, especially in Minneapolis and St. Paul, Los Angeles, and Chicago, is setting the example for the country as a whole of what must be done in all communities. The No Kings mobilizations all across the country was a big supportive boost for those actions as well.

While it is true that organized Democratic Party elected officials, leaders, and operatives supported the March 28 actions, and are in leadership roles in Indivisible, 50501, ACLU, and other liberal organizations, I don't think you can say that they were in tight control of the No Kings actions. In many areas, speakers sharply criticized both Republicans and Democrats

for ineffective response to Trump, for enabling the genocide of Palestinians, for providing huge military budgets for war, for applauding the kidnapping of Venezuelan President Maduro and his wife, Celia Flores, for threats to "take" Cuba, for failing to protect voting rights and the courts. While the No Kings protestors were unanimously in opposition to Trump and his cabinet, large numbers of protestors on March 28 were protesting the U.S. government as a whole—both capitalist political parties, the whole administration, both houses of Congress, and courts—that have allowed the administration to enact part of the Trump agenda, particularly the Supreme Court.

So, while the No Kings protests are definitely not advocating a new independent political party nor a socialist revolution—both of which are needed to begin to solve the escalating problems of capitalism—they definitely are important indicators of mass opposition to the system and a willingness to march in the streets for change.

True, Democrats will try to make the midterm congressional elections the focal point for ongoing opposition to Trump, but there is a real desire by masses of working-class people to act and not just vote.

This is the time to promote the ideas of working-class independence from the political parties that are controlled by the billionaires. It is also the time to promote united mass action against war and for the human rights of immigrants, of women, of Black and Brown people, and the working class as a whole.



The No Kings protest in St. Paul, Minnesota, on Saturday, March 28, 2026.

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## CONTENTS

### U.S. and World Politics

- No Kings** ..... 2  
*By Carole Seligman*
- Guns vs. Butter—It’s Our Choice.** ..... 4  
*By Bonnie Weinstein*
- End the Bombing of Iran! No Blood for Oil!** ..... 6  
*By World-Outlook*
- Israel Isn’t Driving the Iran War** ..... 10  
*By Dan Glazebrook*
- Understanding Israelis’ Support for Iran War** ..... 14  
*By Jonathan Ofir*
- This Isn’t Just Trump’s War on Iran** ..... 15  
*By Stephen Zunes*
- “The Rope is for Arabs Only”** ..... 18  
*By Abdaljawad Omar*
- Trump’s “Board of Peace” Reveals Grim Future for Gaza.** ..... 20  
*By Mitchell Plitnick*
- Washington’s Conquest in Venezuela** ..... 22  
*By Pete Seidman and Yvonne Hayes*
- We Are Willing to Give Our Lives for the Revolution** ..... 31  
*Pablo Iglesias Turrión Interviews Miguel Díaz-Canel Bermúdez*
- How the World Fuels Sudan’s War** ..... 45  
*By Laura Wittebroek*

- School Strike in Germany: 50,000 Against Military Service** ..... 48  
*By Nathaniel Flakin*
- Twin Cities Electrical Workers’ Solidarity Against ICE** ..... 49  
*By Gabriel Legierski, Mike Plante, and Peter Rachleff*
- GOP School Censorship** ..... 51  
*By Timothy Messer-Kruse*
- How Flint Sit-Down Strikers Built Their Confidence** ..... 53  
*By Garrett Shishido Strain*
- Environment**
- Fukushima, 15 Years On** ..... 58  
*By Joshua Frank*
- Incarceration Nation**
- Israel’s Mandatory Death Penalty for Palestinians** .. 61  
*By Kevin Cooper*
- Zorro Jailhouse Lawyer’s Saga—An Interview with Bryant Arroyo** ..... 62  
*By Betsy Piette*
- Massachusetts Federal Court Ignores Nazi-Style Crimes in State Prisons** ..... 64  
*By Jordan Martell Rice*
- War: It’s All About Money** ..... 67  
*By Mumia Abu-Jamal*

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## Guns vs. Butter—It’s Our Choice

BY BONNIE WEINSTEIN

In an April 2, 2026, *New York Times* article titled, “Five Takeaways From Trump’s Address on Iran,” by Luke Broadwater and Tyler Pager, Trump declared:

“Over the next two to three weeks, we’re going to bring them back to the Stone Ages, where they belong.”

This declaration exposes the essence of capitalism— nothing is more sacred than private profits and massive accumulation of wealth—even if it means bombing the world back to the stone age.

And in an April 3, 2026, *New York Times* article titled, “Trump’s Defense Spending Request Could be Offset in Part by Steep Cuts to Domestic Programs,” by Tony Romm:

“With the United States at war with Iran and embroiled in conflicts around the world, the White House said on Friday that it would ask Congress to approve about \$1.5 trillion

for defense in the 2027 fiscal year. If enacted, that amount would set military spending at its highest level in modern history. The request, which arrived on Friday as part of President Trump’s new budget, would amount to a roughly 40 percent bump from what the United States spent on the Pentagon this fiscal year. The administration said it would couple the proposed increase with a call for \$73 billion in cuts across domestic agencies, including the elimination of some climate, housing and education programs. ... Some of the proposed cuts would target programs that serve minority groups and their communities, under the presumption that the spending—meant to expand access to lending, bolster minority-owned businesses and combat housing discrimination—is ‘woke,’ ‘weaponized’ or facilitates ‘cultural Marxism.’ ... The administration signaled it would reserve its most significant increases for law enforcement, including more

than \$40 billion for the Justice Department, a 13 percent increase.”

### Just how wealthy are the wealthiest 0.1 percent?

A March 2, 2026, *New York Times* article by Katie Benner and Steven Rich, titled, “Five Takeaways on America’s Boom in Billionaires” included these facts:

- Supercharged by Trump-era tax cuts and other policies that favor the rich, America’s wealthy minority has more power over the country than at any time in the last century.
- The richest Americans saw their net worth soar by 120 percent from 2017 to 2025
- The top one percent of American households, which have a minimum net worth of \$11.1 million, now collectively own about \$25.6 trillion worth of stocks and mutual funds, the same amount as the remaining 99 percent of the country, according to the Federal Reserve.
- Of the \$25.6 trillion worth of stock owned by the one percent, more than half is in the hands of the top 0.1 percent.”
- And as for corporations, “Typically, fewer than one percent of corporations now account for more than 90 percent of corporate profits.”<sup>1</sup>

### But let’s put these figures in perspective

As of March 2026, there is a record-breaking 3,428 billionaires worldwide, according to Forbes’ 2026 World’s Billionaires List.<sup>2</sup> That’s only 3,428 people—from the capitalist class—that owns the wealth of the entire world! That’s 3,428 people in power over 8.3 billion<sup>3</sup> people who actually do the work to create all that wealth!



Anduril’s autonomous air vehicle, Fury, which recently began production at the company’s new factory outside Columbus, Ohio.

As of early 2026, the United States has the highest number of billionaires in the world, with a record high of 989. Another recent report indicates that number could be as high as 1,135, with a combined net worth of roughly \$5.7 trillion. The U.S. leads billionaires globally ahead of China and India, with the majority concentrated in California.<sup>4</sup>

### **And what about millionaires?**

As of late 2025/early 2026, there are approximately 58 to 60 million millionaires worldwide out of 8.3 billion people. This affluent group represents about 1.5 percent of the global adult population. The United States leads significantly with over 22–24 million millionaires, accounting for roughly 40–41 percent of the global total. The top countries with the most millionaires are the U.S. (23.8M), China (6.3M), France (2.9M), Japan (2.7M), and Germany (2.7M).<sup>5</sup>

### **And what does world capitalism plan to do with all this wealth?**

According to an April 5, 2026, *New York Times* article by Sheera Frenkel, Paul Mozur and Adam Satariano, titled, “Mutually Automated Destruction: The Escalating Global A.I. Arms Race:”

“Russia, China and the United States are all building A.I. arms as a deterrent and for ‘mutually assured destruction,’ Palmer Luckey, Anduril’s founder, said in an interview in February. The buildup has been compared to the dawn of the nuclear age in the 1940s, when the atomic bomb’s destructive power forced rival nations into an uneasy standoff, leading to more than four decades of nuclear weapons brinkmanship. But while the implications of nuclear weapons are well understood, A.I.’s military capabilities are just beginning to be known. The technology—which does not need to pause, eat, drink or sleep—is set to upend warfare by making battles faster and more unpredictable, officials said. ... Even as the specifics of the technologies remain veiled, the intentions are clear. In 2017, Mr. Putin declared that who-

ever leads in A.I. ‘will become the ruler of the world.’ Mr. Xi said in 2024 that technology would be the ‘main battleground’ of geopolitical competition. In January, Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth directed all branches of the U.S. military to adopt A.I., saying they needed to ‘accelerate like hell.’”

The capitalists’ only goal is to build up their global war machines in competition for the world’s resources—so that the most powerful military will rule the world. The USA is already at the top of that list, and it certainly intends to remain at the top at any cost—including bombing the world back into the stone age.

### **But who creates the wealth that this tiny, capitalist minority owns and controls?**

The vast majority of the workers of the world—we, the 8.2 billion rest of humanity—workers and professionals of all kinds—farmers, teachers, doctors, nurses, health workers, builders, shippers, delivery workers, rail, bus, train and airplane workers, factory workers, restaurant workers, sales people—everyone who must collect wages to live, we are the ones who create all the wealth in the world. The capitalists—the tiny minority of humanity—own the means of production and all the wealth and profits created by our labor.

We get only a small portion of the wealth we create by our work, and we have to fight tooth and nail to get barely enough to feed and house ourselves and our families.

And all over the world, masses of people are being bombed, starved and driven from their homes by this tiny minority of wealthy despots who steal the resources of the world only to blow it up again to protect their dictatorship over the wealth that we create—all 8.2 billion of us.

### **We can be divided no more!**

The capitalist minority has done a great job of pitting worker against worker everywhere and for every reason they

can think of—race, religion, national origin, language, sexual orientation, economic standing, education—any kind of difference they can think of to divide us and keep us ignorant of the tremendous power we can have if we had democratic control over the means of production and all the wealth we create.

If we are united, we have the power to end private profits for capitalists altogether—to take the ownership of the means of production out of their hands and into our hands and for the good of all.

The world has no use for capitalism whatsoever. We have no use for war, borders, armies, or police—we could share the wealth of the world equally.

With a completely democratized workforce—we can make sure everyone has all the necessities and joys of life—housing, healthcare, education and ample free time to explore all our talents to the fullest.

We can do away with the production of war machines and turn our production towards supplying the needs of all based upon freedom, democracy and economic and social equality and rational planning.

We, all 8.2 billion of us, can create the kind of world we want to live and raise our children in. We know how to create the things we need and want—things of quality for everyone. All we have to do is end the capitalist dictatorship—and leave all the decisions to us, the majority of humanity.

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1 <https://www.nytimes.com/2026/04/18/business/dealbook/corporate-profits-record.html>

2 <https://www.forbes.com/sites/chasewithorn/2026/03/10/2026-worlds-billionaires-list-facts-and-figures/>

3 [https://www.worldometers.info/world-population/#:~:text=World%20Population%20Clock:%20208.3%20Billion%20People%20\(LIVE%2C%202026\)%20%2D%20Worldometer.](https://www.worldometers.info/world-population/#:~:text=World%20Population%20Clock:%20208.3%20Billion%20People%20(LIVE%2C%202026)%20%2D%20Worldometer.)

4 <https://www.wsj.com/finance/investing/what-we-know-about-americas-billionaires-1-135-and-counting-98d22268>

5 <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Millionaire>

# End the Bombing of Iran! No Blood for Oil!

By WORLD-OUTLOOK

## Editorial

March 7, 2026—The massive bombing of Iran unleashed by the U.S. and Israeli governments on February 28, 2026, has thrust the Middle East into a regional war. Tehran is retaliating with missiles and drones directed against U.S. and Israeli targets, as well as oil refineries and other installations in neighboring countries that directly or indirectly support Washington's unprovoked assault.

Drunk with the allure of imposing their will by military power after their recent success in Venezuela, the super wealthy families that rule the United States—alongside their Israeli allies—have sparked a bloody and expanding conflagration. While claiming to make the world “better off,” their “peace president” and his minions have opened up a new, more dangerous chapter.

This is an imperialist war, shaking the Mideast and threatening world peace. It has set back prospects for the Iranian people to eventually rid themselves of the oppressive regime in Tehran.

It is a war for oil.

Ranked third after Venezuela and Saudi Arabia, Iran sits atop one of the largest oil reserves in the world. Taking control of these enormous assets would put the U.S. military in a better position to face a future war with China—Washington's top competitor.

All this is done at the expense of working- and middle-class people in Iran and across the region.

**This war, and its  
shape-shifting rationale,  
are actually steered by  
one man—Donald Trump.**

So far, the White House has been mum about oil and China—its undeclared motivations for assaulting Iran. But the shifting rationales for the bombing offered by U.S. president Donald Trump and his top cabinet offi-

cials indicate they are all lying through their teeth about their true goals, or, at best, they don't know if, how, or when they may meet their objectives.

## The war's shape-shifting rationale

At his first public event since the attack began, Trump on Monday, March 2, never mentioned a key part of his initial justification for the war: deposing Iran's clerical regime.

Instead, he alleged Iran would “soon” have intercontinental ballistic missiles that could hit targets inside the United States—without offering any evidence such capabilities exist.

In a midnight announcement on social media during the first weekend of the war, Trump had outlined the attack on Iran as a push to devastate Tehran's rulers so that the Iranian people could take over. By Monday, that became “not a so-called regime change war,” in the words of U.S. war secretary Pete Hegseth.

Hegseth told reporters at the Pentagon the Iranian government was building sophisticated missiles and other conventional arms to shield its plans for a nuclear weapon. “Iran had a conventional gun to our head as they tried to lie their way to a nuclear bomb,” he claimed. (Never mind that his boss insisted in June 2025 the Pentagon had already “obliterated” Tehran's nuclear sites.)

Incredibly, Hegseth also told the media, “We didn't start this war, but under President Trump, we are finishing it,” claiming that Iran “waged a savage, one-sided war” for “47 long years” even if the country's leadership didn't “declare it openly.”

In reality, in the middle of ongoing talks with Iranian leaders in February, the White House decided to abruptly unleash the U.S. navy and warplanes against Iran in a joint operation with



Thousands turned out on March 3 in Minab, Iran, for the funerals of 165 girls and staff killed in a U.S. bombing raid during the joint U.S.-Israeli offensive that obliterated a primary school in Hormozgan province. Mourners condemned the imperialist war.

Israel, even though neither faced an imminent threat from Tehran.

U.S. secretary of state Marco Rubio offered a third rationale for going to war. Washington, he said, knew Israel was going to strike Iran, which would lead to counterattacks against U.S. forces and potential casualties, and decided to strike first to minimize the risk.

### **Antisemitic conspiracy theories**

This argument is already being used by the ultraright in the United States to peddle antisemitic conspiracy theories.

White supremacist Nick Fuentes, for example, has been outspoken about this. “Americans will die in terrorist attacks and in missile strikes so that Israel can expand its borders in every direction,” Fuentes declared. “Trump, Vance, and Rubio sold us out.”

Such sentiments, on the margins of right-wing politics now, can turn into a wave of antisemitic hatred of Jews if the war doesn’t go well for the White House.

As a March 3 newsletter by *Jewish Currents* put it, Rubio’s statement is “setting up American Jews to take the blame if the war goes badly, as it appears destined to do. Though left-wing and progressive Jews have tried to distinguish between Jews and Israel in the American imagination, mainstream Jewish institutions have done their best to confuse the issue, conflating criticism of Israel with antisemitism.” Most “mainstream” Jewish groups, like the Anti-Defamation League, rushed to back Trump’s war on Iran.

This war, and its shape-shifting rationale, are actually steered by one man—Donald Trump. A totally unpredictable president, who trusts only himself as his best advisor, and who does not think or care about consequences (except those that may affect him personally).

A March 5 Trump interview with *Axios* offered another illustration of this reality. Despite Hegseth’s denials—surely at the behest of his boss—Trump returned to his “regime change” justifi-

cation. Given the February 28 assassination of Iranian supreme leader Ali Khamenei in an Israeli strike, Trump told *Axios* he must be personally involved in selecting Iran’s next leader—just as he was in Venezuela.

A day later, Trump took this even further, “leaving his aides, and congressional allies, struggling to keep up and at times contradicting the president,” as the *New York Times* put it. In a March 6 social media post, Trump declared he would settle for nothing short of “unconditional surrender” by Iran. After Tehran’s submission would come “the selection of a GREAT & ACCEPTABLE Leader(s),” he mused.

**This is an imperialist war, shaking the Mideast and threatening world peace. It has set back prospects for the Iranian people to eventually rid themselves of the oppressive regime in Tehran.**

This must make most of the wealthy families that rule the United States nervous. Trump was not their top preference for leading their empire. But they couldn’t find a better alternative, and they are stuck with him. He doesn’t care about their opinions, and they don’t hold him in high esteem. But most of them, or the big-business media they control, won’t openly criticize his launching or handling of the war unless it goes badly.

As “Trump’s 2nd Term: One-Man Rule & the Danger of Incipient Fascism”, published by *World-Outlook* a year ago, put it, Trump’s “expansionist saber-rattling, attempts at resource grabbing reminiscent of the colonial era, and aggressive protectionism could lead to new

Wars and possibly another world conflagration. This is more likely in an increasingly unstable world in which ultrarightist forces have already ascended to power, or are knocking on its doors, in a rising number of ‘first-world,’ or more accurately imperialist, countries.”

### **Competition for the world’s oil supplies**

Khamenei’s killing, the targeting of other top Iranian government officials, and the broadening U.S. bombing raids, with civilian facilities hit alongside military installations, belie the Trump administration’s proclamations about “helping” the Iranian people.

The “regime change” Trump is toying with has nothing to do with freeing the people of Iran from the stranglehold of a repressive regime. Just as in Venezuela, “Operation Epic Fury” is about the oil.

And, just as in Venezuela, U.S. imperialism seeks to gain an advantage *vis-à-vis* China. Before the U.S. attacks, Beijing was buying more than 80 percent of the oil shipped from Iran, as well as having been the buyer of more than half of Venezuela’s oil exports. Together, this oil accounts for about 17 percent of Chinese petroleum imports, a significant share of its total needs.

The war in the Middle East has already expanded to involve most of the countries of the Arabian Peninsula, as well as Lebanon and Cyprus. On March 4, NATO forces intercepted a missile reportedly originating from Iran and headed toward Turkey. Among the NATO powers, France, Greece, and the United Kingdom have moved military assets closer to the war zone.

But the underlying competition between the United States and China threatens a much broader and more devastating military conflict down the road.

### **Behind Washington’s 47-year hatred of Iran**

To the dismay of U.S. imperialism, Iran’s oil reserves have been out of its

reach since Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi was deposed by a revolutionary upsurge of Iranian workers and peasants, as well as students and other youth, in 1979. From that moment, under then U.S. president Jimmy Carter, Iran has been a thorn in Washington's side.

During the first years of the Iranian revolution, working people made significant gains. The *shoras*—democratically elected workers' councils—pressed for workers' control of production in the factories; peasants seized landed estates and demanded agrarian reform; women fought for and secured new political and economic rights.

"One thing was lacking in Iran, however, that prevented working people from completing their victory by taking power into their own hands. There was no revolutionary party, composed in its majority of workers and peasants, experienced in the struggles of the oppressed and exploited, and enjoying the respect of the masses," as the accompanying article, "Revolution and Counter-revolution in Iran: The Origins of the Clerical Regime"<sup>1</sup> noted.

"This allowed the bourgeois forces organized around Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini to [eventually] establish a stable capitalist regime."

In the fall of 1980, the Iraqi army invaded Iranian territory with the backing of Washington and its allies, who had been thwarted by the outcome of the Iranian revolution a year-and-a-half earlier. The Khomeini regime's conduct during that war, which ground on for nearly eight years, played a major role in the eventual overthrow of the Iranian revolution.

"By 1988, when the war with Iraq ended," the article referenced above explained, "the clerics running Tehran had consolidated a theocratic regime on the corpse of the 1979 revolution. They have ruled dictatorially ever since."

For decades, the regime of Ayatollah Ali Khamenei—who succeeded

Khomeini after his death in 1989—has been marked by authoritarianism and repression. It set back the Iranian workers movement, already debilitated during the decade of the Iran-Iraq war, and kept it in check by repeatedly jailing and killing thousands of opponents.

**Given the February 28 assassination of Iranian supreme leader Ali Khamenei in an Israeli strike, Trump told *Axios* he must be personally involved in selecting Iran's next leader—just as he was in Venezuela.**

Another feature of the clerics' rule has been their vociferous antisemitism, fanning the flames of antisemitism against Jews in the Middle East with both rhetoric and material aid to bourgeois nationalist forces—such as Hamas or Hezbollah—that claimed to represent or support the Palestinian people's struggle for self-determination but instead set it back. This hatred of Jews is one of the excuses the U.S. and Israeli governments have consistently used as justification for their actions against Iran.

Most recently the Khamenei regime showed its true colors during protests that began on December 28, 2025. Initially sparked by staggering inflation, particularly in food and fuel—caused to a large degree by U.S.-initiated draconian sanctions, as well as government corruption—protesters increasingly turned their ire toward the ayatollah. In return, Tehran unleashed a fierce crackdown, firing metal pellets at close range into the crowds and threatening anyone involved in the protests with the death penalty.

By Iranian government estimates, the repression left 3,000 people dead in

a matter of days; others estimate the toll to be much higher.

On January 26, the *Human Rights Activists News Agency (HRANA)*, based in Iran, reported that 5,777 protesters had been killed, as well as 86 children, and 11,009 had been severely injured. Another 17,091 deaths are still under investigation, and 41,880 people have been arrested, according to *HRANA*.

### Washington's hypocrisy

In announcing the undertaking of "major combat operations in Iran," Trump addressed the Iranian people. "For many years, you have asked for America's help. But you never got it. No president was willing to do what I am willing to do tonight," he claimed. "Now you have a president who is giving you what you want."

"So, let's see how you respond," Trump continued, in his arrogant and paternalistic manner. "America is backing you with overwhelming strength and devastating force. Now is the time to seize control of your destiny, and to unleash the prosperous and glorious future that is close within your reach. This is the moment for action. Do not let it pass."

However, the assassination of the top ruling cleric and a number of other government officials, and the deaths of hundreds, is not the gift for the Iranian people wrapped in a U.S. flag that Trump proclaimed.

Even though many Iranians understandably celebrated Khamenei's killing, the assassination was a trampling of Iran's sovereignty and a flagrant violation of international law.

In truth, the war has set back the Iranian peoples' efforts to rid themselves of the oppressive clerical regime.

The recent wave of anti-government protests, including demonstrations by thousands of students at several universities across the country in late February—the first such actions since Tehran's deadly crackdown in

January—has subsided. This is to be expected in the middle of unceasing U.S. and Israeli bombings.

In addition, the Iranian government has been able to mobilize tens-of-thousands of supporters in many cities across the country patriotically shouting, “Death to America.”

On March 3, thousands in the southern city of Minab, Iran, participated in the funeral of 165 girls and staff killed in a U.S. bombing raid during the joint U.S.-Israeli offensive that obliterated a primary school in Hormozgan province. Mourners condemned the imperialist war.

In fact, popular indignation at the war’s toll is rising across the country, where more than 1,300 people have been killed so far as a result of the U.S. bombing, most of them civilians, according to *Al-Jazeera*.

Lasting change in the interests of the working people of Iran can only come about as a result of their own efforts, through mass action like the mobilizations that toppled the Iranian monarchy in 1979.

Trump and his ilk will never install a government anywhere that represents the interests of the vast majority—working people. Simultaneously with his call on the Iranian people “to seize [their] destiny,” Trump told the *New York Times* he had “three very good choices” to lead the country for them. Once again, the White House is preparing to call the shots.

There is ample historic precedent. Washington backed the shah’s bloody monarchy that ruled Iran with an iron fist since 1925, for more than half-a-century, until the people of Iran toppled it in 1979. The royal tyranny’s rein included a CIA-backed military *coup* in 1953 that overthrew the democratically elected government of Mohammad Mosaddegh for the “crime” of nationalizing Iran’s oil.

### **Contradictory claims: widening, but “not endless” war?**

Washington’s war on Iran is unpopular in the United States. Nearly 60 percent disapprove of the attacks, according to a *CNN* poll conducted immediately after the strikes. Two other polls, by *Reuters/Ipsos* and *The Washington Post*, had similar results.

**On the Democratic side of the aisle, the main complaint is that they didn’t get an invitation to the party. They protest that the Trump administration did not seek congressional approval to declare war under the War Powers Act. But few Democratic politicians are outspoken opponents of the war itself.**

These attitudes may become more widespread if U.S. casualties—so far six [As of mid-April 2026, the U.S.-Iran war has resulted in 13 to 15 confirmed U.S. service member deaths, with over 390-520 personnel injured, according to *Al Jazeera*<sup>2</sup> and *The Intercept*.<sup>3</sup>] have been acknowledged by the Pentagon—rise.

During his March 2 press briefing, Hegseth tried to quell this discontent. He promised “this is not Iraq.... this is not endless.”

However, both Trump and the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Dan Caine attempted to prepare the U.S. population for a longer engagement.

Caine announced the deployment of additional U.S. troops and materiel to the region. He gave no predictions

about the possible length of U.S. military operations.

Trump said his government initially “projected four to five weeks” as the likely duration of the war but noted the military has “the capability to go far longer than that.”

Trump stated he did not rule out the deployment of ground troops in Iran. Washington has never won a war through aerial bombing alone, and it is not likely to do so now. The White House is also arming Kurds in Iraq and pushing them, along with Kurds in Iran, to take over sections of western Iran to help with the Pentagon’s dirty work.

Despite growing concern in the U.S. population, most Republican politicians are falling into step behind Trump. The GOP closed ranks the first week of March and killed resolutions in Congress that would limit the president’s war powers.

On the Democratic side of the aisle, the main complaint is that they didn’t get an invitation to the party. They protest that the Trump administration did not seek congressional approval to declare war under the War Powers Act. But few Democratic politicians are outspoken opponents of the war itself.

In fact, the Democratic Party showed under the Biden administration that it is as gung-ho as the GOP in its desire to topple the Iranian regime and confront China. The Democratic elite is just not convinced Trump’s method is the way to do it.

Working people, youth, and other opponents of Washington’s imperialist wars cannot rely on representatives from either of the capitalist parties—Democrat or Republican—to lead the fight to bring U.S. troops home and to end the slaughter in the Middle East.

Now is the time to broaden protests that sprang up after the first bombing raids. United front actions—educating and drawing in broad layers of the population—are needed. These can

center on the growing demands to immediately end the bombing of Iran.

We can point to the government of Spain setting an example worthy of emulation. It has adamantly refused to allow U.S. warplanes to use the country—including two joint Spanish-U.S. military bases—as a launchpad for strikes on Iran, despite U.S. threats to cut off all trade with Madrid.

The U.S. military should immediately get out of the Middle East!

—*World-Outlook*, March 7, 2026

<https://world-outlook.com/2026/03/07/end-the-bombing-of-iran-no-blood-for-oil/>

1 <https://world-outlook.com/2026/03/07/revolution-and-counter-revolution-in-iran-origins-of-clerical-regime/>

2 <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2026/4/17/why-are-anti-war-protests-in-the-west-muted-on-iran>

3 <https://theintercept.com/2026/04/01/iran-war-us-casualty-numbers-trump-hegseth/>

**In truth, the war has set back the Iranian peoples' efforts to rid themselves of the oppressive clerical regime.**

## Israel Isn't Driving the Iran War

BY DAN GLAZEBROOK

Two days into the U.S. attack on Iran, Secretary of State Marco Rubio made the extraordinary claim that the war was, in fact, a legal, pre-emptive defensive measure necessitated by Israel's own pending strikes on the country. Scrambling for a legal fig leaf for the U.S. role in the aggression, he claimed that the Israeli strikes alone would have led to Iranian retaliation against U.S. forces in the region, and therefore Iran, although it did not know it, posed an imminent threat to the U.S., which the U.S. had the legal right to pre-emptively defend itself against. "We knew that there was going to be an Israeli action, we knew that that would precipitate an attack against American forces, and we knew that if we didn't preemptively go after them before they launched those attacks, we would suffer higher casualties," he told reporters on March 2nd.

This tortuous abuse of logic is, of course, a legal nonsense. I cannot legal-

punch you in the face and you might have retaliated. But legal niceties are, of course, not something in which Trump and his team have any interest.

Despite being an obvious pile of crap, Rubio's statement has been leapt on by many, on the left as well as on the far right, to somehow "prove" that the U.S. ruling class were bounced into a war against their own interests by the Israelis.

There is a section of MAGA that have always attempted to sell Trump as an isolationist, who will end U.S. involvement in foreign wars. Trump himself has never promised that—rather, he has consistently, and massively, ramped up military spending, and not only to build "deterrence," but in order to attack other countries; famously asking, what was the point of having a military if you are not going to use it? His criticism of the "Democrats' wars" was that they were supposedly launching them altruistically, to help the nations they were annihilating (for



Marco Rubio points the finger at Israel for leading the U.S. into the Iran War. (Screengrab from video of Rubio's press briefing.)

someone supposedly skeptical of the Democrats, he certainly swallowed a lot of their bullshit)—whereas he would never bomb people for their own good, but only to serve the U.S. Whether the parents of the resulting severed children would be able to discern the difference is, of course, moot.

Even Trump's supposed hostility to NATO, widely portrayed, even by many on the left, as evidence of Trump's "isolationism," is, in fact, a war plan. His threats to leave the alliance have been aimed, openly, at pressuring his allies to ramp up their own military spending. Why? To join the U.S. in future wars of aggression, in particular the looming big one, with China. As Jack Watling of the Royal United Services Institute has noted, Trump's regular humiliation of his European allies over their lack of military capability aims to coerce them into building up their militaries into a position where they are able "to hold down the Russian flank if the U.S. ends up in a conflict with China."

Trump's first term should have put to rest any ideas that Trump was somehow an "antiwar" President. His very first foreign visit was to the monarchical dictatorship of Saudi Arabia, to sign an \$110 billion arms deal, a massive show of support and material commitment to the horrific and genocidal war on Yemen that the Saudis were then carrying out on behalf of western capitalism.

During that first term alone he ramped up economic warfare on both Iran and China with punitive sanctions; approved the sale of lethal weaponry to Ukraine that Obama had banned; doubled the rate of U.S. global gun-running; launched airstrikes against the Syrian government in the midst of its struggle against ISIS and Al Qaeda; killed tens-of-thousands in the terror bombing of Raqqa and Mosul; and dropped the biggest non-nuclear bomb in history—in its first ever use—on impoverished Afghanistan.

By the end of the first year of his second term, he had already ordered 658 airstrikes, more than Biden managed in four years, on seven different countries.

Nevertheless, claimed his apologists, he has never directly launched an open war of regime change in the Middle East. Despite all the illegality, aggression, killing and bloodshed, this was the one thing that made him—and, by extension, the broader MAGA movement—somehow different from the Democrats. Now they no longer even have that.

Floundering to explain Trump's war, many of the movement's major spokespeople have seized on Israel's involvement as a convenient means of white-washing U.S. imperial interests.

**By the end of the first year of his second term, he had already ordered 658 airstrikes, more than Biden managed in four years, on seven different countries.**

Candace Owens, leading face of the far right's slick 21st century makeover and, until recently, a key Trump apologist, tweeted a message to U.S. soldiers that "Trump has betrayed America and expects you to die for Israel... This was not Trump's decision; it was Bibi Netanyahu's decision... Israel is dictating our foreign policy and we would now like that to stop." Tucker Carlson also claimed that Operation Epic Fury was being waged strictly on behalf of Israel, after he had visited Trump in the White House three times in the previous month, supposedly to lobby against the attack. Nick Fuentes, Alex Jones, Marjorie Taylor Greene and Megyn Kelly have all characterized the attack on Iran as a "betrayal" of the U.S., being fought purely on behalf of Israel, at the expense of American interests. Most

significantly, Joe Kent, Trump's most senior counter-intelligence officer, quit on 17th March with a bombastic resignation letter claiming that "we started this war due to pressure from Israel" who was also responsible for "draw[ing] us into the disastrous Iraq war."

Whilst it is no doubt pleasing to see the MAGA movement tear itself apart, this is a pernicious and foolish narrative. Playing into the key Trump theme of white victimhood, it portrays poor innocent USA as a well-meaning dupe of the Big Foreign (Jewish) Other—and airbrushes U.S. imperialism out of the picture altogether. And there are many on the left pushing the same line: Novara media's Aaron Bastani, for example, claimed that Rubio's comment demonstrates that U.S. and Britain have been "bounced into a conflict" by Israel and that "there's no 'national interest' about this."

The reality is that Iran has been in the crosshairs of the U.S. empire for decades. The Dubya-era policy of Full Spectrum Dominance had already spelt out a quarter of a century ago that the U.S. military required control of all aspects of the battlefield—air, sea and land—across the globe. The implication of this was that no regional independent power should be allowed to exist, as these could potentially deny U.S. military control over certain battlefields. Iraq—not just its government, but its potential to exist as a functioning, independent nation state—was taken out in pursuance of this strategy in 2003; and then in 2007 we learnt from former commander of U.S. forces in Europe, Wesley Clark, that the U.S. Defense Department had also planned to take out Somalia, Libya, Syria, Lebanon, Sudan and Iran in the years that followed. With the exception of Iran, all have now been wrecked by U.S. or U.S.-sponsored war.

Iran poses a particular threat to the U.S.-dominated colonial world order, for a number of reasons. Like Iraq, it

has a large population and rich resources, an exception to the standard arrangements in the Middle East, created by the British and French on the ashes of the Ottoman Empire following the First World War, which largely divided the region into countries with large populations and minimal oil (like Egypt) or significant oil resources and tiny populations (like the Gulf states). The presence of both in Iran gives its state a strength and independence almost unique amongst the countries of the region. And it has been consistently using this independent strength to resist imperialist designs—from the attempted annihilation of resistant populations in Yemen and Gaza, to the collapsing of the Syrian state, to the dollar’s monopoly as an oil-trading currency—for many years. Iran’s decision to start trading oil in the yuan in 2012 seriously rattled U.S. strategists, as the global tribute on which the entire U.S. military and economy depends rests on maintaining the dollar’s position as a reserve currency. This position is what enables the U.S. to exchange intangible dollars for the hundreds-of-billions-of-dollars-worth of real goods and services which it imports, effectively for free, each year—but only as long as other countries want dollars in the bank. And they only want dollars in the bank if they know they are tradable for the world’s uber-commodity—oil. The minute the link is broken, the whole system is under serious threat. Even if Israel did not exist, Iran’s very existence as an independent regional power, would still have to be destroyed in order to maintain U.S. imperial hegemony in its era of growing crisis.

Furthermore, Iranian military solidarity with Syria blocked, for many years, the west’s attempts at state collapse there; whilst their support for Hezbollah in Lebanon has acted as a brake on Israeli impunity. That is not only an Israeli problem. Israel is one of the key pillars of imperial control of

the Middle East (the other being the House of Saud), and acts as, in the words of Reagan’s Defense Minister, an “American aircraft carrier...that cannot be sunk.”

**Even if Israel did not exist, Iran’s very existence as an independent regional power, would still have to be destroyed in order to maintain U.S. imperial hegemony in its era of growing crisis.**

Then there is China. Ultimately, U.S. imperial hegemony requires the dismantling of China, openly cast since 2018, along with Russia, as the enemy, and the “principal priority” for the U.S. Defense Department. Jack Watling again, notes that the war on Iran is part of a broad U.S. global strategy to isolate China in preparation for a war which they are envisioning fighting as early as next year. Watling refers to “a global strategic view within the [U.S.] military and security community that they run the risk of being in what they would call global protracted simultaneous conflict with China but also others from next year. And in that context, they want to desynchronize those threats so that if a conflict breaks out over Taiwan it is just between the U.S. and China and certain regional countries... And there is a logic therefore for writing down Venezuela, Cuba ... and Iran as one of the greatest threats potentially to U.S. bases and supply lines. Now that’s a strategic logic for destroying the navy and the strike capabilities, the ballistic missiles that Iran has, which is broadly speaking the entire objective that has been articulated by the U.S. military.” Indeed, recent western wars, from Iraq to Libya

to Syria to Iran, can also be read as attempts to cut China off from its potential allies, its supply lines and its sources of raw materials in preparation for the big war with China.

And beyond U.S. hegemony, global capitalism as a whole requires war, as William I Robinson has repeatedly explained, in order to stave off its growing accumulation crisis. This crisis consists of ever declining avenues for profitable investment as markets become glutted, with workers too impoverished to consume what they produce. This brings capitalism up against one of its fundamental, and insoluble, contradictions: that as each individual capitalist is incentivized to maximize production and minimize wages, this very process cuts the ground from beneath the feet of the entire system, with the mass of workers simply unable to afford to buy what they produce (with ever increasing efficiency). War can provide a temporary respite, however, by eliminating a mass of productive capacity, and providing opportunities to invest in rebuilding from the ashes. It is no coincidence that the mechanism which transformed the “Great Depression” of the 1930s into the “Golden Era” of capitalism (from the 1950s to the 1970s) was precisely World War Two, the most destructive bloodletting humanity has ever inflicted on itself.

These are the forces driving the war on Iran, and they would exist even if Netanyahu, or Israel itself, had never been born.

Moreover, just because the war is going badly for the U.S., does not mean that it is not driven by imperial interests. As Mao liked to say, the imperialist picks up a rock only to drop it on his own two feet. This is not because some sneaky Jew talked him into it, as the Owens and Kents of this world would have it: it is because imperialism is fundamentally unsustainable, and even though the measures it takes to extend its dominance may end up hastening

its decline, it takes them anyway because the consequences of not doing so may well be judged as yet more calamitous. The war on Iraq went badly, and was widely seen as a disaster—yet it achieved its fundamental goal of knocking out Iraq’s potential as an independent regional power, and thus postponing the inevitable end of U.S. oil-dollar hegemony for a few years longer.

The war on Iran is also going badly. Twenty years ago, Eric Hobsbawm noted that the U.S. “can destroy us all, but it cannot make the world go its way anymore.” This appears to be true for Iran too: Trump can crow all he likes about killing several layers of Iran’s political leadership, sinking its navy, and destroying its infrastructure: but none of this will actually prevent Iranian attacks on Israel, the Gulf states, or even U.S. bases (including those thousands of miles away, such as Diego Garcia), nor will it open the Strait of Hormuz to the tankers of the U.S. and its allies. To do that will require an agreement. This war may prove to be a seminal moment in the collapse of U.S. and western hegemony, for it has demonstrated to the whole world that the U.S. cannot protect anyone. Given that U.S. foreign policy essentially amounts to nothing more than a protection racket, this is not a good look, as protection (from itself, from its allies, and from the fallout of its own aggression) is all it has to offer. And now, it is clear, it cannot even offer that. Taiwan will certainly be taking note, as it assesses whether to keep goading China or come to terms.

Mirroring the war on the ground, the information war, too, is falling apart. U.S. and Israeli officials are contradicting each other and themselves daily—over who started the war, over U.S. prior knowledge of the Israeli attack on South Pars; over whether the war aims at regime change; over whether even a single other country is willing

to help Trump pull his chestnuts out of the fire in the Strait of Hormuz. Trump’s threats to respond to any further attacks on Gulf energy infrastructure with the total obliteration of Iran’s gas fields was proven to be an empty threat after Iran completely ignored it and went on to repeatedly hit Kuwait’s Al-Mahdi oil refinery

Despite all this failure and recrimination, however, U.S. imperial logic still demanded this war. The only way to extend crumbling U.S. hegemony is to destroy regional powers with the capacity to resist its military domination. This means the permanent fracture and crippling of nations like Iran. As Trump himself has admitted, the war aim is to destroy Iran’s capacity to make missiles. Given that any country with even a moderately advanced economy has such a capacity, this amounts to a plan to prevent Iran from ever having a functioning industrial economy. Iraq is the model, or better still, Gaza.

**Israel is one of the key pillars of imperial control of the Middle East (the other being the House of Saud), and acts as, in the words of Reagan’s Defense Minister, an “American aircraft carrier...that cannot be sunk.”**

Trump has been open about his intention to destroy Iran since at least 2016 and stuffed his first Cabinet with Iran war hawks. Yet the U.S. did not feel it could launch a direct attack whilst Iran’s allies Hezbollah, Syria and Russia were all strong. It took time to get the pieces in place, and to get all three degraded, overthrown or bogged

down in their own war. Even with Iran isolated, however, this did not mean that a win was guaranteed; and it is becoming increasingly apparent that the U.S. ruling class were split about the operation’s wisdom and chances of success from the start. But this does not mean that the logic driving its timing—that this may be the only time to strike with a chance of winning, given that the world balance of forces is only going to change in Iran’s favor over time—was not essentially sound.

If we are to have a chance of ever emerging from this period of fascism and world war into which we are rapidly plunging, we need to enter it with eyes wide open. The far right are on the ascendancy, and, as fascism always is, they are very ideologically flexible. Today there is a fascism masquerading for everyone—a pro-Zionist fascism, and an anti-Zionist fascism; a libertarian fascism and a welfare statist fascism; an isolationist fascism and an imperialist one; a white supremacist fascism and a colorblind national chauvinist one. In the end, however, what unites them is that they are fundamentally anti-working class, and fully on board with the militarist build-up which is leading to world war. The U.S. ruling class is increasingly bent on channeling all anti-establishment, anti-authoritarian, and antiwar popular sentiment towards fascism; and needs, therefore, to have plenty of its spokespeople in place to absorb the popular anger against this war—and to do so in a way that utterly elides the reality of U.S. imperialism, blaming all its symptoms on the nefarious influence of its foreign junior partner. That the left would be party to this is indicative of the depth of work that needs to be done.

—CounterPunch+, March 22, 2026

<https://www.counterpunch.org/2026/03/22/israel-isnt-driving-the-iran-war-us-imperial-decline-is/>

# Understanding Israelis' Support for Iran War

By JONATHAN OFIR

Jewish-Israeli support for the illegal war of aggression against Iran is near-total. A recent Israel Democracy Institute poll (March 4) registered it at a whopping 93 percent. Naturally highest on the right (97 percent), it is still 93 percent at the center, and even an overwhelming 76 percent on the left. Opposition is at a negligible three percent. Let us also remember that 68 percent of Jewish-Israeli voters in the last elections were self-described right-wingers, and that percentage is rising to 75 percent among the first-time voters.

This overzealous support for the war in Iran reveals an inherent truth of Israeli society, demonstrated by this quote by Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu back in 2015, where he spoke at parliament, saying:

“I’m asked if we will forever live by the sword—yes.”

This was linked with his claim that “at this time we need to control all of the territory for the foreseeable future.”

So, Netanyahu ties up “living by the sword” to territorial expansion. This is a constant in Israeli policy—territory before security, and then claiming that keeping the gains is a matter of security.

That territory is, of course, Palestine from the river to the sea, but it goes further than that. Last month, the Israeli centrist opposition leader Yair Lapid, confirmed that territorial ambitions from the Euphrates in Iraq to the Nile in Egypt were part and parcel of Zionism, because “Zionism is based on the bible,” and “our ownership deed over the land of Israel is the bible.” Lapid was basically in agreement with the Christian Zionist U.S. Ambassador to Israel, Mike Huckabee, who had earlier opined that Israel could just “take it all,” from the river to the river, that is.

Well, you know, the Euphrates river, at the southern point, runs just ten miles from Iran, and the joint Tigris-Euphrates basin, where it ends, is also in Iran. So, one could arguably expand and include

Iran in the picture, in addition to Turkey, Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and Egypt. After all, it’s not exact science. And if there’s one thing Israel is good at, it’s expanding.

Iranian-born, Israeli journalist Orly Noy, wrote an excellent piece in *+972 Magazine*, titled “We are at war, therefore we are” (March 1). Here she noted Netanyahu’s dramatic proclamation from June:

“Only eight months ago, following the ceasefire with Iran, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu declared that ‘in the 12 days of Operation Rising Lion, we achieved a historic victory, which will stand for generations.’ It turns out this ‘historic victory’ did not last even a single year, let alone generations.”

But this time it’s different:

“This time, the attack came with an added objective: liberating the Iranian people from the oppressive rule of the ayatollahs. For it is well known that one of Israel’s central roles in the Middle East is to rain freedom upon the peoples of the region with fighter jets and bombers.”

Israelis are supposedly for removing an existential threat. But Iran isn’t really that. The problem is not that the Iranian regime is crazy, but rather that it is calculated in challenging Israel politically. In 2012, former Mossad chief Meir Dagan, called the Iran’s regime “a very rational regime.”

It is Israel that needs to coat its craziness with heroism. Thus, it is now on a most moral mission to “save Iran from itself.” Its recent aggressions against Iran apply the heroic lion association, no doubt to also appeal to the Iranian royalists whose flag bears that symbolism.

The lion rose, the lion roared.



Israelis take part in the flag march marking Jerusalem Day on May 18, 2023. (Photo: Ilia Yefimovich/DPA via Zuma Press/APAImages)

The support for this supposed war of liberation naturally included the liberal (yet biblically maximalist) Lapid: “In moments like these we stand together—and we win together. There is no coalition and no opposition, only one people and one IDF, with all of us behind them,” he wrote.

It also included the furthest left of the Zionist political spectrum, Yair Golan, leader of The Democrats, the merger of Labor and the further left Meretz:

“The IDF and the security forces are operating with strength and professionalism. They have our full backing.”

Well of course, Golan, the army general, the leftist who advocated for starving Gaza’s population and hoped to see that “seven million Palestinians who live between the sea and the river have simply disappeared,” supports that military liberation operation.

Any leader in Israel knows that lining up the entire Zionist political spectrum behind them is possible with war, for some time at least. One would almost be a fool not to start a war, if one was an Israeli leader struggling with backing, polls, court cases and facing an election this year, which Netanyahu is. While some polls are suggesting a victory for Netanyahu’s current coalition in a future election, others are suggesting a stalemate with opposition parties, and Netanyahu seeks a decisive element that can cut through that.

What is clear is that the Zionist vision of Greater Israel and beyond continues. The genocide continues, the ethnic cleansing continues, and the annexations continue, and Israelis seem to be in the conviction that this is just how it’s meant to be. Constant war,

to sustain our constant expansion. Because we live in a “villa in the jungle,” as former Prime Minister Ehud Barak used to say. The perception of a war of civilization against barbarism, is as old as Zionism itself.

—Mondoweiss, March 22, 2026

[https://mondoweiss.net/2026/03/forever-live-by-the-sword-understanding-israelis-massive-support-for-iran-](https://mondoweiss.net/2026/03/forever-live-by-the-sword-understanding-israelis-massive-support-for-iran)

**...it is well known that one of Israel’s central roles in the Middle East is to rain freedom upon the peoples of the region with fighter jets and bombers...**

## This Isn’t Just Trump’s War on Iran

Both parties paved the way for disaster

BY STEPHEN ZUNES

Unlike the invasion of Iraq, which received the support of a sizable minority of congressional Democrats, Donald Trump’s war on Iran has received near-universal criticism. Still, the party has focused primarily on process-style critiques—such as the legality of declaring the war under the Constitution and the war’s economic impact—rather than the humanitarian consequences and flagrant violations of international law.

That should not come as a surprise to anyone familiar with the U.S. bipartisan consensus on Iran: For over 20 years, a number of prominent Democratic leaders—and in some cases, large majorities of congressional Democrats overall—have helped paved the groundwork for Trump’s war by issuing exaggerated and alarmist statements about Iran’s supposed danger to the region, threatening the use of mili-

tary force, and undermining diplomatic initiatives, sometimes even criticizing Republicans from the right.

In 2024, the Democratic Party platform criticized “Trump’s fecklessness and weakness in the face of Iranian aggression during his presidency” by not responding militarily to attacks by Iran and groups in Iraq and elsewhere that share Iran’s strategic objectives. The platform cited four separate incidents that took place under his first administration, failing to acknowledge that each was a direct result of Trump’s aggressive policies against Iran, including the assassination of Qassim Suleimani, a top Iranian general.

By contrast, the party’s platform praised President Joe Biden for having “authorized precision airstrikes on key Iranian-linked targets,” which it claimed would “deter further aggres-

sion by Iran.” It praised “America’s ironclad commitment to the security of Israel and our unrivaled ability to leverage growing regional integration among U.S. partners to counter Iranian aggression.” Though eager to stress military means to counter Iran, the platform failed to directly call for a return to the Iran nuclear deal under the Obama administration, which considerably reduced regional tensions—a deal that Biden campaigned on reinstating but failed to do.

The month after the release of the party platform, Democratic nominee Kamala Harris attacked Trump in a presidential debate, declaring that her administration “will always give Israel the ability to defend itself, in particular as it relates to Iran and any threat that Iran and its proxies pose to Israel.”

## Leading Democrats push for military attacks on Iran

In an interview with *CBS*, when she was asked who she considered to be the greatest enemy of the United States, Harris said it was “obvious” that Iran—not nuclear-armed states such as Russia, China, or North Korea—was the “greatest adversary.” She explicitly said that she would not rule out going to war against that country.

This framing from the right continued into Trump’s presidency, even as the president began pushing more toward sustained military conflict. During Israel’s unprovoked bombing of Iran in June 2025, Senate Democratic leader Chuck Schumer insisted that “Israel has a right to defend itself,” despite the fact that Israel had started the war. Just over a week before, he criticized Trump for even engaging in negotiations with Iran—negotiations that provided cover for the U.S.’s own bombing of multiple Iranian nuclear sites. Just prior to the U.S. bombing of Iranian nuclear sites during Israel’s war, Schumer posted a video to social media accusing Trump of “folding on Iran” by attempting to negotiate a deal, bemoaning about how

“Trump always chickens out” regarding the use of military force.

Similarly, House Democratic leader Hakeem Jeffries refused to criticize the Israeli attack or call for a return to the Iran nuclear deal. Although Iran has no capability of striking anywhere outside of the Middle East, Jeffries claimed “the Iranian regime poses a grave threat to the entire free world.”

**...over 90 percent of House Democrats were intent on undermining Obama’s efforts for a non-military resolution to the conflict with Iran...**

Such hyperbole is not new. As far back as 20 years ago, Democratic leaders like then-Senator Evan Bayh were claiming that Iran “may be only months away from having the capacity to build a nuclear bomb” and insisting military options should be considered. Similarly, then-Senator Hillary Clinton argued during the Bush years that his adminis-

tration was not taking the threat of a nuclear Iran seriously enough, criticizing it for allowing European nations to take the lead in pursuing a diplomatic solution, and insisting that the administration should make it clear that military options were being actively considered. These proclamations came even as the U.S. was struggling to maintain control of Iraq at the height of its occupation.

During the 2008 Democratic primaries, Clinton accused Barack Obama of being “naive” and “irresponsible” for wanting to diplomatically engage with Iran and other nations that U.S. policy has often antagonized. Despite these accusations, Obama selected her as his secretary of state, through which, according to a story in *Time* magazine, Obama administration officials noted she was “skeptical of diplomacy with Iran and firmly opposed to talk of a ‘containment’ policy that would be an alternative to military action should negotiations with Tehran fail.”

Clinton was far from the only Democrat pushing back against the Obama administration’s diplomatic efforts. In 2011, in an effort to sabotage any potential diplomatic contact with Iran, an overwhelming majority of House Democrats voted for a Republican bill declaring “No person employed with the United States Government may contact in an official or unofficial capacity any person that ... is an agent, instrumentality, or official of, is affiliated with, or is serving as a representative of the Government of Iran.” Administration pressure and constitutional questions prevented the bill from passing the Senate, but it underscored that over 90 percent of House Democrats were intent on undermining Obama’s efforts for a non-military resolution to the conflict with Iran.

The following year, a similarly large majority of House Democrats voted for a resolution urging the president to oppose any policy toward Iran “that



U.S. Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer speaks during a news conference following a weekly Democrat policy luncheon at the U.S. Capitol on April 14, 2026, in Washington, D.C.

would rely on containment as an option in response to the Iranian nuclear threat.” While Obama had already stated a willingness to consider taking military action against Iran if the regime procured nuclear weapons, this resolution significantly lowered the bar for war by declaring it unacceptable for Iran simply to have “nuclear weapons capability”—not necessarily any actual weapons or an active nuclear weapons program.

In 2013, after Clinton was replaced by the more liberal John Kerry as secretary of state and Iranians elected the reformist President Hassan Rouhani, yet another overwhelming majority of House Democrats joined Republicans in voting, over the objections of the White House, to impose punitive new sanctions on Iran. It was widely interpreted as a bipartisan rejection of the new Iranian president’s offer to enhance nuclear transparency and pursue “peace and reconciliation” with the West.

Additionally, in an apparent effort to poison the atmosphere on the eve of Rouhani’s inauguration, over two dozen Democratic senators signed a letter to President Obama demanding a “toughening of sanctions” and “a convincing threat of the use of force.”

In May of that year, every Democratic senator joined their Republican colleagues in supporting a resolution which “urges that, if the Government of Israel is compelled to take military action in self-defense, the United States Government should stand with Israel and provide diplomatic, military, and economic support to the Government of Israel.” The wording is significant in that it put Senate Democrats on record that the United States should support an Israeli war on Iran not only if Israel was attacked, but even if Israel attacked first. By giving Benjamin Netanyahu the authority to determine what might “compel” Israel to act in “self-defense,” this near-unanimous decision helped pave the way for Israel to make such claims in its U.S.-backed war in June 2025 and the joint U.S.-Israeli war

this year.

Fortunately, by 2015, the Obama administration—along with Great Britain, France, Germany, Russia, and China, and with the backing of the European Union and the United Nations—was able to negotiate an agreement whereby, in return for sanctions relief, Iran drastically curtailed its nuclear program to the degree that it was physically impossible to build a nuclear weapon, while also agreeing to strict monitoring to ensure compliance. It took perhaps the most intense lobbying efforts of the Obama presidency to get congressional Democrats on board. In the end, only two Democratic senators, Robert Menendez and Chuck Schumer, opposed the agreement, but their colleagues nevertheless elected them to senior positions—Menendez as chair of the Foreign Relations Committee and Schumer as their Senate leader.

The 2016 Democratic platform endorsed the nuclear deal—but declared that, if Iran violated the agreement, rather than allow for the automatic reimposition of strict international sanctions to pressure Iran to come back into compliance as the deal outlined, a Democratic president “will not hesitate to take military action.” Since it would take Iranians at least a few years to rebuild their dramatically circumscribed nuclear program to the point where they could develop even a single nuclear weapon, there would be plenty of time, as well as serious punitive economic mechanisms, to push Iran to resume its compliance. Immediately launching a war, as the platform called for, would therefore not only be a direct violation of the United Nations Charter, it would be completely unnecessary.

This is only a partial list of ways in which Democrats have pushed for a military confrontation with Iran over the past couple of decades. Even today, the fact that Democratic leaders still

support unconditional military aid to Israel and Netanyahu, Trump’s partner in the illegal attacks on Iran, raises questions about their sincerity in opposing the war.

It is highly unlikely the United States would have launched a full-scale war under a Democratic administration as it has under Trump. However hawkish many in the Democratic leadership have proven to be, they would have been far more likely to listen to allied governments, as well as the broad consensus of strategic analysts, intelligence officials, and military leaders that make up the foreign policy elite, many of whom have long warned of the serious consequences of going to war.

At the same time, it is important to recognize how Democrats share responsibility with Republicans for creating the climate that made such a war possible.

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—Truthout, April 17, 2026

<https://truthout.org/articles/this-isnt-just-trumps-war-on-iran-both-parties-paved-the-way-for-disaster/>

# “The Rope is for Arabs Only”

Israel’s new death penalty law for Palestinians recycles a colonial playbook

By ABDALJAWAD OMAR

The picture of Israeli National Security Minister Itamar Ben-Gvir jubilantly trying to open a champagne bottle on the Knesset floor over the passing of a death penalty law for Palestinians will be anchored in history as one of those photographs that needs no caption.

It’s the image of a country that has never truly left the colonial moment into which it was born. It didn’t simply inherit British practices but kept them alive for over 70 years. It now reaches back to retrieve one of the darkest of these practices.

Israel’s new death penalty law, which exclusively targets Palestinians, did not come out of nowhere. It was passed down from a scaffold the British had already built on the same land, testing it on the same people under the same sky. In his study of Britain’s “pacification” of Palestine, Matthew Hughes, a military historian at Brunel University, shows how the military courts established by the British Mandate in November 1937 were built for speed above all else—a terror performed so quickly that no one had time to appeal or look away. Shaykh Farhan al-Sādi, an elderly Qassamite revolutionary leader and one of the principal field commanders of the 1936 uprising, was captured on a Monday, tried on a

Wednesday, and hanged on a Saturday. It’s the same law Israel reintroduced today.

What those courts also reveal is that British execution policy was, from the beginning, applied differently depending on who stood before the judge. Palestinians were hanged for carrying four bullets; Jews received prison sentences for firing weapons. The courts were equal on paper and unequal in practice, and everyone living under them knew it.

**The widened application of capital punishment in the courts gave license to soldiers in the field. What we are watching in Gaza, Lebanon, and the West Bank today follows the same pattern, pushing the boundaries of permissible conduct.**

Bahjat Abu Gharbiyya, a Palestinian nationalist and resistance fighter who lived through the British Mandate and

left some of the most detailed firsthand accounts of that period, documented this disparity plainly: in his account, the capital sentence fell on Arabs, while Jews charged with the same or graver offenses walked away with prison sentences. The rope, in practice, was for Arabs only.

The new Israeli law carries this same racism forward, entering a prison system where Palestinians make up the vast majority of political prisoners, and where the definition of who is dangerous has been stretched until it fits almost anyone who refuses to disappear quietly. The rope, as it always has been in Palestine, is for Arabs only.

There is something else that legalizing execution does, something beneath the law’s stated purpose that may be its more consequential effect. Hughes shows that in Mandate Palestine, official policy and unofficial violence never operated separately. As British courts hanged men with increasing speed and confidence, the threshold for what soldiers felt permitted to do in the field quietly fell. At Miska, a Palestinian village in the coastal area, British police tortured four captured Palestinian rebels in May 1938, killing them once interrogation was complete—not in a courtroom, but in the open.

Law and lawlessness were not opposites in that system: they fed each other. The widened application of capital punishment in the courts gave license to soldiers in the field. What we are watching in Gaza, Lebanon, and the West Bank today follows the same pattern, pushing the boundaries of permissible conduct.

For years, Israeli forces already operated under rules that permitted the shooting and killing of unarmed persons, so long as they could nominally



Palestinians protesting the Knesset’s passing of the death penalty law exclusively for Palestinians, Gaza City on April 1, 2026. (Photo: Hashem Zimmo/APA Images)

be deemed a threat. But Israel's current war has expanded this category to the point that nearly everyone can now be made into a target.

### **A codification of existing practice**

In this sense, Israel is not doing something new with this law. It is catching up with itself. The execution law is largely a shield designed to protect soldiers from even the limited threat of accountability, and to formalize what the field has already made routine. According to Israeli rights group Yesh Din, of the 1,260 complaints filed against soldiers for harming Palestinians between 2017 and 2021, soldiers were prosecuted in less than one percent of cases—0.87 percent, to be precise. The law does not create impunity but guarantees it. Once enshrined, it pushes the violence further, each legal expansion making extrajudicial killing easier to justify, and each unjustified killing creating pressure for new legal cover. They drive each other.

For decades, Israel maintained a public performance of conscience. The language of democracy, the announcements of investigations, the carefully worded regret after each killing—none of this changed what was happening, but it served a purpose: it kept Western governments comfortable enough to provide diplomatic and military cover, and gave Israeli liberal society a way to say: this is not who we are, this is an exception, this will be looked into. The champagne bottle ends that performance—not because Ben Gvir has changed what Israel does, but because he has decided it no longer needs to be explained or excused.

What Israel does and what Israel is willing to admit to doing are now the same thing. And when a political project stops apologizing for itself, it rarely goes back. The frankness becomes normal, the normal becomes policy, and the policy becomes law—until what was once unsayable is written into statute, and what was written into statute becomes the last thing a family sees

through a car window on the way home, or what two wanted Palestinian men see before being executed while surrendering to Israeli soldiers. That is what happened in Tammoun and Jenin in recent months.

### **Refusing Israel's timetable for death**

Execution is scheduled death—the state's claim that it alone decides when a life ends, that the moment of dying belongs to power and not to the one who dies. The British knew this when they hanged al-Sa'di on a Saturday, moving fast enough that no appeal, no intercession, and no calendar could intervene. Israel knows it now, writing the hour of execution into law so the decision becomes permanent.

**The execution law is largely a shield designed to protect soldiers from even the limited threat of accountability, and to formalize what the field has already made routine.**

And the logic of this law is the same logic driving Israel's war, both depending on controlling the sequence and deciding not only who is targeted, but when, in what order, and on whose terms. Israel's war has moved through its fronts one at a time: Gaza decimated, Lebanon engaged and paused, Iran struck twice, and later the West Bank. Each front is kept separate from the others, each managed in its own contained interval so that no single front becomes the moment that breaks the timetable. The war machine, like the military court, works best when it holds to the schedule.

But Ibrahim Tuqan, Palestine's foremost poet of the Mandate era and the man who turned the gallows into the

defining image of Palestinian resistance, wrote the oldest answer to this belief in his poem, "The Red Tuesday." It has aged well.

The poem recounted the death of three Palestinian revolutionaries who had participated in a precursor event to the 1936 uprising, hanged by the British on Tuesday, June 17, 1930. Fouad Hijazi, Muhammad Jamjoum, and Atta al-Zir were set to be executed in three consecutive hours in Acre prison, each execution timed so that each death arrived alone, and that each grief was absorbed before the next. And this is exactly what Israel's war planners are doing today: sequencing death, containing resistance, and managing the intervals.

Tuqan's poem is structured around this very fact. Rather than narrating the executions from the outside, he gives each of the three hours its own voice—the first hour speaks, then the second, then the third, each one personifying the martyr whose death it contains. The hour is not a passive unit of time in the poem; it is a claimant. By doing this, Tuqan takes the executioner's instrument—the scheduled interval, the managed sequence—and hands it back to the men who died inside it. Each hour becomes the martyr's own declaration rather than the state's mechanism of elimination.

But what the empire had not written into its schedule was what the condemned men did next. They began to fight each other for the right to die before their comrades, collapsing three managed hours into a single racing will to be the first martyr. Tuqan captures this by giving the second hour its own voice, letting it speak its impatience directly:

"I jostled the one standing in front of me to reach the honor of immortality first."

What resistance across this region is attempting to do, unevenly and at enormous cost, is exactly this: to refuse the

Continued on page 65

# Trump's "Board of Peace" Reveals Grim Future for Gaza

BY MITCHELL PLITNICK

February 20, 2026—It's said that where there's smoke, there's fire. But sometimes, the smoke is meant to create the illusion of a fire.

Such is the case with Donald Trump's speciously named "Board of Peace," which met this week for the first time.

It's a motley crew of authoritarians and Trump lapdogs, and the speeches reflected that. One leader after another offered empty platitudes and gushing, albeit fictional, praise of the U.S. President.

There is a surreal quality to Trump convening a "Board of Peace" as he muscles up for what is increasingly looking like an inevitable, and disastrous, attack on Iran and blithely declaring that he has brought "peace to the Middle East" as Israel continues to slaughter Palestinian civilians in droves.

But when we get past the theatrics and the hypocrisy, nothing about this "Board of Peace" is changing anything. Its impact in Gaza is currently zero; the conditions, the killing, and the tensions there would be identical even without this "Board of Peace."

But it is still important to follow gatherings like what Trump convened

on Thursday. Even if what was discussed is irrelevant to life on the ground for the moment, it is still illustrative of what Israel and its allies are seeking to build on the remains of the genocide. If Thursday was any indication, this augurs a very grim outlook for Gaza.

## Reality intrudes on the "Board of Peace"

Much attention has rightly been paid to the fact that Trump invited both Benjamin Netanyahu and Vladimir Putin to sit on the Board. Both men, of course, face charges of war crimes for which they are wanted fugitives by the International Criminal Court.

Israel agreed to join the Board just before Netanyahu met with Trump last week. Russia has yet to respond to the invitation. There is, quite pointedly, no Palestinian presence on the Board whatsoever. Indeed, this week, the Trump administration announced it had established formal two-way "communication" between the Board of Peace and the Palestinian Authority, a body that is no longer credible in the eyes of most Palestinians. So Palestinian contact, let alone input, remains minimal at best.

The current members of the Board of Peace are: Albania, Argentina, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bahrain, Bulgaria, Cambodia, Egypt, El Salvador, Hungary, Indonesia, Israel, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kosovo, Kuwait, Mongolia, Morocco, Pakistan, Paraguay, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, United Arab Emirates, Uzbekistan, and Vietnam.

That's a list of authoritarian states and leaders desperate to win Donald Trump's favor. It's noteworthy that just a handful of Eastern European states joined, and none, aside from Israel, are traditionally close allies of the United States.

About two dozen other states did send observers to the meeting of the Board, as did the European Union, but many of them have already made it clear they will not join (even the Pope has refused), and clearly wanted to be in the room just to get a first-hand look at what would happen there.

What happened was very little.

While the focus was technically on Gaza, almost nothing of substance came out of the meeting regarding Palestine at all. Trump said the U.S. would donate \$10 billion to the Board of Peace, but he failed to specify what the money would be used for or how he intended to raise it, since Congress, not the President, controls the United States' checkbook.

Trump also stated that Kazakhstan, Azerbaijan, UAE, Morocco, Bahrain, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Uzbekistan, and Kuwait would be coming up with \$7 billion for rebuilding Gaza.

But it's all smoke, as the "reconstruction plan" for Gaza remains far out of reach. Israel maintains control of more than half the Strip, is launching daily, deadly attacks, and is doing all it can to prepare the ground for a new wave of



Group photo taken at the first meeting of the Trump-led "Board of Peace," in Washington, DC, on February 19, 2026. (Photo: White House)

full-blown genocide.

Hamas and other Palestinian factions—none of whom, the world must be reminded, ever agreed to disarm themselves—are about to submit to sacrificing their right to fight against Israel's siege and occupation, which is guaranteed under international law.

None of the states that have pledged troops intend for those troops to confront Palestinian factions; rather, they are supposed to be a peacekeeping force, maintaining security alongside a Palestinian police force.

But that police force, which the U.S. is trying to assemble from the armed Palestinian gangs that are either employed by Israel or are simply free-lance bandits, is not coming together any time soon, either.

Under those circumstances, none of Trump's cronies are going to send either troops or funds to Gaza for his Board of Peace, no matter what they told him as they fawned over him in Washington this week.

### **Little relief in sight in Gaza**

The Board of Peace managed to secure United Nations Security Council approval, along with Trump's terminally flawed "20-Point Peace Plan." That combination means that the fiction of bringing "peace" to Gaza granted the Board a certain air of legitimacy; it was sold as a means to finally end the periodic Israeli "lawn mowing" that, after October 7, morphed into a genocidal horror that horrified a normally complacent Western world.

The truth is, as I've noted before, Trump has much bigger aspirations for the Board of Peace. That's why he created the so-called "Executive Board," which will be the tool he intends to use to govern Gaza to turn it into a resort town on the Mediterranean with a reduced number of Palestinians acting as quaint "native servants" for tourists, in Trump's and Jared Kushner's racist vision.

The Board of Peace, as Trump hinted during his remarks on Thursday, is intended to challenge the United Nations and serve as a vehicle for Trump's personal and family power even after he has left office.

"The Board of Peace is going to almost be looking over the United Nations and making sure it runs properly," he told the audience.

Meanwhile, Gaza remains stuck in limbo. The technocratic committee that is supposed to take over the day-to-day administration and civic responsibilities in Gaza (and represents the full extent of Palestinians' involvement in governing their own lives) remains in Egypt, their entry into Gaza barred by Israel.

But never fear, they do have a name: the National Committee for the Administration of Gaza (NCAG). They even have a logo, one which is very reminiscent of that of the Palestinian Authority, so Israelis have found a reason to complain even about that.

All of this remains incidental and amounts to little more than a distraction. Israeli leaders are eager to get back to the intense violence that crushed Gaza for two years.

Foreign Minister Gideon Sa'ar represented Israel at the Board of Peace con-fab and made it absolutely clear that the threat of major violence is very real.

"Distinguished leaders, all previous plans for Gaza failed because they never addressed the core issues: terror, hate, incitement, and indoctrination," he told the gathering. "At the heart of President Trump's comprehensive plan are the disarmament of Hamas and Islamic Jihad, demilitarization of the Gaza Strip, and deradicalization of Palestinian society there."

Sa'ar's words built on Netanyahu's own threats. "Hamas will very soon face a dilemma. Lay down its weapons the easy way or the hard way," he told an audience of Israeli soldiers on Thursday.

Meanwhile, even more extreme figures such as Knesset Member Limor Son Har-Melech of Itamar Ben-Gvir's Kahanist "Jewish Power" party, joined a rally of the radical settler group Nahala earlier this week to infiltrate Gaza—under the full protection of the Israeli army, naturally—to plant trees there in anticipation of the return of Israeli settlements.

"Where the Jews rule over their enemies' is not just a verse in the Book of Esther, it is the reality we are building here on the ground. Gaza will be Jewish, because only in this way will we ensure victory and real security for the people of Israel," she said during the ceremony.

Nahala is planning a march into Gaza over Passover, which begins on April 1. If Netanyahu gets his way, Har-Melech will be frustrated because the full-scale invasion of Gaza will have resumed by then. Perhaps it will take longer if Trump's timetable dictates a delay. But it's coming.

This is where the Palestinians in Gaza find themselves: trapped between the madness of the radical settlers and the expansionist dreams of the Israeli government. Genocide stares them in the face in either case, while the international community plays games to appease Donald Trump, and American weaponry flows into Israel while its warships prepare to decimate Iran.

The "Board of Peace" isn't even relevant enough to this reality to be a joke.

—Mondoweiss, February 20, 2026

<https://mondoweiss.net/2026/02/trumps-board-of-peace-reveals-grim-future-the-u-s-and-israel-have->

# Washington's Conquest in Venezuela

BY PETE SEIDMAN AND YVONNE HAYES

## Part 1

On January 3, 2026, U.S. forces bombed Venezuela and abducted the country's president, Nicolás Maduro, and his wife, Cilia Flores. In an editorial that day, *World-Outlook* unequivocally condemned this attack on the country's sovereignty. "End U.S. imperialist aggression in Venezuela! Free Maduro and Flores! No blood for oil!" the editorial in *World-Outlook* concluded, demands that we continue to embrace today.

The U.S. assault, *World-Outlook* explained, was not about whether "Maduro is a 'legitimate representative' of the Venezuelan people or a 'vicious' person or a 'drug kingpin.' This is about enabling U.S. corporations to take control of the country's vast oil resources, maintaining U.S. hegemony in the western hemisphere, and allowing U.S. big business to challenge increasing competition from China ... all this at the expense of the working people of the Americas."



U.S. strike on Caracas January 3, 2026. (Screenshot: The Guardian)

Indeed, within hours of their overpowering raid, U.S. president Donald Trump and his secretary of state Marco Rubio were crowing that Washington would now "run the country," and "take back the oil that belongs to us."

Following that attack, many pundits expected Trump to appoint María Corina Machado to manage this piracy. Machado, winner of the Nobel Peace Prize for her role in leading the opposition to Maduro in the 2024 elections, cravenly sought Trump's approval for heading a new government in Venezuela. As part of that quest, Machado slavishly presented her Nobel Prize to Trump, who had been outraged at not winning it himself (after ordering a major U.S. military assault on another country!)

However, Trump left Machado in the dust, telling reporters she is "nice," but "she doesn't have the support within or the respect within the country" to serve as president.

The Trump administration instead decided the most effective way to fill the leadership vacuum created by Maduro's kidnapping was to greenlight Venezuela's vice-president Delcy Rodríguez to take over. Trump and company did not mind her "anti-imperialist" rhetoric. They might even have found it useful for pacifying any unrest after their assault on the South American country. Washington wagered—with knowledge not readily available to the public at the time—that a Rodríguez administration would serve as a docile transitional regime, enabling U.S. big business to maximize profits off Venezuela's oil and other riches at the lowest political cost.

Delcy Rodríguez, former head of the Venezuelan oil and finance ministry; her brother Jorge Rodríguez, president of the National Assembly; and

Diosdado Cabello, the interior minister, found themselves Washington's choice to run Venezuela's government while Maduro and Flores face trumped up charges in New York City.

In the weeks since taking office, Delcy Rodríguez *et al.* are proving Trump and Rubio's judgment to be sound.

## How to defend Venezuela's sovereignty

Among those in the United States who oppose Washington's assault on Caracas and its saber rattling in the Americas—the so-called Trump Corollary to the Monroe Doctrine,<sup>1</sup> there are counterposed assessments on what has unfolded in Venezuela and on the character of the country's current government.

After the U.S. raid and abduction of Maduro, Manolo De Los Santos, executive director of the People's Forum in New York City and a researcher at Tricontinental: Institute for Social Research, outlined his perspective in the January 4 article "Venezuela's Revolution still stands: debunking Trump's psyop." It was first published by the *People's Dispatch* and immediately reprinted by *Liberation*, the newspaper of the Party for Socialism and Liberation (PSL).

De Los Santos characterized the evolution of politics in Venezuela, beginning with the 1998 election of Hugo Chávez as president, as a revolution leading the nation toward what Chávez called "socialism in the 21st century." De Los Santos argued that this process—the "Bolivarian revolution"<sup>2</sup>—is alive under Rodríguez's leadership. This claim flies in the face of reality, as we will show in this article.

Eager to find an explanation for Rodríguez's rush to negotiate with Washington, rather than organize resistance against the Yankee attack,

De Los Santos argued that the weaknesses of her politics were actually strengths that avoided a more violent confrontation; not a betrayal of the Venezuelan people, but part of a necessary retreat to preserve “revolutionary state power” and “secure political space and prevent total annihilation.”

De Los Santos argued that, in the lead-up to the January 3 attack, the Trump administration faced “the power of organized popular resistance” alongside the professional military, creating a “scenario where any ground invasion would degenerate into a protracted people’s war.” Combined with “widespread public rejection of military intervention, spanning the political spectrum” in the United States, these factors compelled Washington to backtrack and accept Rodríguez as the legitimate successor to Maduro, De Los Santos claimed.

There was U.S. reluctance to involve Washington in a “regime change war,” De Los Santos insisted, citing the examples of Iraq and Afghanistan, where he said Yankee strategists learned to seek the “path of least resistance.” That involved utilizing bombing campaigns, abductions, and collaboration with local leaders the invaders could work with, rather than costly military interventions that would also result in many U.S. casualties. In Caracas, that path led to Rodríguez rather than Machado.

But there was another lesson the U.S. imperialists took from their disastrous occupation of Iraq. There, U.S. occupation forces completely obliterated the existing Baathist state apparatus but were never able to install a reliable client regime to fill the vacuum left behind.

De Los Santos claimed that “the Venezuelan masses, party, and state were prepared to counter a full-scale U.S. invasion in a decentralized people’s war of resistance.” That would create a situation even more unfavorable for Washington than what it faced in

Iraq after a massive military intervention two decades ago.

Yet, when U.S. helicopters swooped in to capture Maduro and bombs exploded over several other targets, there was—by most accounts—a stunning lack of resistance on the part of both the Venezuelan armed forces and the population.

De Los Santos tried to explain this away with a very dark assessment of the chances for working people or any country to resist imperialist assaults today.

**Government takeovers in semi-colonial countries by radical military officers from impoverished backgrounds—either through elections or military coups—have often led at first to significant social reforms but not to attempts to overthrow capitalism.**

“No country on the planet has the preparation or the capacity at present to prevent the overwhelming and brutal force of a U.S. special operation such as the one conducted,” he said. “No nation, no matter how morally justified, popularly mobilized, or militarily capable, can presently match the concentrated, high-tech lethal force of the U.S. war machine in this respect.”

In other words, De Los Santos may as well be saying, “Working people are doomed.”

### **Need for objective analysis**

“A concrete analysis is required to cut through the disinformation, understand the objective balance of forces, and chart a path forward,” De Los Santos said. But he seemed incapable of taking his own advice.

De Los Santos suggested that those disagreeing with his assessment of the balance of forces in Venezuela, or his view of the class character of the “process” now unfolding, are simply being hoodwinked by the Trump administration’s psychological warfare and campaign of disinformation. “No socialist should have a knee-jerk reaction accepting bourgeois propaganda,” he admonished.

Was Chávez—followed by Maduro and now Rodríguez—leading a social revolution toward establishing socialism in Venezuela? Are concessions and retreats now necessary or possible to protect the interests of the workers and peasants of that country? Does the “Bolivarian Revolution” point the way forward—in Venezuela or elsewhere?

To answer these questions, it is useful to take a look at the past 25 years of the “Bolivarian” process to better understand the class character of the Venezuelan state and the relationship of forces between Venezuela’s capitalist class, the country’s workers and peasants, and U.S. imperialism today.

### **Reforms under Chávez**

In 1998, Chávez, a radical young army officer, was elected president following a period of mass protest against an International Monetary Fund (IMF)-mandated austerity program. Chávez’s trajectory was not rare. Government takeovers in semi-colonial countries by radical military officers from impoverished backgrounds—either through elections or military coups—have often led at first to significant social reforms but not to attempts to overthrow capitalism.

In the wake of this popular resistance and an electoral victory with a 56 percent majority, the Chávez administration enacted land reform, achieved a reduction in the poverty rate by 20 percent in a few years, and launched a literacy campaign that taught 1.5 million to read and write. With the aid of Cuban medical missions, new clinics brought preventive and emergency

care to many who rarely, if ever, had seen a doctor.

These advances for workers and peasants were registered as high oil prices on the world market and a tightening of state control of the country's oil resources<sup>3</sup> bolstered state revenues.

This period is described in more detail in the September 2024 *World-Outlook* article "Venezuela Elections: Fraud Foretold?"

Despite the social gains described above, that article noted, "Under the Chávez administration, private property in the means of production remained largely intact, with economic power staying firmly in the hands of the country's wealthiest families. His nationalist regime, however, increasingly came into conflict with the majority of Venezuela's capitalist class. The clash turned into a collision in the fall of 2001."

At that time, Chávez's government enacted legislation that, if fully implemented, would have cut into the profits and power of the financial oligarchy. These measures included the land reform, protections for working fishermen, greater state control of the country's oil resources, and the allocation of state funds for affordable housing and other social programs.

"The new administration also drew the ire of Washington and the local bourgeoisie for cultivating closer political and economic ties with revolutionary Cuba," the 2024 *World-Outlook* article noted.

"Encouraged by these openings, workers and peasants fought for land, jobs, and more democratic rights. These struggles alarmed most of Venezuela's capitalists and their U.S. backers. The anti-Chávez opposition organized *cazerolazos*, large "pot-banging" protest rallies demanding the president's resignation, in 2001. In 2002 it staged a military *coup* that removed Chávez from power for two days but was reversed by popular opposition.

"This was followed in 2003 by a 'strike' in the state-owned oil monopoly, Petroleos de Venezuela (PDVSA), instigated by company executives who worked hand-in-glove with top union bureaucrats controlling the oil workers union at the time, lockdowns in other industries aimed at crippling production to accelerate an economic crisis, and armed attacks on government buildings; and a referendum to recall Chávez in 2004.

"Washington and other imperialist governments backed these efforts and later imposed debilitating sanctions on Venezuela that largely impacted the country's working people.

"In one popular outpouring after another, however, working people mobilized and defeated every attempt by Venezuela's capitalist class and its backers abroad to topple Chávez."<sup>4</sup>

**Castro reminded his audience that "it is a political axiom that there can be no revolution without the total destruction of the old bourgeois state."**

As oil prices flattened and suffered periodic sharp dives beginning around 2007, Venezuela's state revenues decreased. The conflicts between the capitalist class and the government's social agenda sharpened.

### **Chávez rejects "Cuban road"**

"At the same time, the Fifth Republic Movement led by Chávez, which in 2007 fused with other organizations to form the United Socialist Party of Venezuela (PSUV), rejected the Cuban road toward a genuinely socialist future," the 2024 *World-Outlook* article pointed out.

"The PSUV refused to lead the country's working people to end the rule of the capitalists, establish a workers and peasants' government, nationalize the

means of production, and reorganize society based on human solidarity and social equality," it continued.

"Instead, the PSUV promoted 'socialism in the 21st century.' This was a euphemism for maintaining capitalist economic relations modulated by greater state control over some private industries and marked by increasing concentration of governmental power in the hands of the head of state—the president.

"The increasingly authoritarian role of the government became crystal clear in 2006. That year, Chávez was re-elected Venezuela's president with 63 percent of the popular vote. A year earlier, his party had secured complete control of the country's National Assembly, after the opposition boycotted legislative elections, as well as the Supreme Court and most of the judiciary, and the National Electoral Council.

"Following these sweeping victories, Chávez signed into law an 'enabling act' allowing him to rule by decree, with virtual dictatorial powers, for up to 18 months. He also floated the idea, repeatedly, of seeking constitutional reform that would permit him to seek reelection indefinitely, perpetuating his power for life.

"These are the hallmarks of a Bonapartist<sup>5</sup> regime, albeit one with a leftist veneer in this case. They are the opposite of strengthening the political power of workers and peasants."

### **Maduro's regime: Chavismo's thuggish caricature**

Maduro, a close Chávez ally, assumed the office of president after his predecessor lost his battle with cancer. Maduro then elevated the government's authoritarianism to another level. Beginning six months after his election in 2013, and relying on a string of enabling acts, he ruled by decree for the majority of his presidency during the next 12 years.

On February 4, 2026, *Tempest*, a "revolutionary socialist collective," according to its website, published an interview with Federico Fuentes, a

longtime Venezuela solidarity activist who lived in Caracas for several years during the Chávez government as a correspondent for *Green Ve*. He is also a contributor to *Venezuelanalysis*.

“Sometime during the Maduro government, between 2015-17, it became clear that the section of society for whom it governed was shifting,” Fuentes noted. “A combination of circumstances and choices led it to break with the poor majority and working-class base that had supported the Chávez government and formed the backbone of the Bolivarian revolution. Instead, it consolidated a new base among the military, security forces, and the new capitalist class.”

Unlike Chávez, “the Maduro government was undeniably a pro-capitalist government,” Fuentes continued. “It represented both the interests of the new capitalist class, which had enriched itself through its connections to the ‘Bolivarian’ state (the so-called Bolivarian bourgeoisie that Chávez denounced), but also the traditional capitalist class. The Maduro government ultimately won over the support of *Fedecámaras*<sup>6</sup> [the country’s chamber of commerce], while the head of the Caracas Stock Exchange said after the 2024 presidential elections that the government, not the opposition, best represented economic stability.

“The Maduro government was also decidedly anti-worker. Often sections of the Left excuse the government, saying its policy decisions were due to the sanctions. But this ignores that government policies led to a dramatic upward redistribution of wealth even before the sanctions. Moreover, even under the sanctions, it is not the case that the Maduro government had no other options. From 2018 onwards, it deliberately chose to shift the burden of the crisis onto the working class.”

With continuing fluctuations of oil prices, tightened sanctions by U.S. and other imperialist powers, and misman-

agement of resources by corrupt government officials, the Venezuelan economy went into freefall. Inflation rose from 100 percent in 2015 to 80,000 percent by the end of 2018. The poverty rate mushroomed to over 80 percent by 2020. These devastating conditions led to a mass exodus from Venezuela, with up to 25 percent of its population emigrating in search of a better life.

**The Bolsheviks did not retreat on the conquest of state power by workers and peasants—which took place through a social revolution that shook the world—and the subsequent drive to uproot the vestiges of feudalism and tsarist rule. They did not retreat on their course to firmly cement the rule of the workers and peasants.**

Protests in the face of rampant unemployment and shortages of food and other basic necessities were met with repression by the Maduro government. Security forces, the military, and extralegal goon squads took to the streets to suppress the demands for relief.

In July 2024, Maduro claimed victory in the presidential elections. Despite widespread doubts about the results, procedures designed to guarantee the integrity of the vote were ignored. Protests against this lack of transparency broke out, including in many working-class areas. The government responded with a wave of repression, resulting in some 2,000 arrests and the killing of 23 protesters and bystanders.

## **Anti-worker repression under Maduro**

The turn in economic policy under Maduro “had to be accompanied by a ramping up of repression. Outside Venezuela, we hear about repression against the right-wing opposition—though never about their anti-democratic, violent and illegal actions. But the Left and working-class forces in Venezuela have arguably faced greater repression,” Fuentes explained in the *Tempest* interview.

“In terms of workers’ rights, there are hundreds of trade unionists in jail for protesting, new trade unions cannot be registered, strikes are illegal, and collective bargaining is essentially banned. As for the left, every single left-wing party in the country has either been stripped of its electoral registration or denied the right to register for elections. The last presidential election [in 2024] was the first since the fall of the military dictatorship in 1958 in which the left was completely barred from standing a candidate.

“When we add to this that the Venezuelan people were denied their right to have their votes counted and verified (arguably one of the most basic democratic rights, but which some on the Left seem to want to deny to the Venezuelan people, claiming nothing untoward happened in those elections), we get a sense of just how far democracy had been wound back. Not just in terms of the Chávez era (when the left rightly pointed to Venezuela as a world leader in transparent elections) but even in terms of minimum bourgeois democratic rights.

“There is a further component that needs to be considered; namely the use of security forces to terrorize working class and poor communities. As discontent with the government rose among traditional Chávez-voting sectors, the Maduro government stepped up its policing of these neighborhoods through its ‘Operation Liberate the People’ and creation of the elite death squad, FAES (Special Action Forces).

“The result was a dramatic rise in police killings of predominately young Black men in those neighborhoods: from about 1500-2500 a year in 2014-15 to 5000-5500 a year between 2016-18, making Venezuela’s security forces the deadliest in the region on a *per capita* basis. Though not strictly a political operation, this repressive policing had the effect of terrorizing communities which had begun to step out of line.

“Given all this, it is hardly surprising that even strong Chávez voting areas eventually turned against Maduro and did not rush onto the streets to defend him after his kidnapping.”

With the capitalist class still holding the reins of industry and finance and a repressive regime increasingly hostile to the needs and demands of workers and peasants, Venezuela’s working people were ill-prepared to answer Washington’s aggression on January 3, 2026.

### **Lack of any preparedness to repel U.S. attack**

During the last five months of 2025, the amassing of the largest U.S. force in the Caribbean since the October 1962 missile crisis,<sup>7</sup> the murder at sea of more than 100 people in small boats, and a naval blockade of Venezuelan oil ordered by the Pentagon clearly signaled that a U.S. military assault was likely, if not inevitable. With gunboats and aircraft carriers just 50-100 miles off the Venezuelan coast, even U.S. intelligence was surprised at the lack of a defensive response U.S. special forces encountered in the early hours of January 3.

On January 7, General Javier Marcano Táбата, commander of the presidential honor guard and head of Venezuela’s military counterintelligence unit, was fired by Delcy Rodríguez for failing to protect Maduro from capture during the U.S. raid. Marcano Táбата was reportedly then arrested on accusations of accepting bribes, providing the U.S. military with Maduro’s location, and deactivating anti-aircraft defense systems.

But the failure of the Venezuelan military to mount a robust defense cannot simply be blamed on one person. Venezuela’s advanced, Russian-made air defense systems were not even hooked up to radar during the raid and abduction, U.S. officials told the *New York Times*. Venezuela had been unable to maintain and operate at combat readiness the Russian-made S-300 anti-aircraft or its Buk-M2 defense systems, purchased in 2009.

**Allende’s Popular Unity government instituted significant social reforms but avoided infringing on bourgeois institutions or arming the Chilean people to defend their gains.**

In addition, Maduro had been asserting for months there were 4.5 million Venezuelans under arms, prepared to defend themselves against any assault by U.S. imperialism. De Los Santos inflated that number to eight million. Yet that force did not materialize, in the months leading up to January 3, during the U.S. military assault, or in the weeks since then.

The only vigorous defense the U.S. invaders faced was at the presidential compound in Caracas. Fifty people were killed trying to protect Maduro and his wife; among those who died, Cuban combatants constituted the majority. Thirty-two Cubans assigned to a security detail gave their lives upholding a commitment to defend the sovereignty of a sister country and protect its president. Approximately 50 additional Venezuelan civilians lost their lives during the U.S. bombardment.

The election of Chávez as president in 1998 opened a period of mobiliza-

tion of the working class and peasants in Venezuela. By the time of the 2026 U.S. assault, however, there was a nearly complete erosion of the gains workers and peasants had initially made. Along with that, widespread repression by the Maduro government—a capitalist regime that bore no resemblance to even moderate social democratic governments, had rendered popular defense of Venezuela’s sovereignty against imperialist assault impossible.

That’s the root cause of what transpired on January 3. Not the “high-tech lethal force of the U.S. war machine” that “no nation... can match” or stand up to, as De Los Santos and the PSL falsely claimed.

### **Part 2**

With Maduro out of the picture, the Rodríguez administration jumped quickly to accommodate Washington’s demands. “We consider it a priority to move towards a balanced and respectful relationship between the U.S. and Venezuela,” Rodríguez wrote just two days after the bombing of the capital city. She called for negotiations “on terms of sovereignty and equality.”

Of course, there is no equal playing field for such negotiations. This was true before January 3, when the U.S. government imposed brutal sanctions on Venezuela and deployed its armada offshore. And it is even more true today, as a Damoclean sword<sup>8</sup> of possible U.S. military intervention hangs over every encounter between U.S. and Venezuelan officials.

During a January 28 hearing before the U.S. Senate foreign relations committee, Rubio said the Trump administration has established a “very respectful and productive line of communication” with Rodríguez’s government. As a result, he said, the Trump administration does not “intend or expect” to use military force against Venezuela.

In a written statement to the committee, however, the U.S. secretary of

state warned Washington is “prepared to use force to ensure maximum cooperation... if other methods fail.” He noted, “Rodríguez is well aware of the fate of Maduro; it is our belief that her own self-interest aligns with advancing our key objectives.”

De Los Santos pointed out that negotiations with the U.S. government are a continuation of the approach by Maduro in the months before his abduction. “Maduro himself consistently called for diplomacy and negotiation to avoid an all-out war and had already offered to negotiate comprehensive economic agreements with the U.S. for Venezuela’s oil and mineral resources,” De Los Santos wrote. “If the Venezuelan state were to sign such deals going forward—now with Maduro kidnapped—it would not constitute treason.”

Those deals are now being signed. They are indeed a continuation of policy under Maduro, which reveals the degree of capitulation to U.S. imperialism then and now.

### **Opening oil industry to private foreign investment**

On January 6, Trump announced a more than \$2 billion deal to divert Venezuelan crude to the United States. Much of that oil was already loaded in tankers off the Venezuelan coast, unable to breach the U.S. naval blockade.

In her January 15 state-of-the-union address, Rodríguez argued for opening Venezuela’s state-run oil reserves to more foreign investment. She pledged that increased oil production through foreign acquisitions would create a flow of cash to the country’s healthcare system and infrastructure, much of which has severely deteriorated since it was built under Chávez.

In response to a request by Trump, Rodríguez also granted amnesty to 379 people imprisoned by the Maduro regime and has agreed to accept a larger number of U.S. deportation

flights to Venezuela. Between 600 and 900 prisoners, according to Venezuelan human-rights organizations, remain behind bars. A vow by Rodríguez to establish a general amnesty for political prisoners fell short of indicating who would be released or when.

A day before Rodríguez’s January 15 speech, Trump made public the sale of \$500 million in Venezuelan oil to Geneva-based Vitol, which has a U.S. headquarters in Houston, Texas. John Addison, a senior trader at Vitol and a \$6 million megadonor to Trump’s 2024 presidential campaign, was part of negotiating the deal.

**A conscious working class, committed to the fight for power, aware of the pitfalls, and mobilized in action can defend itself even against the lasers, drones, robots, and technology of imperialism’s war machine and the hands that drive it.**

### **U.S. takes control of sales of Venezuelan crude**

The proceeds of this first sale, the White House said, would be split between Venezuela, U.S. companies, and the U.S. government, at Washington’s discretion. Trump said proceeds going to Venezuela would be used to purchase only “American-made” goods—more precisely, “U.S.-made.”

Trading houses Vitol and Trafigura—both previously implicated in bribery schemes and price manipulation—were initially depositing monies for the oil in a Qatari bank. But on February 12, U.S.

energy secretary Chris Wright told *NBC News* that the U.S. treasury has now set up an account to directly receive the proceeds from these sales.

Four private banks in Venezuela have already received a \$300 million share of the proceeds from the first sale; Venezuela’s portion of funds from future sales will be meted out based on monthly budgets approved by Washington, Rubio told Congress on January 28.

All this and the lack of oversight under new licensing agreements underscores concerns that the arrangement is vulnerable to abuse. To what extent any funds will make it to Venezuela’s state coffers, and whether any of the funds that do reach that destination are used for the healthcare system or infrastructure needs remains to be seen.

In another clear indication of who is running the show, *Bloomberg* reported on February 10 that oil tankers have already been rerouted from Venezuela to not only the United States, but to India, Europe, and Israel. If true, this would mark the first shipment of Venezuelan oil to Israel in years, although Bloomberg noted that Israel does not disclose crude suppliers, and tankers sometimes disappear from digital tracking systems near its ports.

Venezuelan Miguel Pérez Pirela, a senior government spokesperson, called the report a lie. But, as Trump declared in a more truthful statement during a January 23 interview with the *New York Post*, “They don’t have any oil. We take the oil.”

In line with Rodríguez’s state-of-the-union proposals, Venezuelan lawmakers approved a bill on January 29 granting private companies autonomy to operate under new oil contracts or in joint ventures, even if they are the minority stakeholders. This makes possible asset transfers and outsourcing. The new law also formalizes an oil production-sharing model secretly negotiated by Maduro with little-known energy firms. Politicians and

experts have warned about the potential for corruption due to loose regulation of these deals.

The bill also reduces income tax for energy projects, replacing that with a yet unregulated “hydrocarbon tax.” While this may attract investors, former Venezuelan officials say the legislation is unconstitutional.

### “To Doubt is to Betray”

“There remains a strong base of support for Chavismo and the Bolivarian Revolution,” De Los Santos asserted, adding that the Venezuelan “Bolivarian” state remains intact, with the leadership of the government and PSUV, as well as the armed forces, in position to “stabilize institutions [and] reclaim public space by calling the masses to mobilize.”

It is true that thousands of Venezuelans took to the streets of Caracas protesting the kidnapping of their president. However, lest this patriotic fervor focused on Maduro and Flores boil over and foster opposition to the new administration’s course and to its concessions to U.S. imperialism, interior minister Cabello sent an ominous message.

Cabello was brought into Maduro’s inner circle following his prominent role in the brutal suppression of workers’ protests after the 2024 elections. At a January 6 rally in Caracas, he sported a blue cap, emblazoned with the Orwellian slogan “To Doubt is to Betray.”

### “Brest-Litovsk moment?”

To give a left veneer to his argument that the concessions to Washington by Venezuela’s current government constitute a necessary retreat in the course of “building socialism,” De Los Santos drew a parallel with concessions the new revolutionary government of Russia, led by the Bolsheviks, made in 1918 when it signed a peace treaty at Brest-Litovsk, in what is today Belarus.

In 1917, as World War I raged around them, the workers and peasants of Russia carried out a mighty revolution, overthrowing the stranglehold of the tsarist regime and semi-feudal class relations. Exhausted by years of war, they faced the monumental task of building the new Soviet republic under the threat of attack by many imperialist armies lined up on both their western and eastern borders.

Squeezed in that vise, with its troops fatigued and demoralized, the Bolshevik

leadership made the decision to concede a vast amount of territory and resources in a separate peace agreement between their infant republic and the Central Powers of Germany, Austria-Hungary, the Ottoman Empire, and Bulgaria. This treaty effectively pulled Soviet Russia out of World War I.

“Venezuela faces a similar ‘Brest-Litovsk moment,’” De Los Santos argued. “Isolated by right-wing regional governments and facing a near-total blockade, the revolutionary core is prioritizing the survival of the state as a rearguard base for future struggle.”


While 2026 Venezuela may seem similar to 1918 Russia at first glance, there are critical differences between the two that show De Los Santos stretched the historical parallel he cited to the breaking point.

First of all, the Bolshevik leadership laid bare the harsh truth about the decision to end Russian involvement in WWI in exchange for the surrender of territory, calling the treaty “onerous and humiliating.” They did not try to dress it up as a “balanced and respectful relationship,” as did Delcy Rodríguez.

The Bolshevik leaders explained and educated, unlike Rodríguez who obfuscated the truth and misled and confused working people.

The Brest-Litovsk treaty was hotly debated and ultimately ratified by the Russian Communist Party at its 7th congress in March 1918. In contrast, the leaders of Venezuela’s government have opened no such public discussion of these matters, since January 3, or after the passage of the January 29 law surrendering control of its assets to Washington.

The Russian Communist Party’s 7th congress resolution explained, “Since we have no army, since our troops at the front are in a most critical state of demoralization, and since we must make use of every possibility, however slight, of a breathing-space before the imperialist attack on the Soviet Socialist



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Republic begins, the Congress recognizes the necessity of ratifying the most onerous and humiliating peace treaty which the Soviet government signed with Germany.”

At Brest-Litovsk, the Bolsheviks surrendered roughly one million square miles of territory—including land containing about 90 percent of Russia’s coalfields, 50 percent of its industry, 64 percent of its iron ore, and Ukraine’s breadbasket. However, understanding what they did not concede is critical to seeing the difference between what the Russian Revolution faced in 1918 and what Venezuela faces today.

The Soviet republic used the breathing space opened up by the Brest-Litovsk treaty to build the Red Army, at the same time preparing to defend the conquest of worker and peasant power by mobilizing the population and energizing an international solidarity movement in their defense.

The Bolsheviks did not retreat on the conquest of state power by workers and peasants—which took place through a social revolution that shook the world—and the subsequent drive to uproot the vestiges of feudalism and tsarist rule. They did not retreat on their course to firmly cement the rule of the workers and peasants. The Brest-Litovsk concessions enabled them to drive ahead on continued education and mobilization of the masses of working people throughout the Soviet federations—and the world—to defend their revolutionary course.

The class relations in Russia following its 1917 socialist revolution sharply contrast with Venezuela today. While Chávez, Maduro, and now Rodríguez (plus De Los Santos, more vigorously than Rodríguez) have proclaimed that “socialism in the 21st century” was and remains alive and well in Venezuela, the country has never overturned capitalism.

Unlike the Russian Revolution of 1917, the PSUV did not lead the country’s working people to take political

power and use it in their own interests to abolish capitalist social relations and open the road to socialism—either under Chavez or under Maduro. Chávez instituted measures that provided openings along that road. But all those were largely overturned under Maduro, who consolidated capitalist rule.

### The example of Cuba

During the past 25 years, Venezuela instituted certain reforms to provide relief to the lives of working people by tightening state control over some industries. At the same time, its government sought to appease the capitalist class, leaving economic power firmly in the hands of the country’s wealthiest families. To manage the inevitable contradictions, the government increasingly concentrated political power in the head of state.

This is not socialism—21st century or any other flavor. It has, as *World-Outlook* explained in September 2024, “the hallmarks of a Bonapartist regime, albeit one with a leftist veneer... [It is] the opposite of strengthening the political power of workers and peasants.”

The experience in Venezuela stands in contrast to that of its close neighbor and ally Cuba, which embarked on its own revolutionary course in 1959.

Not long after rebel forces led by Fidel Castro<sup>9</sup> toppled the hated, U.S.-backed dictatorship of Fulgencio Batista and marched into Havana, Cuba’s revolutionary government moved rapidly to nationalize the main means of production.

Just as Washington told Venezuela recently it could not send its oil to Cuba, back in the early 1960s, Washington told Cuba it could not buy oil from Russia. In response, Cuba didn’t negotiate. It nationalized the Shell refinery and other oil installations! It then organized to deal with Washington’s retaliation of cancelling its sugar quota by nationalizing the country’s massive sugar industry. It also carried out a thor-

ough agrarian reform. And it dismantled the capitalist state, from its army to all its bourgeois institutions. Cuban revolutionaries took key positions in government, banking, and industry, forcing out those capitalists who did not leave voluntarily, all the while mobilizing the population to defend the gains of their revolution.

The Goliath to the north, enraged by Cuba’s break from its grasp, took one step after another to block the forward march of the Cuban people. But every time Washington punched, the Cuban people successfully defended themselves.

The leadership of the Cuban Revolution mobilized the masses, speaking openly about the imminent danger and preparing the people for the military invasion they knew was coming—unlike the secretive and collaborationist course of the Maduro regime.

When—barely 15 months after the revolutionary victory—Washington launched the Bay of Pigs invasion in April 1961, U.S. and Cuban counterrevolutionary forces were met with fierce resistance by an entire population. They were sent running with their tails between their legs in a matter of 72 hours.<sup>10</sup>

### “A process is not yet a revolution”

There is no “easy road to revolution,” Castro told Chilean students during a state visit in 1971. He described what he saw unfolding in Chile under then-president Salvador Allende, a social democrat, as a “revolutionary process.” But he added that “a process is not yet a revolution.” Castro reminded his audience that “it is a political axiom that there can be no revolution without the total destruction of the old bourgeois state.”

The idea of “socialism in the 21st century” is not a revolutionary program any more than it is a new idea. It is a euphemism for maintaining capitalist economic relations, while trying to win some social reforms. It is a rehashing of social democratic ideas

that have been tried and repeatedly failed to lead to socialism for more than a century.

Chile was a tragic example of this reality. In 1973, the Allende government was overthrown. Allende—a courageous social democrat, the polar opposite of Maduro, but with similarities to Chávez—heroically died while trying to defend his democratically elected government against a rightist military *coup* largely instigated and backed by Washington.

The cause of Chilean workers and farmers, and of working people the world over, suffered a severe setback precisely because Allende's Popular Unity government instituted significant social reforms but avoided infringing on bourgeois institutions or arming the Chilean people to defend their gains.

The situation in Chile in the early 1970s resembled to a degree what unfolded in Venezuela under Chávez in the first seven years of that Venezuelan leader's rule. But it bears no resemblance to what unfolded in Venezuela under Maduro in the decade leading up to his kidnapping.

We must condemn Washington's brutal violation of Venezuelan sovereignty and the U.S. smear campaign against Maduro and his government. But we should not apologize for or offer political support to a capitalist regime that has repeatedly used force and violence to quell workers' discontent while falsely claiming to represent their interests.

To call the process in Venezuela “revolutionary” and cite it as the road to a new kind of socialism sows confusion and demoralization. To tell the Venezuelan workers and farmers, as De Los Santos does, that the betrayal of their hopes for the future is being made in the name of socialism derails whatever impulse toward resistance might remain.

Socialism has already been given a bad name, first and foremost by Joseph

Stalin and the degeneration of the Soviet state under his rule to a system in many ways worse than capitalism.<sup>11</sup> The mouthpieces for the capitalist class in the media and in government work tirelessly to promote the deep-going prejudice among working people against socialism that Stalinism engendered. We don't need De Los Santos' arguments to further this travesty.

### **Mobilizing the power of working people**

Contrary to De Los Santos' doom-day assessment of the invincibility of the U.S. military, the power of the masses can be mobilized to face even the most “high-tech” lethal force. But to unleash that power, a revolutionary leadership must be forged that does not obfuscate the lessons of history or prettify the missteps, failures, and bloody errors of the past.

A conscious working class, committed to the fight for power, aware of the pitfalls, and mobilized in action can defend itself even against the lasers, drones, robots, and technology of imperialism's war machine and the hands that drive it.

The proof of this is the Cuban people, who for nearly 70 years have withstood sabotage and invasion, economic strangulation and endless campaigns of disinformation, spying and assassinations, all just 90 miles from the same power De Los Santos describes as invincible.

Cuba is testimony to what workers and peasants, mobilized with the power of the state at their service, can accomplish. Even today, as they prepare to fight even with bare hands against the Goliath to the north, they have not given an inch in their commitment to the conquests of their revolution and their socialist ideals.

Cuba represents the “moral and political compass” for the world's working people, as Cuban leader Ernesto Limia Díaz put it in a recent interview. It points in completely the opposite

direction than that of Maduro and his successor in Caracas, who offered up Venezuela's patrimony to Washington in sordid deals.

While the rogues in Washington, drunk with power, bandy about more threats and aim their weaponry at Cuba, Iran, and elsewhere, there is a need for the broadest unity in action against their crimes.

At the same time, those who have the interests of the working class and its allies at heart have a duty to tell the unvarnished truth about what has transpired in Venezuela to help avoid such setbacks being unnecessarily repeated in the future.

The claims of De Los Santos and PSL take a wrecking ball to that goal.

*Although this is a signed article, it reflects the views of all of the editors of World-Outlook.*

—World-Outlook, February 22, 2026

<https://world-outlook.com/2026/02/22/washingtons-conquest-in-venezuela-i/>

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1 First articulated by then-president James Monroe in 1823, when nearly all Spanish colonies in the Americas had either achieved or were close to independence, the Monroe doctrine asserted that any further efforts by European powers to control or influence sovereign states in the region would be viewed as a threat to U.S. security. It represented the seeds of a policy that could be summarized as Latin America and the Caribbean being the “backyard” of the United States—an unabashed attempt at U.S. economic domination in the hemisphere and the mustering of military power to back that up. “The Trump Corollary to the Monroe Doctrine” was first asserted in the 2025 National Security Strategy document released by the White House in November 2025.

2 The Bolivarian Revolution refers to the process of social reform in Venezuela initiated in 1998 when Hugo Chávez was first elected the country's president. It is named after Simón Bolívar, a Venezuelan military officer who led the fight for independence from Spain in the early 1820s in the region encompassing what today is Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador, Panama, Peru, and Venezuela.

3 The Venezuelan oil industry was officially nationalized on January 1, 1976, during the first presidency of Carlos Andrés Pérez, Chávez's predecessor. This nationalization established *Petróleos de Venezuela S.A. (PDVSA)*, as a state-owned petroleum enterprise. Soon after being elected president for a second time in 1989, Pérez announced *El Gran Viraje* (The Great Turn) to deal with empty coffers and a huge foreign debt. This turn included austerity measures dictated by the International Monetary Fund and allowed for greater participation of private investors in PDVSA. Tightened state control of PDVSA returned in 2007 under Hugo Chávez.

4 For more information on how working people defeated the 2002 U.S.-backed *coup* attempt to topple the democratically elected government of Hugo Chávez see "We're fighting to defend workers in Venezuela," an eyewitness report published in the August 12, 2002, *Militant* newspaper.

5 *World-Outlook* explained the term Bonapartism in its inaugural article, following the January 6, 2021, attack on the U.S. Capitol by a right-wing mob that tried to overturn the results of the 2020 U.S. election through violent means. The mob was inspired by the false claim of a "stolen election" by Donald Trump. *World-Outlook* called attention to the writings of Marxist scholar George Novack. Decades ago, Novack wrote that Bonapartism "carries to an extreme the concentration of power in the head of the state already discernible in the contemporary imperialist democracies. All important policy decisions are centralized in a single individual equipped with extraordinary emergency powers. He speaks and acts not as the servant of parliament ... but in his own right as 'the man

of destiny' who has been called upon to rescue the nation in its hour of mortal peril."

6 *Fedecámaras* (Venezuelan Federation of Chambers of Commerce) is the largest, non-profit, and most influential umbrella organization representing private business associations in Venezuela.

7 In October 1962, in what is widely known as the Cuban Missile Crisis, Washington pushed the world to the edge of nuclear war by enacting a naval blockade of Cuba and threatening war unless the Soviet Union withdrew nuclear missiles it had installed in Cuba, despite the wishes of the Cuban government. The Cuban people and their revolutionary government, with unparalleled determination to defend their sovereignty and their socialist revolution, blocked U.S. plans for a military assault and saved humanity from the consequences of a nuclear holocaust.

8 Refers to an extremely precarious and threatening situation.

9 Fidel Castro was the central leader of the Cuban revolution. He served as Cuba's president from 1976 until his retirement in 2008. He died in 2016.

10 *Playa Girón* (Bay of Pigs) was where counterrevolutionary forces — organized and backed by the U.S. government during the presidency of John F. Kennedy, a Democrat and liberal icon—landed in an unsuccessful attempt to overthrow the Cuban Revolution in April 1961. The population mobilized and repelled the attack in just three days.

11 In 1917, the working class and peasantry of Russia carried out one of the most deep-going revolutions in world history. In a matter of months, the revolution led to an unprecedented

leap in the country from a semi-feudal monarchy to a republic run by working people of city and countryside, opening the possibility of the socialist transformation of society in the former Tsarist empire and around the world. But the new workers and peasants' republic remained isolated internationally when opportunities to extend the revolution in Germany and other advanced capitalist countries in Europe were lost. Under the pressure of unrelenting hostility from the capitalist powers, reaction set in within ten years. A privileged bureaucratic caste led by Joseph Stalin violently crushed the opposition to its policies in the Bolshevik Party, which had led the revolution, and drove workers and peasants from political power.

Stalinism replaced internationalism, which is fundamental to Marxism, with the idea of "socialism in one country." It used thuggery and outright murder against those who defended Marxism around the world. It transformed the parties of the Communist International into subservient appendages of Stalin's regime in the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR). Over decades, it became the cumulative expression of the corruption of communism and Marxism, in the name of communism and Marxism.

In his book *The Revolution Betrayed*, Bolshevik leader Leon Trotsky, who was exiled by Stalin's regime and eventually assassinated by its agents, gives the clearest and most detailed explanation of how and why this bureaucratic social layer was able to take and hold political power in the USSR.

*Revolution Betrayed*

<https://marxist.com/classics-the-revolution-betrayed/all-pages.htm>

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## We Are Willing to Give Our Lives for the Revolution

PABLO IGLESIAS TURRIÓN INTERVIEWS MIGUEL DÍAZ-CANEL BERMÚDEZ

*Miguel Díaz-Canel Bermúdez, First Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Cuba and President of the Republic, recently gave an interview to Spanish political scientist Pablo Iglesias Turrión on the digital platform Canal Red, which was broadcast on the Cuban Mesa Redonda program.*

*The dialogue addressed issues related to the current situation in Cuba, the impact of the economic, commercial, and financial blockade imposed by the United States government, and recent acts of international solidarity.*

*The conversation offers insight into the internal and external challenges facing the Caribbean nation, as well as the government's stance regarding the humanitarian flotilla that took place in recent days.*

*This is a very long and comprehensive discussion that allowed for the Cuban President to lay out in an informal way the Cuban reality and resilience of its people in the shadow of the empire. I encourage you to read it in its entirety.*

—Resumen editorial.

**Pablo Iglesias:** The fascists who are in power in the United States today

learned very well from their Nazi role models the *Goebbelsian* principle that a lie repeated a thousand times can become the truth.

**Miguel Díaz-Canel:** We are very grateful for this opportunity you are giving us to speak to the European public, to the Spanish public, because these truths are constantly being undermined by media manipulation, by this narrative of lies and slander.

### The palace of the revolution

**Miguel Díaz-Canel:** Pablo, we are entering the Palace of the Revolution, a

place where the footsteps of Commander-in-Chief Fidel Castro Ruz can still be felt today. This was his workspace, the place where he received delegations, held important meetings, and we always keep him as a point of reference in daily life, especially in these difficult times.

**Pablo Iglesias:** I wanted you to explain this to me because there are some plants and rocks here that aren't merely decorative.

**Miguel Díaz-Canel:** This is a very subtle observation of yours. Fidel had a comrade-in-arms in the Sierra Maestra,

Celia Sánchez, one of the heroines of the revolution who was his collaborator for many years. And Celia had a particular sensitivity to Cuban culture, to Cuban identity, and she wanted Fidel and Raúl to have a reference point from the Sierra Maestra in this space. Therefore, these stones were brought from the Sierra Maestra, and this is the vegetation of the Sierra Maestra, the mountains where the rebel army launched its offensive against Batista's tyranny. Everyone who comes here is amazed by the vegetation; it's a very unique palace, a palace with its own

vegetation and rocks, and I think it demonstrates a bit of Cuban identity.

### Another special period

**Pablo Iglesias:** Miguel, Cuba is in the spotlight because of a situation that everyone tells me is terrible. I was here for the first time in '94, right in the middle of the Special Period, and people tell me, "Now we could say we're in another Special Period." That observation is clear.

**Miguel Díaz-Canel:** Look, Pablo, I think we've always been in a complex situation. For example, I'm part of a generation that was born in the early years of the revolution. I was born in 1960. I turned one the day after the victory at Playa Girón, and 80 percent of the Cuban population was born after the revolution. Therefore, we are generations that were born under the blockade. My children were born with the blockade. The children of our generation, our grandchildren, were also born under the blockade and have been developing their lives until now under the conditions of the blockade. The thing is, the effects of the blockade are also closely related to the times that came before the Special Period.

That experience you have of the 1990s in Cuba—there was a socialist bloc that greatly supported Cuba, and we can never deny that. Then that socialist bloc collapsed. We had to, under the conditions of the Special Period, in the midst of that blockade, create, be creative, move forward, and then came times when the relationship with Venezuela, the Bolivarian Revolution, the support of China, Vietnam, and other countries allowed us to move to a different situation. But there is a point that I would say is a watershed moment, which is the year 2019, in the first stage of the Trump administration.

### First stage of the Trump administration

**Miguel Díaz-Canel:** At the end of 2019, in the second half of 2019, the Trump administration intensified the blockade. That is, the blockade began



Unity! Photo by Bill Hackwell

to take on a qualitatively different character. It was intensified. Why do we speak of intensification? Because Title III of the Helms-Burton Act, which internationalizes the blockade, was applied for the first time. You see, the blockade is a policy of coercion, of maximum pressure, entirely unilateral, which the United States unilaterally applies to Cuba, but with the Helms-Burton Act, it internationalizes it because it then applies the restrictions and sanctions, the pressure, to other third parties involved in a commercial or financial relationship with Cuba.

It is a law; therefore, this blockade law negates the very precepts of capitalism and imperialism that speak of the “free market.” It is a completely absurd thing, I would say aberrant and very perverse. Very perverse. First, because they base it on a concept of slander, lies, and double standards. What they criticize you for, they don’t criticize others for. What’s unacceptable to us is acceptable to others. So, at that stage, Chapter 3 of the Helms-Burton Act is applied, but it also includes us on a list of countries that supposedly support terrorism. When you’re put on that list of countries that supposedly support terrorism, all your financial operations are cut off. Most banks stop giving you credit, and financial transactions become very complicated.

So, all of this is expressed in financial and energy persecution. That’s why I say it was a watershed moment, because from then on, the situation began to worsen. Today, the situation we have today is one that has been building up and is being further exacerbated by the executive order, the events in Venezuela, and the current position of the Trump administration. Even then, our main sources of foreign currency financing began to dry up. Exporting became very difficult, tourism was blocked, and travel was prohibited for U.S. citizens and severely restricted for even Cuban citizens residing in the United States. This cut off a significant flow of tourism and sources of income.

Without access to that foreign currency, we began to have problems acquiring the fuel we needed to purchase spare parts and maintain our power system, which consisted of thermoelectric plants that were also obsolete and overused. Shortages of food and medicine began, along with transportation problems and the paralysis of a portion of our economy.

**It’s because the state lacks the capacity to provide our services. It’s not the state itself, it’s the blockade that prevents the state and the government—which is the people—from doing their job.**

### **Blockade against Cuba; we are part of the same people**

**Pablo Iglesias:** And all of this has very significant implications... I want to ask about this because, of course, many people say, well... These are measures against the Cuban government, against a social government, but what does this mean for the people? Economic warfare, a blockade, and now practically no fuel, no oil. What does this mean for the lives of Cuban men and women, that the lack of oil is not arriving?

**Miguel Díaz-Canel:** There are several things you’re pointing out that are very important to clarify. First, in this attempt to say that it’s to affect the government and not the people, they’re trying to divide the government and the people. I am part of the people. I wasn’t born into an elite. I’m not from an elite family. I was born into a working-class family. My mother was a rural elementary school teacher, my father worked in a brewery, and that’s how the

leaders are. We are part of the people. Why this attempt to separate the people from the state or the government in the leadership, to separate it from the people? We are part of the same people.

Our children, our families live together, like everyone else. One has that feeling of belonging to the people, one also suffers the problems of our people because of the responsibilities we have representing those people. So, there is a primary framework there because remember that all this economic coercion and all this maximum pressure policy also has an ideological component.

So, what’s being defended is the hegemony of a power that wants to exercise it in an extreme way against a small island, but it also has a component of media manipulation, and there are all those codes of media matrix that they try to construct. In other words, it affects everyone. How does it affect the government? It hurts us deeply that our dreams, programs, and projects for the benefit of the people can’t move forward as we want. It bothers us to see the people suffering.

### **Creative resistance**

**Pablo Iglesias:** But so that people understand, for example, there are students who can’t go to university, there are hospitals that... we haven’t reached those extremes yet.

**Miguel Díaz-Canel:** I always say that there’s a concept of creative resistance, which isn’t just resisting the blows of the blockade, but growing and trying to move forward in the midst of that situation. So, we’re constantly reorganizing, but there are indeed impacts. For example, impacts on daily life, like having to sleep without electricity. It’s a hot country, the children sleep uncomfortably, and they have to get up early in the morning to go to school. We’ve taken organizational measures so everyone can get to school. When you have the problem of distance these days, with no transportation, you start to run into another problem: how do

you get around? How do you get to work? How do you get to school? How do you get your children to school?

So, they start to organize themselves, and in some places, we've changed the settings. The school setting then shifts to the community setting, the local setting, and it's reorganized there, but the curriculum continues. Universities have moved from in-person classes for regular courses to a hybrid model, connecting university students with community issues and also taking advantage of the resources available in different institutions, and that's how their education continues. We have a healthcare system that is capable of facing epidemics, as we were able to do with COVID-19, which we were able to manage.

### **The consequences of the blockade on health and education**

**Pablo Iglesias:** Many people outside of Cuba don't know this, but you created your own vaccine.

**Miguel Díaz-Canel:** We are one of the few countries that created five vaccine candidates. Three of them became vaccines. And I'll explain why, because it also has a lot to do with this concept of creative resistance. Well, health is a major issue. Today we have more than 120,000 people on a waiting list for surgeries because we've had to attend to emergencies because we don't have electricity in the hospitals, in the operating rooms, because we lack the supplies to perform all the surgeries. But we perform those surgeries, that number of surgeries, under normal conditions, even under a blockade that wasn't as severe as the one we have now with this energy blockade. Even under these conditions, we maintain infant mortality rates, maternal mortality rates, health indicators, and educational indicators comparable to those of developed countries.

In other words, they are being affected, but we've achieved so much in social terms that this deterioration hasn't yet

put us in a position of inferiority compared to other countries, but there are impacts. For example, in those surgeries we're waiting for, there are more than 11,000 children, and there are children and cancer patients for whom we have difficulty guaranteeing the medications that Cuba provides free of charge. Education is affected. Many of our educational platforms rely on connectivity, on digital transformation platforms, and on artificial intelligence processes.

**Many families have been able to acquire photovoltaic panels or systems for their homes, right? And to be independent of the national power grid, but they don't keep the solution just for their own homes. They share it because there's tremendous community solidarity.**

All of this is affected because when there's no electricity, the cell towers for connectivity don't work, there are transportation systems, and there's the problem of supplying water to the population. When there's a blackout, the water sources also stop working. Most of them run on electricity. So, you see, you already have the burden of transportation, you have the burden of healthcare, you have the burden of education, you have the burden of food, and now you're lacking water. How many problems are converging at once? And I say, why?

It's because the state lacks the capacity to provide our services. It's not the state itself, it's the blockade that prevents the state and the government—which is the people—from doing their

job. I believe that many of the things we've set out to do, many of the ways we're resisting and organizing, are primarily related to the people, not just to government management. This government management cannot be separated from the people, who possess a capacity for self-organization, creativity, and resilience. Let me give you an example. Right now, we're lacking liquefied gas. Liquefied gas is one form of coercion, because the other form, electricity, is also difficult for us. People have created solutions in their homes; one person builds a charcoal oven, another a stove. They've developed highly efficient wood-burning stoves. Neighbors at the community level are able to create communal kitchens to cook for several households simultaneously.

Many families have been able to acquire photovoltaic panels or systems for their homes, right? And to be independent of the national power grid, but they don't keep the solution just for their own homes. They share it because there's tremendous community solidarity. I have panels at home, and I give my neighbors an extension cord, and others then share it so people can charge their scooters, phones, or tablets. There are even homes that also make it available to the government and local authorities to set up what we call "viewing points." It's a place with audio equipment and a television, so if there's a power outage, people still have a place to get information, watch the news, or see the television programming.

The concept of electric mobility is also part of our energy initiatives. We've also turned to electric mobility to become self-sufficient. So, for example, here we're assembling a type of vehicle—many electric motorcycles and tricycles. Well, the electric tricycle we assembled came with a design. Now there are a multitude of designs because people are adapting the electric tricycle, so we have electric tricycles for transporting passengers.

In the cities, we have electric tricycles that have been converted into vans to transport goods. We have electric tricycles that people have adapted with a bit more comfort, for example, to help patients who need hemodialysis, who have to travel regularly to receive such a complex service. They've even adapted tricycles for funeral services, so they don't have to rely on hearses. They've made electric tricycles with amenities, with televisions, screens, to also bring cultural and informational activities to the population. The way we've organized the school year in general education and the school year in higher education under these conditions is also innovative, I would say it's creative. The people are suffering, there are limitations, there are shortages, but that Cuban spirit of overcoming adversity, the solidarity, the joy, is not lost.

**Pablo Iglesias:** I'm telling you, without that capacity, how long does Cuba need to achieve energy sovereignty in the sense of not depending on oil? Because I understand you've stepped on the gas; this transition, this strategic collaboration with China to support solar energy, was planned for a long time, but now you have to make it happen.

**Miguel Díaz-Canel:** I'm going to talk about that, but first, so I don't leave out an answer to something you asked me when you spoke about vaccines, because that's where the concept of creative resistance comes in.

### **Sovereign vaccine to fight COVID**

**Miguel Díaz-Canel:** We were in the midst of COVID-19, as I already told you. In the midst of COVID-19, we were already experiencing the first stage of this intensification of the blockade. Furthermore, all the measures adopted at that time by the Trump administration were maintained by the Biden administration. In other words, the parties in power in the United States changed, but the policy toward Cuba did not. When we realized how the issue of vaccines was unfolding global-

ly, we realized that we wouldn't have the money, nor would we be able to acquire vaccines due to the blockade, so we called upon Cuban scientists.

We said, "It is necessary to have Cuban vaccines to achieve sovereignty in managing the pandemic." Two months later, the first batch of a vaccine candidate was available. The rest, as we know, is history: five vaccine candidates, three effective vaccines that weren't just for Cuba; we shared them with another country. This allowed us to control the disease on the day we vaccinated. We were the first in the world to vaccinate children over two years old with our own vaccines, and we achieved very high immunization levels after receiving them. That's where I ask myself, why is it that the concept of creative resistance not only allows you to resist, but also to develop? You developed vaccines.

**First, there's their arrogant, hegemonic, and domineering mindset, and second, the fear of Cuba's example, because Cuba has a different way of doing things.**

There are powerful nations that couldn't develop vaccines, so you advance, you grow, and you develop. It's not about resisting with submission; it's about resisting with creativity. Then, speaking of these same concepts, well, we lacked medical oxygen, and the United States government pressured oxygen companies in the Caribbean and Latin America not to sell us oxygen, so we had to make a tremendous effort. We received help from Russia and other countries to overcome that crisis, and they denied us the sale of ventilators. Young Cuban

scientists developed ventilators that are now high-performance, certified, and we can even export them. All of that is innovation, not just resistance.

### **The road to energy independence**

**Miguel Díaz-Canel:** Well, even back then, we began evaluating how to find a set of solutions to the country's problems that would make us less dependent on the contributions and aid we could receive from other countries, such as the socialist bloc at one time, and Venezuela, China, and other friendly nations, to further guarantee the country's economic sovereignty and sustainability. And within these issues, there are two fundamental ones: food production and energy. So, how have we approached the energy issue? Well, with a comprehensive government program to overcome the energy situation and provide energy stability for the country. One component of that system is that we still have to rely for years on baseload power generation from thermoelectric plants. The thermoelectric plants are in very poor condition. Therefore, we are implementing a program to recover the capacity of these plants. So, under these conditions, we have had to allocate funding to recover capacity.

For example, so far this year we have recovered 185 megawatts (MW). There is a full year-long program, but last year we managed to recover over 100 MW of distributed generation capacity—not thermoelectric plants, but island systems with equipment that generates using fuel oil or diesel—which we haven't been able to use today because we haven't had diesel or fuel oil. We haven't received a single drop of fuel in the country for three months. But look, today the peak deficits during nighttime hours are between 1,800 and 1,900 MW. If we had distributed generation available at the peak, we would have 1,000 MW. That peak demand would be 500 MW, and it would only last a few hours at night, covering the entire deficit during the early morning hours.

With this distributed generation and the photovoltaic parks, we could eliminate any deficit during the day as well. So where is the deficit? It's not due to the inadequacy of the energy program; it's that we haven't had the fuel to utilize the capacity we believe we could.

So, on the one hand, there's the recovery of thermoelectric capacity; on the other hand, there's the recovery of distributed generation, which had been severely degraded. And a third element is investment in renewable energy sources. They can't block our sun; they can't block our air. So last year, thanks to a business project that I can't explain because they'll persecute and attack it, we managed to install 1,000 MW of photovoltaic parks across the country in just one year. Therefore, we went from a three percent penetration of electricity generation from renewable energy sources to ten percent. That is, we grew by seven percent in just one year amidst intensified blockade conditions. We believe we should be—our calculations show we should reach at least 3,000 MW from renewable energy sources, particularly photovoltaics, since we're also investing in wind energy. At the same pace as last year, if we can maintain it financially, we can reach that goal in two or three years.

This year, we're going to prioritize investments in renewable energy sources, specifically photovoltaic parks with energy storage. This storage allows us to contribute to the system's frequency stability, as frequency instability is what has caused the numerous blackouts we've experienced recently. Furthermore, it provides us with nighttime generation capacity based on the energy stored during the day from photovoltaic generation. For example, right now, during the day, we're generating power with thermoelectric plants that run on Cuban crude.

Cuban crude isn't very abundant; it's heavy. However, we adapted the refining system here years ago—the system

to adapt it, right? Now we're moving towards refining. With this crude, requiring very little processing, the Cuban thermoelectric plants operate. Of course, they need more frequent, more systematic maintenance, especially on the boilers, due to the effects of the sulfur and gases emitted by this crude.

**...there's a history of more than 150 years of struggle, because this country has a lot of experience. When was it ever humiliated? When was Cuba colonized, when was it a neo colony, when Cuban governments were subservient to the United States government, when almost all our resources were plundered and dominated by American companies...**

But under these conditions, we must understand that if we cannot import, if we cannot receive fuel—although we don't relinquish that right, as it is a fundamental one for any country, and this right is affected by the energy blockade—we can operate our thermoelectric plants with domestic crude oil.

That's what we're generating electricity with today; plus the photovoltaic parks I explained to you. Therefore, for now, we are generating electricity with our crude oil and our solar parks, and while we can't completely cover the deficit, we are generating our own. No one can take that generation away from us.

So, what have we planned? We are going to increase domestic crude oil

production by drilling more wells and introducing technologies that will allow us to improve well extraction. Cuban petroleum scientists already have a refining methodology. As we become less dependent on international crude oil, but also on domestic crude oil, we will be able to process and refine a portion of our domestic crude to use in the rest of the economy, not just for electricity generation. Crude oil extraction also brings natural gas.

We have a power plant, a system called *Energás*, which also generates electricity using the associated gas from oil production. If oil production increases, and in fact, in January and February we reversed the decline we've been experiencing in oil and associated gas production, surpassing last year's figures and meeting our planned targets.

Therefore, we have a component that allows us to move forward. This includes continuing investments in photovoltaic parks, renewable energy, and wind power. We are developing biodigesters; that is, by treating solid waste, especially in cattle-raising areas, we can implement systems that provide gas for cooking in communities and settlements. These systems, powered by gas generators, can also generate electricity, and we reduce pollution. It's a completely sustainable approach. We are also introducing technologies to utilize biomass. For example, in the sugar sector, we can convert the electricity generation of sugar mills to biomass during the off-season, with very few modifications, so that they can also generate electricity using biomass. This is also entirely sustainable.

In addition to investments in power generation, we have incorporated electric mobility into this strategy. As we increase our use of electric mobility, we need less fuel for economic operations and transportation. So, we are building capacity through international economic partnerships, as well as with the private sector in the electrical systems assembly

and production industry, in addition to other investments we are making in purchasing this equipment. We will soon be purchasing 400 electric vehicles to support the healthcare sector, which will provide stability in all the country's polyclinics and hospitals. We have also implemented incentive measures for anyone—whether state-owned, private, or cooperative—who introduces renewable energy sources into the country, both for their businesses and for personal use.

We are applying incentives in terms of tariffs. Those who begin generating electricity with a system and supplying it to the national power grid receive a favorable rate, and if they maintain this for years, we eliminate import tariffs on these technologies. Furthermore, we offer a range of tax benefits related to services, profits, and installation for those who promote this. This has created an environment that I would describe as both participatory and supportive. For example, we have the example of a worker from a non-state micro, small, or medium-sized enterprise (MSME) who purchased all the photovoltaic systems needed by the social institutions in a municipality, such as the polyclinics. Therefore, if the power goes out, the polyclinics have energy, the bank has energy—in other words, the main energy services for the population are powered by the same model developed by this non-state entity. So, we have now acquired a group of photovoltaic systems. We are doing the same in all the municipalities across the country.

Now, thanks to solidarity aid, we are receiving a lot of equipment. Institutions from other countries are offering to provide us with all the photovoltaic systems needed by the health system. There are non-state entities that are buying and donating these systems to certain state social institutions. Many state-owned companies are already starting to make investments. Private individuals who have electric mobility equipment, such as tricycles and electric cars, have made them

available for public services. So, all of this has created empathy, and I would say a movement that I believe will very soon generate significant power, which we will have to add to the state's efforts, and we will gradually overcome this crisis. No, it's not a problem that will be solved overnight; it will take us three years. But I believe it's a more sustainable path.

**I believe in humanity, in the human condition. I believe that most people in the world, regardless of creed or ideology, are good people. And I believe that Cuba has proven to be a just cause.**

That's why I also say that we must see these challenges as opportunities, which is the concept of a revolutionary: not to give up and to see them as opportunities. We are heading towards a more sustainable path, but we will overcome it gradually, and we will have a stage where we will still experience limitations, as we are now. But, for example, thinking ahead, if we hadn't invested 1,000 MW in photovoltaic parks last year, what would be happening in Cuba now? We would have almost no capacity to generate power during the day, and the system would be so unstable that we would be experiencing one blackout after another.

#### **Dialogue process with the U.S.**

**Pablo Iglesias:** Miguel, there's an elephant in the room, and that's Donald Trump. I have to ask you this question, which I don't know if you can answer. Are you talking with the United States government?

**Miguel Díaz-Canel:** Look, there has been a lot of speculation and manipulation, and I'm going to explain the exact content of the information we responsibly provided to the Cuban people and the international community. Look, whenever there have been tense relations like those currently existing between the United States and Cuban governments, individuals and institutions—some governmental, others non-governmental—have emerged, seeking to establish channels for dialogue between the two governments and overcome any antagonism or pitfalls, above all, to avoid confrontation and find solutions. And that's what's happening right now. However, any level of conversation or negotiation that leads to an agreement is a long process.

First, a channel for dialogue must be established. Then, common agendas of interest for both sides must be developed, and the parties must demonstrate their intention to move forward and truly commit to the program. Based on the discussion of these agendas, agreements that are beneficial to both sides must be reached, and from there, we can conclude with results. So, in the first part of the information we provided, what did we say? That it was consistent with the policy of the Cuban Revolution. Why? Because this isn't the first time in the history of the revolution that talks have been attempted.

There were attempts during the Kennedy administration. There were attempts during the Carter, Clinton, and even Reagan administrations, and some progressed further than others, and some failed along the way due to various circumstances. But this current attempt is not unique. Furthermore, the revolution, from its earliest years, has always maintained its willingness to engage in dialogue with the United States government, based on respect and equality, without pressure or preconditions, to find solutions to our differences. In other words, this willingness has been present throughout the entire history of the revolution.

Therefore, what we are proposing now does not contradict the history of the revolution in any way. Even one of the most far-reaching conversations, those between Army General Raúl Castro and President Obama, which resulted in concrete agreements, managed to ease some of the sanctions imposed on Cuba at that time. We are willing to build a civilized relationship between neighbors, regardless of our ideological differences. But we can do this because the United States, in fact, does so with some of those it considers its adversaries; it has relations with Russia, it has relations with China, it has relations with other countries. So, why is Cuba the focus? What we are doing is not unprecedented in history; it reflects a historical position of Cuba.

We are not warmongers. We do not offend; we are not going to do anything against the United States; we do not blockade the United States. The blockade is a unilateral situation, a unilateral decision by the United States government. The other thing we have said, because it is the other narrative they have tried to create, is that there are divisions within the leadership of the revolution. There we explained that under the leadership of the army general, who has earned his standing in this country, he is the historical leader of the revolution, even though he has relinquished his responsibilities. But the prestige he holds among the people, his history, his contributions, his historical recognition—no one can deny it. This is similar to what happens in other parts of the world, where there are people who have leadership not because of their positions, but because of their history and experience.

**Pablo Iglesias:** I've been told that you speak with him frequently.

**Miguel Díaz-Canel:** We speak frequently. I share information with him; he's keeping abreast of it.

**Pablo Iglesias:** What are his thoughts on the current situation?

**Miguel Díaz-Canel:** It's a complex situation. He is one of those who, along with me and in collaboration with other party, government, and state bodies, has been guiding how we should conduct this dialogue process. If the dialogue process unfolds and he remains very attentive, he values it, and

**Most of the responses in those countries are that they cannot do without the services of Cuban healthcare personnel. But some have unfortunately succumbed to these pressures, and we have had to withdraw our doctors because of these demands. This has left a significant portion of the population in those places unprotected, unable to cover their needs with other doctors, and it is not the United States that will provide them with doctors to fill the gaps previously covered by Cuban collaboration.**

he encourages us when he sees that what we are doing is yielding results, and above all, there is his commitment to the people, to the revolution, to saving the country from aggression. So, under that guidance, under that leadership—a collegial leadership headed by him and me and shared with the rest—our officials recently held talks with

officials from the State Department aimed at discussing our bilateral differences in order to find a solution.

**Pablo Iglesias:** What do they want? What are they asking for?

**Miguel Díaz-Canel:** That moment hasn't arrived yet. We've initiated the conversation so that, if there's a willingness, we can then build an agenda for discussion and debate that could lead to negotiations. That's why we're proposing this, and it's also been encouraged and facilitated by international actors.

**Pablo Iglesias:** Can you say what they are?

**Miguel Díaz-Canel:** No, I don't want to say. We don't want to jeopardize that. Besides, these things are always done with great discretion, and we've approached it with seriousness and great responsibility because it's a very sensitive process. So, what are the objectives? First, to determine what bilateral differences we can resolve.

**Pablo Iglesias:** What could that be? I mean, what would we be talking about?

**Miguel Díaz-Canel:** There are thousands of issues, economic matters. We can talk about investments, we can talk about how the United States government can participate in the Cuban economy, but there are also migration issues, the fight against drug trafficking, against terrorism, for regional security, environmental issues, scientific collaboration, educational collaboration, cooperation—there are thousands of topics.

**Pablo Iglesias:** And what would be unacceptable to Cuba?

**Miguel Díaz-Canel:** For Cuba, first, that they condition us to adopt a certain position in order to talk. That they respect our sovereignty, our independence, and our political system as we would respect them. Those things are not up for discussion. That we work with a criterion of reciprocity and adherence to international law.

So, let's look for those bilateral differences where we can find solutions, let's

have the will on both sides to move forward in this process, let's be able to find areas of cooperation that allow us to confront the threats and achieve peace and security for both nations and also for the region, because we are part of an agreement reached in the region at a Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC) conference, held in Havana, where a proclamation of peace for Latin America and the Caribbean was agreed upon.

And on the other hand, our conviction is not to respond to manipulation because this is a serious process that must be conducted with great responsibility and sensitivity, because it is a process that affects bilateral relations. Therefore, we must create spaces for understanding that allow us to move forward with solutions and that move us away from confrontation, and all of this must be done with a sense of respect, equality, equity, and respect for things that are fundamental, things that should not be included, and should not be included for anyone, in a discussion questioning the political system of imposition or the loss of sovereignty and independence.

### **Cuba and the symbolism of the primary assault rifle, AKM<sup>1</sup>**

**Pablo Iglesias:** Of course, this is the ideal scenario, the one Cuba wants: a scenario of dialogue with respect for sovereignty. But we've seen that Trump uses military threats and sometimes carries them out. I understand that this is the most complicated scenario. There's an image that's gone viral, Silvio Rodríguez, musician and former Deputy of the National Assembly of the People's Power of Cuba, saying, "If they come in, give me my AKM."

**Miguel Díaz-Canel:** That's it, that's an expression that's even symbolic. Silvio is a symbol of the conviction of the majority of the Cuban people. In other words, we don't want war, we want dialogue, we want to reach that point of agreement, that space which you would say would be ideal.

But if that agreement doesn't materialize, we are prepared. And I say this with the deep conviction that I share with my family: that we would give our lives for the revolution. Because there's a history of more than 150 years of struggle, because this country has a lot of experience. When was it ever humiliated? When was Cuba colonized, when was it a neo colony, when Cuban governments were subservient to the United States government, when almost all our resources were plundered and dominated by American companies, and all the miseries and evils that the revolution eliminated in this country? And now we're talking about difficult times, but even in these difficult times in Cuba, people have more things and more rights guaranteed than at any other time in history. And that won't be lost, and the people are very aware of it. And that's why one of the first things we, as revolutionaries, always do is prepare for the worst-case scenario. If you can overcome the worst-case scenario, you can overcome any scenario.

**I think what you're about is this idea that we can all help each other, that if we all help each other the world is a better place.**

Right now, in Cuba, a plan is being developed to enhance the preparedness for the defense of the entire population. Our concept of a people's war, which is not an offensive concept, is a concept of defending the sovereignty and independence of the country, but with popular participation. And every Cuban knows what role, what mission they have to play in the defense, and the majority of our people are prepared to face that, right? That's what we want to achieve, because we have never wanted to see the American people as

an enemy. We even separate our view of the American people from that of the American government.

But the American government could build a neighborly relationship with Cuba that is entirely decent, based on cooperation that benefits both sides. We are a small island, but in the concept of socio-economic development of the revolution, we try to provide for everyone. Therefore, this is a market of 11 million people for the United States, a nearby market. We sometimes have to import rice from Asia. We could have the rice right next to the United States. We could have oil and fuel very close by, just 90 miles away, but the United States could also benefit from Cuban scientific advancements. We have crucial vaccines against cancer, and medications effective against other diseases.

Whenever I speak with visiting American delegations, I try to explain, somewhat symbolically, how the possibility of both our peoples enjoying a civilized relationship is being undermined. This stems from a personal experience: every year in Cuba, the Havana Jazz Festival takes place. On the festival's final night, an orchestra of Cuban and American musicians performs. You're there, and you leave with a surge of satisfaction, thinking, "How can the talent of two countries provide that level of satisfaction that our people could enjoy?" But even cultural exchange is hindered by the embargo. Just look at how far the embargo reaches.

### **Problems for Spanish investment in Cuba**

**Miguel Díaz-Canel:** And I'll give you an example that affects Europeans, and Spaniards in particular. We have several Spanish companies with investments in Cuba. These businesspeople, who are committed to Cuba and respect it, have endured all kinds of pressure. Many face limitations on entering the United States, or many face restrictions as part of the U.S. embargo.

But, for example, in these recent pressures on tourism to Cuba by the

United States, there's a visa called the ESTA visa, which allows Europeans to enter the United States with certain ease. Well, if a European comes to Cuba, the U.S. government revokes their ESTA visa. They don't do that to anyone else in the world. Why does it have to be Cuba? That's what someone else was asking. Look, we're not a threat to anyone, for the reasons I explained.

Furthermore, this nation has a strong sense of solidarity and hospitality; they welcome everyone who comes with open arms. You visit Cuba yourself, and if you go into any neighborhood, you'll immediately find someone who offers you something, even their home, who shares with you. It's a decent people, a peaceful people. Therefore, no one believes that Cuba is a threat, as some claim, an unusual one for the United States. So, that can't be the reason. We don't hinder the lives of Americans in any way. The only thing that could affect us is that the United States might view us with such anger. First, there's their arrogant, hegemonic, and domineering mindset, and second, the fear of Cuba's example, because Cuba has a different way of doing things. In any international forum, Cuba has its own perspective, its own truths, and can present its arguments without being subject to any kind of pressure.

We are capable of recognizing all the good that is done by anyone in the world, but we also have our own voice to denounce what is lacking. And we, with this economy that has been afflicted for so many years, and which they call a failed state—a failed state could have survived 67 years of a blockade like the United States' or could be functioning under these conditions. This economy, which is often criticized, has been a war economy, but it has sustained social programs, and look at Cuba's social indicators, which even powers with far more money haven't achieved because social justice, equity, working hard, popular participation, and the unity of the Cuban people have prevailed.

### **Medical brigades and our international public medical school operated by the Cuban government, ELAM**

**Pablo Iglesias:** There's something I'd like you to explain that many people don't know. Cuba has sent medical brigades to many countries, and they've been incredibly important in bringing healthcare to social sectors in those countries that otherwise would never have had access to it.



Pablo Iglesias Turrión (WikiPedia)

**Miguel Díaz-Canel:** That's right, we've seen that in Europe. The farewell after their experience in Italy was broadcast on many television channels, but for some countries in Latin America and the Caribbean, this has been almost a prerequisite for strengthening their healthcare systems and providing care to people who had never had access to it.

**Pablo Iglesias:** That's coming to an end due to pressure from the United States. I'd like you to explain this, that is, that there are countries being forced to tell Cuban doctors and healthcare

professionals to leave because the United States doesn't want them there.

**Miguel Díaz-Canel:** Let's look at some background information. There is a teaching by Martí<sup>2</sup> that one's homeland is humanity, and Cuba, the Cuban Revolution, has been consistent with that teaching. For us, there are no distinctions of race, skin color, ethnicity, or nationality. We see the world as a community that must live in harmony, in balance, where each person contributes to others according to their abilities and potential. And by virtue of this, we have experienced scientific development under the Revolution, and we have also seen development in areas such as education and healthcare that set us apart. Furthermore, the training of our healthcare personnel is a humanistic one, based on ethical principles. There is no princely arrogance of an elite of doctors or healthcare professionals who see healthcare as a means of enrichment.

Our people see it as a way to contribute, to save lives, as a social commitment, a human commitment. And from the early years of the revolution, a group of countries facing certain disadvantages and wanting to develop social programs tailored to their communities requested medical assistance. The first mission was to Algeria during the Algerian revolution, and this practice became systematic.

The world also began to understand how Cuba provided these resources and opportunities, and increasingly, countries and governments with a humanitarian and social vision, seeking social justice, requested medical brigades from us, especially to serve underserved areas in their countries. Doctors in those countries often preferred to work only with the urban elite, neglecting the most disadvantaged sectors. Thus, the concept of medical brigades emerged—groups of Cuban doctors, nurses, and healthcare professionals who, of their own volition, are willing to serve in another country.

These medical brigades operate in several formats. In some countries, we've gone free of charge, and we don't charge anything for the medical brigade, except that the host country guarantees the personnel's living expenses.

In other countries, we have different formats, and they also depend on the government's ability to contract these services. But all Cubans participating in a medical mission abroad continue to receive their full salary for the duration of their service. Then people say it's human trafficking and exploitation. No, we're paying their full salary in Cuba while they're on a medical mission. In many of the medical mission contracts, they also receive a stipend, or a redistribution, meaning they receive their full compensation from the mission plus what they would receive if they were working in Cuba, which they aren't doing at that moment. In other words, they have salary security, so there's no exploitation involved, and they are willing to participate. And in addition to that, some of these agreements include a sum of money that the Cuban government or the Ministry of Public Health receives for those services provided.

But what is that money used for? To enrich an elite? That money is used for the expenses that this country has to maintain in its healthcare system. Because we, being a poor country, have a world-class healthcare system. We have some of the most advanced technologies, an advanced and coordinated primary, secondary, and tertiary healthcare system that reaches the entire population, is completely free, and also supports high-level scientific research. So, it's all a fallacy to say that this is slave trafficking, human trafficking, that it's exploitation, and there is simply pressure now. Pressure has been exerted.

We are aware of actions by the U.S. State Department that have pressured Caribbean and Latin American leaders, even going so far as to visit countries in other parts of the world to

inquire why those countries have this agreement. Most of the responses in those countries are that they cannot do without the services of Cuban healthcare personnel. But some have unfortunately succumbed to these pressures, and we have had to withdraw our doctors because of these demands. This has left a significant portion of the population in those places unprotected, unable to cover their needs with other doctors, and it is not the United



Miguel Díaz-Canel Bermúdez (WikiPedia)

States that will provide them with doctors to fill the gaps previously covered by Cuban collaboration. Furthermore, Cuban collaboration extends beyond these medical security services. We have a Latin American medical training school.

Almost all of us provide it free of charge. Some participate through self-funding. Hundreds-of-thousands of doctors from Latin America, the Caribbean, Africa, and even the United States itself have been trained there. There are very poor areas in the United States that I met in New York during

one of my visits to the United Nations, through an agreement with peace pastors. These doctors from humble backgrounds received free training in Cuba and today serve those communities with a humanitarian vocation, devoid of any desire for personal gain, so dedicated are they to their people. At one point, during Dilma Rousseff's government in Brazil, we had almost 15,000 Cuban healthcare workers and we were able to serve entire populations—I'm not saying this out of Cuban chauvinism, far from it; it's what Brazilians tell you, it's what Dilma and Lula acknowledge. They even reached areas of that vast country, a continent that Brazil, where medical services had never before been available. And then suddenly the Bolsonaro government came along, a completely neoliberal government, and erased that collaboration.

Brazilians still lament that and our willingness to help. Furthermore, we harbor no feelings of revenge or hatred. We analyze the conditions under which a group of countries have decided to discontinue our services, but the day they ask us again for doctors, we are always ready to help. That is the concept behind our medical brigades. That is our commitment, that is the willingness of our people. Those who join a medical brigade don't get rich. Moreover, it demonstrates a sacrifice; they are separated from their families for years, whom we try to have visit during vacation periods. Often, they are in the most remote areas of those countries, in challenging living conditions, and yet they carry out their work with dedication.

How many lives have they saved? When the ALBA<sup>3</sup> project, in conjunction with Venezuela, was called Operation Miracle, millions of Latin Americans with vision impairments and diseases that had left them nearly blind—diseases that could be treated—regained their sight free of charge, thanks to Cuban doctors.

## Educational brigades and literacy

**Miguel Díaz-Canel:** We also have our educational brigades. In Cuba, in 1962, in the early years of the revolution, we managed to declare ourselves a territory free of illiteracy. More than 40 years later, with a Cuban method called “Yes, I Can” and the presence of Cuban educational brigades in Latin American countries, several more Latin American countries managed to eradicate illiteracy. And yet, how many countries in the world today, in Africa and on other continents, have not been able to overcome the scourge of illiteracy, which is to brutalize their people, to deny them the opportunity to think, to have critical thinking, to contribute, to achieve scientific and cultural development?

These are our truths. That’s why we are so grateful for this opportunity you’re giving us to speak to the European public, to the Spanish public, because these truths are constantly being fractured by media manipulation, by this narrative of lies, slander, and character assassination, which is one of the components of this ideological, cultural, and media war we are facing.

And this is why I always use the expression “the perversity of the United States government’s policy toward Cuba.” Why does a superpower, the world’s leading superpower, have to resort to such perverse, dark, immoral, and indecent practices to portray a small island in this way? And there we return to the answer to your question. Because it is the example.

### The immorality of the U.S. with the energy blockade

**Pablo Iglesias:** There’s something I learned today that caught my attention, and I’d like you to explain it. Of course, the United States isn’t letting oil in. So, for Cubans, it’s very difficult to get gasoline, difficult because you can wait many days for a car, or because of the limited availability. We’re practically working

with what little we had. But it turns out that the United States embassy has asked the Cuban government, “Hey, can you let us import gasoline for our embassy cars?” How did this happen?

**We all have to be accountable at different times of the year to the public, to governing bodies, and that always leads you to constantly review yourself, and we take everything very seriously.**

**Miguel Díaz-Canel:** Immoral, isn’t it? The issue isn’t whether the entire population is living with the restrictions you imposed and you want to save yourself. No, no. Find a solution to the energy blockade, and we’ll all have fuel. The Cuban people will have it, all the country’s institutions will have it—private, state-run—all the embassies will have it, but it has to be on equal terms because it can’t be that the one responsible for this is now the one who appears as the victim or takes advantage of the situation. That’s immoral, that’s indecent.

### The historical relationship between Mexico and Cuba

**Pablo Iglesias:** Yesterday, President López Obrador, [of Mexico] who is now retired, wrote something on his social media and said, “I feel very hurt by what is happening to the people of Cuba.” There is something that always happens with the Cuban people and with Cuba itself, which is that it continues to be a significant force that mobilizes consciences throughout the world, and years may pass, many things may change, but it continues to happen, as with the Palestinian cause.

In other words, there are things that make many people say, “This can’t be.” Andrés Manuel López Obrador, who says nothing—I mean, he’s a former president of Mexico who says, “I’m leaving.” And he’s practically disappeared from the public eye and doesn’t use social media. And he breaks his silence for the second time after more than a year to speak about Cuba. And he’s the voice of many more people who have come here with the flotilla, with the meeting of the Progressive International. What do you feel when you see this solidarity that emerges despite the fact that many states are still hesitant, that they’re afraid of the United States, and that there are still people who say, “We are willing to show solidarity with Cuba”?

**Miguel Díaz-Canel:** It stirs up a mix of feelings. First, there’s a feeling of admiration, respect, and commitment for those who help us, for those who show solidarity. I have firsthand experience of this when we’ve met with people who come to show solidarity with Cuba, or when, on work trips, we always have the opportunity to meet with friends of Cuba in other countries. Seeing how Cuba is the center of life for so many people in such diverse parts of the world, and how the Cuban issue is even capable of uniting different perspectives.

And I believe in humanity, in the human condition. I believe that most people in the world, regardless of creed or ideology, are good people. And I believe that Cuba has proven to be a just cause. I would say a cause that could be embraced by most of the planet, and so the way Cuba supports and shows solidarity also awakens a lot of sympathy. So, that initial commitment, that initial feeling of respect, commitment, and admiration—because you ask yourself, how is it possible that in such a place in the world there are people whose lives revolve around defending Cuba?

Furthermore, they do it with tremendous will and systematic dedication, and commitment, because we know we cannot let down those who do it because they see hope in Cuba, or because they see the triumph of a utopia, or because they see in Cuba what they would like to have in their own countries. There's also that feeling of intimacy, of a relationship forged through these attitudes. For example, there are relationships between countries that are historical. Mexico, Mexico. I believe that Andrés Manuel López Obrador (AMLO) is a loyal follower of Mexico's consistent policy in the international arena and of Mexico's consistent policy with the Cuban Revolution.

Mexico and Cuba are united by historical ties of all kinds. Mexicans participated in our wars of independence. Cubans were people who were linked to Benito Juárez<sup>4</sup>, they were in the Mexican Revolution, they were part of the inner circle of Benito Juárez, Fidel Castro, the Granma<sup>5</sup> expeditionaries in exile in Mexico organized the revolution. The Granma came from Mexico. Cuban artists and intellectuals have always had a connection with Mexico. In Cuba, on every radio station in every community, there is at least one program a week that features Mexican music. In other words, culturally we are very closely linked. And in the early years of the revolution, in the 1960s, when the United States also pursued a policy of pressure to isolate Cuba, the only Latin American country that did not break relations with Cuba was Mexico, and it seems that history is repeating itself now. They are pressuring, they are seeking isolation, they want Cuba to be alone. And AMLO is coming out of retirement to support Cuba with a sense of responsibility, loyalty, originality, and feeling—we know his honesty. But Claudia, the president of Mexico, whom we admire and love and who is increasingly admired by the Cuban people—I don't know how many Cubans would like to

be able to tell Claudia personally how much they admire and appreciate her.

Claudia is defending Cuba every day; every day she's looking for ways to help us. Every day she's challenging the lies of media manipulation against Cuba. So, that also weaves a relationship of understanding, integration, and responsibility. And why not say it? I say this without any vanity. It also gives you a feeling of satisfaction because you say, "We haven't been wasting our time, we've given, but we're also receiving." Not because we're doing it in exchange, but because I think what you're about is this idea that we can all help each other, that if we all help each other the world is a better place. And I think that's how we also contribute a little to defending that idea.

And now, well, we've been talking with you this morning. I just got back from the welcoming ceremony for the convoy. Yesterday we were at a meeting with the participants of the convoy. I was completely moved yesterday. I left that event completely moved today. In such a short time, so many people from diverse backgrounds, many of them from humble sectors of society, have come together. They've organized themselves, paid for their own travel, collected solar panels, food, and medicine, and are coming to Cuba with the intention of doing so, but also with a sense of altruism. They've rented motorcycles and electric vehicles so as not to, as they say, hinder any of the problems you're facing.

They've stayed in the most modest accommodations possible and are interacting with the people to truly understand the realities firsthand. I can tell you that this strengthens convictions, reinforces commitments, and fosters a sense of loyalty and fidelity. We cannot betray them; we cannot let them down. I believe all these feelings are present, and above all, an idea has triumphed: Cuba is not alone. How can Cuba be alone when there are these demonstrations from different parts of the world?

## **Balance, responsibility, and postponed dreams**

**Pablo Iglesias:** I've spoken with some Cubans who tell me, "I'm not far-right, I recognize the advances of the revolution, and regarding Trump, I am first and foremost Cuban, but I would like our government to sometimes engage in self-criticism as well because we don't always understand that it has done everything right." Of course, it's very difficult to do everything right when you're in government. If you had to take stock of, let's say, the things you would do differently if you could go back.

**Miguel Díaz-Canel:** Look, we are constantly looking inward and criticizing ourselves. Even the debates we've had recently have been very fundamental debates about the situation in the country, not so much to always look for blame, right? What responsibility has one had in things not going one way or another? Because there's always the stigma of the blockade and of being a besieged city under the blockade, but if not, what's the point of promoting further progress? And in that sense, there's a whole series of transformations we've initiated that aren't recent; they've been underway for years. The thing is, besides any shortcomings or inadequacies on our part, it also has to do with the limitations imposed by this blockage. We have postponed dreams, pending achievements, things that haven't progressed at the pace we wanted.

But, for example, we have been very critical of the bureaucracy, we have been very critical at times of the comprehensive way in which a problem is addressed to solve it, right? Of the speed of procedures, of the speed of providing responses, of some organizational problems in certain sectors, or of a lack of creativity in certain sectors, and above all, we are subject to the criticism of the people. We all have to be accountable at different times of the year to the public, to governing bodies, and that always leads

you to constantly review yourself, and we take everything very seriously.

We are constantly monitoring public opinion, trying to find the right answers. Many recent, momentous decisions, such as the Constitution, the Family Code, the Children, Youth, and Adolescents Code, and the government program to address the economy, have been subject to a process of public consultation. In some cases, we have even held two very democratic exercises: a public consultation and a referendum. And yet, some people say that we are not a democracy, that we don't take into account the participation of the people.

And I always ask my colleagues on work teams, in government, in the party, in institutions, that everything we set out to do must be approached with popular participation and oversight. And within that participation, young people must feel that they are contributing, that they can participate, that their ideas and contributions are valued, and none of this is ideal. These are very complex processes, and we carry them out in very complex situations.

### The 32 Cuban heroes

**Pablo Iglesias:** I want to conclude with something we're discussing here on this rock in the Sierra Maestra. In the kidnapping of Nicolás Maduro, 32 Cubans gave their lives defending a political leader from another country. It's not the first time Cubans have protected political leaders from other countries. I'd like to ask you to say a few words about those men.

**Miguel Díaz-Canel:** I believe that this was an event that deeply moved the entire Cuban community in the country. I remember that in the early morning we started getting the first news of what was happening in Venezuela. The news was very vague until we learned that 32 of our comrades had died. And I remember that we immediately went to the Presidential

Palace, called together our party members, and organized a group to brainstorm ways to support Venezuela, to denounce what was a completely brutal and illegal act of aggression: kidnapping a president and taking him out of the country to the United States.

And I remember that at 8:00 A.M. we started calling on the people for an open forum at the anti-imperialist platform to denounce the situation, hoping to gather thousands of people by 10:00 A.M. We kept working, and meanwhile, people were preparing. I arrived at the anti-imperialist platform with some of my family and other coworkers at 9:30 A.M. It was overflowing, Pablo. The people were fired up, people with a very strong feeling and a deep commitment, on a scale I didn't think was possible in just two hours. So much so that we had to delay the start of the event because there hadn't been enough time to prepare it technically—to set up the screens, the sound system—the people moved faster than anything else we could do to ensure the event could take place. And it was a very heartfelt event, very deeply felt. And then, the reactions of the townspeople to that were profound, and a few days later, the remains of our people returned. A march of a fighting people.

We passed in front of the United States Embassy in Cuba. It was a ceremony. From there, I gave a speech, and then the march began. It was a truly powerful event, emotionally, in terms of unity, and in terms of the fight. What was marching was not a defeated people, but a resolute people reaffirming their convictions.

And I believe there is much symbolism in that event, and time will tell when history unfolds. What was the true magnitude of what those Cuban heroes accomplished? For us, they are heroes because 32 Cubans were able to overcome a United States elite force, despite being outnumbered, out-technically disadvantaged, and out-of-con-

trol in every way, and moreover, they were caught by surprise. This demonstrates what millions of Cubans are capable of doing when defending the island, defending the revolution, defending the homeland.

I recall that initially, in some statements, the President of the United States acknowledged that they had fought hard, that there had been resistance. Afterward, those comments were lost; perhaps they regretted what they said, but I believe they taught a lesson. Many of them were young young men who had never been in combat, but they were trained and demonstrated that they were prepared to face that. I've spoken with several of them, even some who were recovering from their wounds.

And when you see those young men, when you go to see them in the midst of their convalescence, and they don't talk about anything they've done, but rather about the pride of a duty fulfilled and what they were capable of doing, you say, "There is no alternative here. There is no alternative. We have to defend this to the very end." And I believe it's such a powerful, such a stark, such a necessary symbol for these times of defining moments that we will always have to be grateful for the example they gave us.

**Pablo Iglesias:** Miguel, thank you very much.

**Miguel Díaz-Canel:** I hope we can meet again.

*Source: Radio Havana Cuba*

*—Resumen, March 27, 2026*

*<https://resumen-english.org/2026/03/cuban-president-miguel-diaz-canel-we-are-willing-to-give-our-lives-for-the-revolution/>*

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<sup>1</sup> *Avtomat Kalashnikova Modernizirovaniy*—a modernized Russian Kalashnikov Automatic Rifle.

*<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/AKM>*

# How the World Fuels Sudan's War

BY LAURA WITTEBROEK

2 José Martí (1853–1895) was a Cuban intellectual, poet, and journalist who became the primary organizer of Cuba's final war of independence against Spain. He founded the Cuban Revolutionary Party in 1892 and is revered as Cuba's national hero, uniting exile communities and revolutionaries to fight for a free, sovereign republic.

<https://www.britannica.com/biography/Jose-Marti>

3 The Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our America (ALBA-TCP), founded in 2004 by Cuba and Venezuela, is an intergovernmental organization promoting regional integration based on social welfare, solidarity, and economic cooperation, specifically acting as a counterweight to US influence. Cuba is a founding member, playing a key role in the alliance's medical and educational initiatives.

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/ALBA#:~:text=ALBA%20or%20ALBA-TCP%2C%20formally,GDP%20\(PPP\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/ALBA#:~:text=ALBA%20or%20ALBA-TCP%2C%20formally,GDP%20(PPP))

4 Benito Pablo Juárez García was a Mexican politician, military officer, and lawyer who served as the 26th president of Mexico from 1858 until his death in 1872. A Zapotec, he was the first Indigenous president of Mexico and the first democratically elected Indigenous president in postcolonial America.

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Benito\\_Juárez](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Benito_Juárez)

5 Granma is a yacht that was used to transport 82 fighters of the Cuban Revolution from Mexico to Cuba in November 1956 to overthrow the regime of Fulgencio Batista.

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Landing\\_of\\_the\\_Granma#:~:text=Granma%20is%20a%20yacht%20that,the%20regime%20of%20Fulgencio%20Batista](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Landing_of_the_Granma#:~:text=Granma%20is%20a%20yacht%20that,the%20regime%20of%20Fulgencio%20Batista)

*A soft drink stabilized with gum arabic. Gold refined in Dubai. Meat imported for a holiday feast. These objects appear far removed from Sudan's war. They are not.*

Since April 2023, Sudan has been engulfed in a brutal armed conflict that began in Khartoum between the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF). Triggered by disputes over security-sector reform during a stalled democratic transition, the fighting quickly spread nationwide, devastated civilian areas, drew in other armed groups, and crushed the fragile hopes raised by the 2019 overthrow of dictator Omar al-Bashir.

The war is rooted in Sudan's postcolonial history of militarized rule, peripheral neglect, and outsourced repression. Since independence, successive regimes have governed through force rather than consent, waging prolonged wars against marginalized

regions. The 2011 secession of South Sudan ended one conflict but entrenched a security state reliant on armed proxies instead of civilian institutions.

Under al-Bashir, this system was formalized. Militias used to terrorize Darfur—most notoriously the Janjaweed, accused of genocide—were not dismantled but institutionalized as the RSF, embedding racialized violence and impunity within the state.

The SAF and RSF were not historic enemies but former allies: pillars of al-Bashir's rule who survived his fall with weapons, wealth, and foreign backing intact. The 2018–2019 revolution briefly exposed another possibility when millions of Sudanese came together to overthrow a dictator once thought immovable. But while protesters dismantled al-Bashir, they inherited a state hollowed out by decades of militarization. Civilian forces entered a transitional process without control over the security apparatus, while the



Photograph by Nathaniel St. Clair

SAF and RSF retained their power and international backing. The transition failed not because of popular apathy, but because armed elites were never removed from power. When security-sector reform threatened these parallel power bases, old allies turned on each other, igniting the war.

The human cost has been catastrophic. Tens of thousands of civilians have been killed or injured by airstrikes, artillery, and ground assaults in densely populated areas, while entire neighborhoods, villages, and displacement camps have been destroyed. Sexual and gender-based violence, including rape and gang rape, has been systematically used to terrorize communities, often in front of victims' families. Widespread looting and the destruction of essential civilian infrastructure—medical centers, markets, food and water systems, and camps—have further violated economic, social, and cultural rights. Many of these acts, amount to war crimes and crimes against humanity, including extermination and persecution.

Sudan has become the site of the world's largest displacement crisis. Over 11 million people are internally displaced, millions more have fled abroad, while famine and mass malnutrition threaten millions, especially children. Human rights organizations warn that genocide and the world's worst hunger crisis may be unfolding simultaneously.

Crucially, this violence cannot be understood as purely internal. It is produced and sustained through foreign states and corporate actors that provide weapons, funding, and political backing to both sides. Through arms transfers, resource extraction, trade relationships, and migration control, external powers are embedded in Sudan's war economy and are creating incentives to maintain the violence rather than resolve it. Sudan thus fits a recurring global pattern: violence is localized, responsibility diffused, and profits internationalized, a structure replicated from the Congo to Gaza to West Papua.

## Weapons

Sudan's war is sustained by an extensive international arms network, resulting in an almost unimpeded flow of weapons. Neighboring countries serve as key transit routes, while both SAF and RSF continue to receive arms despite a long-standing UN embargo on Darfur. This underscores the complicity of the international community, where legality and enforcement are secondary to strategic interests.

The United Arab Emirates (UAE) is central to arming the RSF. Many investigations document sustained and even intensified transfers since 2023, including Chinese drones, Israeli-made weapons and other equipment. Western states and global arms manufacturers are also implicated: components from the United Kingdom, France, Canada, Bulgaria and the United States have been traced into RSF stockpiles, often diverted from legal exports from the UAE.

**Sudan thus fits a recurring global pattern: violence is localized, responsibility diffused, and profits internationalized, a structure replicated from the Congo to Gaza to West Papua.**

Weapons flows are not limited to the RSF. Both sides have received arms from China, Russia, Turkey, Serbia, Yemen and Iran. Chad, South Sudan, Libya, the Central African Republic, Eritrea and Ethiopia have all been identified as supply routes for weapons, fuel and fighters.

Weapons kill in the present as they enable immediate destruction, but they are inseparable from the long-term extraction that sustains the conflict. Taken together, this evidence demon-

strates that Sudan's war is not merely tolerated but actively sustained by international actors. Despite overwhelming documentation of atrocities, arms embargoes are weakly enforced and routinely violated. This raises one central question: why, in the face of mass civilian suffering, displacement and famine, do states continue to permit weapons transfers that predictably enable further violence? For Sudan's civilians, the answer appears grimly consistent: global profit and geopolitical influence continue to outweigh the value of Sudanese lives. The logic is clear: war becomes a market, and Sudanese lives are collateral within global supply chains of violence.

## Resources and extraction

The reluctance of states to meaningfully confront atrocities in Sudan cannot be understood outside the logic of global capitalism, which continues to rely on the extraction of resources from the Global South under conditions of violence. Sudan's war economy extends far beyond bullets. It is financed through a network of natural resources, livestock, and commodities like gum arabic, linking local violence to global consumption.

Sudan possesses significant oil reserves and vast deposits of gold. Its wealth, in gold and oil, has long attracted foreign powers and armed actors. The RSF's recent seizure of Sudan's largest oil field illustrates how control over resources translates directly into military power, while gold revenues sustain both SAF and RSF operations. Gold is especially vital for the RSF since it easily transported and rapidly convertible into cash, making it ideally suited to funding militias, paying fighters, and purchasing weapons.

Foreign actors are deeply embedded. Russia operates gold mines via Africa Corps-linked entities, with an estimated 10% of its reserves sourced from Sudan, often exchanged directly for weapons supporting Russia's war in

Ukraine. The UAE and Saudi Arabia are central players in a broader Horn of Africa influence struggle, importing Sudanese gold, oil, and livestock. Dubai has become a major refining and trading hub, handling nearly all officially recorded gold exports from army-controlled areas in 2024, excluding illicit flows widely believed to exceed legal exports by a substantial margin.

Livestock and food exports reinforce this pattern. Sudan's large herds supply Gulf markets, particularly Saudi Arabia, whose domestic production cannot meet demand during religious holidays like the Hajj. Armed actors along transport routes impose informal taxes, seize animals, and convert trade into war finance. Global demand transforms these civilian economies into militarized supply chains: profit circulates internationally while violence remains localized.

Less visible commodities also matter. Gum arabic, harvested from acacia trees and used in soft drinks, confectionery, pharmaceuticals, and cosmetics, now feeds the war economy. Around 80% of the global supply originates in Sudan, where both SAF and RSF violently fight for control over harvesting areas and exploit informal routes through Chad, the Central African Republic, and South Sudan to reach multinational supply chains. Approximately half is purchased by European companies, putting everyday products—from Coca-Cola to cosmetics—on shelves built through coercion and armed control, implicating consumers far beyond Sudan's borders.

Sudan's economic structure mirrors classic colonial extraction: raw materials flow outward, violence is contained locally, and value accumulation occurs elsewhere. Much resource extraction operates informally or illicitly, with minerals, oil, livestock, and gum moving through opaque networks that obscure accountability. While Europe appears to import little directly from

Sudan, this framing is very misleading. Trade is extensive with the UAE, Saudi Arabia, and China, countries who dominate Sudan's resource flows. Though formal colonial rule has ended, Sudan functions as a neo-colonial extraction zone: its resources flow outward, its violence is internalized, and its population is excluded from the value it generates.

**Sudan's economic structure mirrors classic colonial extraction: raw materials flow outward, violence is contained locally, and value accumulation occurs elsewhere.**

The implications are stark: Sudanese gold, oil, livestock, and gum Arabic fund armed actors, sustain a globalized war economy, and implicate distant consumers in the violence. Everyday consumption—refined gold, soft drinks, imported meat—is bound to distant death, illustrating the moral cost of a globalized supply chain.

### **Geographical location**

Sudan's significance extends beyond its natural resources to its strategic geographic location along the Red Sea, providing access to the Suez Canal and serving as a gateway from the Middle East into Africa. Control over Sudanese ports, particularly Port Sudan, offers immense geopolitical and economic leverage, including influence over maritime trade in the Red Sea and access to regional markets.

Gulf states have invested billions to secure footholds: Saudi Arabia backs the SAF and the UAE supports the RSF with financial aid, weapons, and diplomatic support. These investments now intersect directly with military opera-

tions and the control of trade routes, ports, and resource flows. By controlling key harbour infrastructure and overland corridors, armed actors can monitor and tax the movement of critical commodities like gold, oil, gum arabic, and livestock, turning Sudan's strategic geography into a vital node in the war economy. Sudan's ports and corridors reproduce imperial logics: control the routes, extract the value, localize the violence.

### **Migration**

European engagement is shaped by migration control, revealing how security priorities outweigh human rights. In 2016–2017, the EU paid €160 million to al-Bashir's government to curb migration toward Europe. While direct cooperation was suspended after the 2019 RSF massacres in Khartoum, the broader Khartoum Process remains. These migration deals contributed to the rise and empowerment of the RSF by legitimizing cooperation with an indicted dictator and his security apparatus, even though arrest warrants for al-Bashir for war crimes and genocide had already been issued by the International Criminal Court at the time.

While the immediate impact of migration funding may be less visible than for example arms transfers, researchers warn of its long-term effects: armed groups have learned that manipulating migration flows can attract European attention, funding and political legitimacy. European border security, like resource extraction, externalizes violence: comfort, stability, and consumption in Europe are preserved at the expense of Sudanese lives.

Sudan's war is not an anomaly but a concentrated expression of a global system that depends on unequal exchange, violent extraction and moral distance. Armed violence, mass displacement, famine, and systemic exploitation are sustained not only by domestic actors but by regional and international powers that profit from instability. From gold and oil

to gum arabic, livestock and migration control, Sudanese lives are rendered expendable within supply chains that sustain global consumption and geopolitical power. A conflict that began with militias created to govern the periphery now feeds a global economy that governs through distance, denial and consumption.

Neutrality is a myth. Global profit and strategic positioning continue to outweigh the value of human life. The war does not end at Sudan's borders; it ends on supermarket shelves, in refineries, and at ports where violence has been converted into normal consumption. What began as a soft drink, a bar of gold, or imported meat is bound to distant death and to our consumption, returning as a question of responsibility. Until trade and financial lifelines are disrupted through sanctions, trade regulation and political rupture, calls for peace will remain performative. Justice requires confronting not only who kills, but who profits, who consumes, and who looks away.

*Laura Wittebroek is a writer and member of Clamour.*

—CounterPunch, February 20, 2026

<https://www.counterpunch.org/2026/02/20/profit-over-people-how-the-world-fuels-sudans-war/>

**Sudan possesses significant oil reserves and vast deposits of gold. Its wealth, in gold and oil, has long attracted foreign powers and armed actors.**

## School Strike in Germany: 50,000 Against Military Service

BY NATHANIEL FLAKIN

Thursday, March 5, 2026—At 11:00 A.M., teenagers started flooding Potsdamer Platz. They came from schools around the city, marching in groups of 50 or 100, waving banners and banging drums. “Not one person and not one penny for the Bundeswehr,” [The armed forces of Germany] they chanted.

“I don’t want to die for a country that doesn’t offer me anything,” said Karl, 18, a student at Evangelische Schule Berlin Zentrum in Mitte. “They talk about protecting us while cutting funding for education and culture.”

On January 1, Germany’s military began sending out questionnaires to people born in 2008 as they turn 18 this year. Young men are required to fill out the form; it’s voluntary for women. After that, men may be asked to submit to a physical exam. It’s a soft launch for reintroducing conscription, which was paused indefinitely in 2011. Now, claiming that a Russian attack could be imminent, the government wants to expand the Bundeswehr from

184,000 to 270,000 active soldiers in less than a decade.

Since the move was announced last year, they’ve offered all kinds of perks for enlisting: free driving school, free transit, and take-home pay of about €2,300 [\$2,672.03] a month. But reactions nationwide have been meh [mediocre]—with one poll showing 63 percent of people aged 18-29 opposing the service—and it seems inevitable that people will soon be required to enlist.

So, on Thursday, students in 130 cities across Germany went on strike. According to organizers, more than 50,000 teenagers ditched class and hit the streets; around 10,000 of them were in Berlin. (The police counted just 3,000.)

Some students were threatened with a *Fehltag* [absence] in their report card for attending. “I’d rather have a mark for missing a day than be dead in a trench,” Richard, 16, told *HEIST*.

“People are against military service,” said Karl from the *Evangelische Schule*. He helped organize a strike committee



On March 5, 2026, 50,000 teenagers ditched classes and hit the streets to protest against conscription. Josh Meissner—IG @joshm.de

six weeks ago. On the morning of the strike, they went from room to room reminding fellow students. He estimates 150 joined—more than from almost any other school. This is key to building the mobilization. “We need more activism at the schools,” he said.

The young people who spoke to *HEIST* want a future without war, without “having to kill other young people who are in the same situation as me,” said 17-year-old Luigi from Kant-Gymnasium in Lichtenberg. “In fact, I probably have more in common with them than I do with German politicians.” Over 30 years of neoliberalism have left their mark; this is the generation that grew up in a state that told them they were on their own. Now they’re supposed to sacrifice for the fatherland?

Militarism carries extra weight in Germany. “We should be careful because of our history,” said Jonah, 18, from the Carl-von-Ossietzky-Gymnasium in Pankow (incidentally, named after a famous pacifist).

The government says this is all voluntary, but that’s not what it feels like. “They’re going after people without money or prospects,” said Locke, also 18. “It’s like in America, with a poverty draft.”

Konrad Kieser, a teacher taking a sabbatical from his job at the Willy-

Brandt-Schule in Wedding, had the same impression. “They aren’t finding enough volunteers, and soon they’ll start forcing people.” He sees his students, many with immigrant backgrounds, being enticed by military recruiters promising adventure and a sense of belonging. “In this economic system, is it really voluntary?”

Teachers tend to be a fairly liberal bunch, and a handful were present at the demonstration in the red vests of their union, the Gewerkschaft Erziehung und Wissenschaft (GEW), which opposes military service. “Hands off our class!” one banner read. A teacher from the Rosa Luxemburg Oberschule remembered organizing his own school strikes for better education 15 years ago, holding sit-ins during recess and marching from one school to another.

At Potsdamer Platz, the police detained one student for what they claimed was an insult worthy of investigation: a cardboard sign with the handwritten phrase “*Merz leck eier.*” A directive to the Chancellor to lick their eggs (eggs referring to something else in German.) Still, thousands of young people took up the chant. The message was clear: if the man behind remilitarization is so enthusiastic about war, he can go to the front himself.

*Nathaniel Flakin is a freelance journalist and historian from Berlin. He is on the editorial board of Left Voice and its German sister site Klasse Gegen Klasse. Nathaniel, also known by the nickname Wladek, has written a biography of Martin Monath, a Trotskyist resistance fighter in France during World War II, which has appeared in German, in English, and in French, and in Spanish. He has also written an anticapitalist guide book called Revolutionary Berlin. He is on the autism spectrum.*

—Left Voice, March 6, 2026

<https://www.leftvoice.org/school-strike-in-germany-5000-against-military-service/>

**The government says this is all voluntary, but that’s not what it feels like. “They’re going after people without money or prospects,” said Locke, also 18. “It’s like in America, with a poverty draft.”**

## Twin Cities Electrical Workers’ Solidarity Against ICE

BY GABRIEL LEGIERSKI, MIKE PLANTE, AND PETER RACHLEFF

For months, the country and the world have been watching Minnesota, where the Trump administration’s military occupation by ICE, Border Patrol, and Homeland Security has been met by a multi-faceted grassroots resistance.

As rank-and-file electricians, we sought to involve our local unions in the campaign to push ICE out of the Twin Cities and to support our immigrant neighbors and fellow workers.

In early February, three weeks after the murder of Renee Nicole Good and

just eight days after the murder of Alex Pretti, 40 members of the Electrical Workers (IBEW) joined an “ICE OUT” potluck to talk about the occupation and its effects on working people.

These kinds of meetings had become common in neighborhoods and community groups. Ordinary people organized ICE watch groups or gathered food for those too afraid to go out, showing what it means to build a collective movement.

Within the IBEW in the Twin Cities, the initiative came from participants in

the RENEW program, which focuses on educating and involving apprentices and younger members.

At the potluck, RENEW members of IBEW Locals 292 and 110 shared why and how they had proposed and passed local resolutions against ICE’s activities. Then members shared personal stories of how the ICE presence was affecting them and their communities.

One apprentice described his experience being detained while recording an ICE arrest in his building. Another

talked about the effects on the restaurant where he works his second job. Many others talked about their involvement in local efforts to defend their neighbors and their co-workers.

### **“Members stalked and harassed”**

Apprentice electrician Michael Plante (one of the authors of this article) had put forward the resolution in Local 292 on January 13, condemning ICE’s actions and calling to limit its activities.

The resolution called out the federal “secret police” for “the harassment and detention of peaceful citizens and non-citizens based on racial profiling, including multiple brothers and sisters in Local 292. Our own members have been stalked and harassed by ICE, they have woken up to their neighbors’ doors being broken in and neighbors abducted by masked men, and many of our streets and workplaces have become unsafe as a result of this chaos.”

His words were met with support in the union hall. One member compared these times to the civil rights movement in Selma, Alabama. Members from different experiences and backgrounds spoke in support, and the resolution passed resoundingly.

Electricians in St. Paul Local 110 passed their resolution a week later, the day after the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther

King Jr., holiday. “If our actions were to cause death we would, and should, be held accountable,” it read. “We would, and should, lose our licenses and careers. We must hold our government to the same standard we hold ourselves.”

### **Years of organizing**

These resolutions and events reflect years of organizing by apprentices in Locals 292 and 110.

**We’ve been able to have open conversations about what works, like an open line among rank-and-file members, and what doesn’t, like isolating locals into their own jurisdictions.**

The once-dormant RENEW committee of Local 292 in Minneapolis has become a center for young members who want to build solidarity both inside and outside of the local.

It started with four people, who began holding social hours and family gatherings, and engaging with the local leadership, in an effort to build connection and community among the

younger members who hadn’t been present for the struggles of the past.

Coupled with long-term relationship-building and conversations, their efforts slowly—and then all at once—brought in more members than the committee had seen in years.

Across the river, Local 110 members in St. Paul were also busy reviving their RENEW committee. They got interested in what was happening at 292, and the two committees started sharing ideas, event planning, and organizing strategies.

Then members from two other Minnesota locals, 160 and 343, reached out to learn more about what was happening in the Twin Cities locals. We’ve been able to have open conversations about what works, like an open line among rank-and-file members, and what doesn’t, like isolating locals into their own jurisdictions.

### **ICE OUT gathering**

Through the process of passing the resolutions, members of 292 and 110 decided to hold the potluck for workers to discuss the occupation. The plan took on greater urgency after Alex Pretti, a member of Government Employees (AFGE) Local 3669 who worked at a VA hospital, was executed by federal agents. Minnesotans were looking for ways to show each other support and solidarity.

The event was held at the East Side Freedom Library, which was started in 2014 with the purpose of building solidarity among working-class people of different backgrounds.

This space holds the history of the labor movement within its walls. It is housed in a historic Carnegie Library, funded in 1917 by profits from the exploited labor of immigrant iron miners, coal miners, and steelworkers. It’s located in a historically working-class and immigrant neighborhood of St. Paul. And today it is home to a new generation of labor organizing, and a celebration of its future.



Union members have been involved in the campaign to push ICE out of the Twin Cities and to support immigrant neighbors and fellow workers. Photo: Brad Sigal

## GOP School Censorship

BY TIMOTHY MESSER-KRUSE

Workers in the Twin Cities are showing what the long, slow work of relationship-building can accomplish—from the George Floyd uprising to today’s sustained effort to resist fascism and build a future based on solidarity.

As tradespeople, we know what it means to build things. We learned at the East Side Freedom Library that the ratification of the U.S. Constitution in 1787 was celebrated with a parade in Philadelphia led by the Bricklayers’ Union. Their banner read, “Both Buildings and Governments Are the Work of Our Hands.”

*Gabriel Legierski and Mike Plante are apprentice electricians and members of IBEW Local 292. Peter Rachleff is the co-founder and emeritus co-executive director of the East Side Freedom Library.*

—Labor Notes, March 31, 2026

<https://labornotes.org/blogs/2026/03/twin-cities-electrical-workers-build-solidarity-fight-against-ice-occupation>

A sure sign of spring is the dropping of new GOP bills regulating what is taught in schools. This year’s legal seedlings are trending toward more sweeping restrictions.

Missouri’s “Sunlight in Learning Act” threatens to cut half of any district’s budget found to be teaching prohibited concepts. It turns out the lights on many topics of historical discussion. Going beyond merely banning the *New York Times* “1619 Project” as many states have done, it takes the novel step of banning not just that but “any successor theory or concept.”

The 1619 Project is actually a collection of essays by highly regarded scholars such as Michelle Alexander, Matthew Desmond, Jamelle Bouie, Tiya Miles, Mehrsa Baradaran, Jeneen Interlandi, Kevin M. Kruse, Linda Villarosa, Trymaine Lee, Wesley Morris, Khalil Gibran Muhammad, Martha S. Jones, and Bryan Stevenson. Among the theories these researchers discuss is how the African American experience of oppression influenced popular music; the role of the commodification of sugar on world history;

the deep connections between the failures of Reconstruction and the persistent racial wealth gap and the rise of mass incarceration; the role of enslaved peoples in westward “settlement;” the century-long debate about whether slavery was capitalist or an obstacle to economic growth; the role slavery and segregation and even urban planning played in the development of the modern U.S. financial system and the modern healthcare crisis.

Not to mention what initially aroused anger against the 1619 Project, Nicole Hannah Jones summary of historians’ arguments about the role of slavery in propelling American revolutionaries toward independence. Fencing off all these historic debates from the classroom will leave only the feel-good Mason Weems morality tales of George and the cherry tree, or worse, the Uncle Remus Tales of Joel Chandler Harris.

Both Ohio and New Hampshire are close to passing legislation named in memory of Charlie Kirk. Ohio calls its bill the “Charlie Kirk American Heritage Act” and the Granite State is debating the Charlie Act, which is an



Rightwing culture warrior Christopher Rufo on the Joe Rogan Experience.

acronym for “Countering Hate And Revolutionary Leftist Indoctrination in Education Act.” They are different in that Ohio’s Charlie Act attempts to wedge religious lessons into public schools while New Hampshire tries to ban ideas conservatives don’t like.

Both claim to rest on political neutrality and historical fact. Language is, of course, a pliable thing, but in both states the concepts of historical accuracy and neutrality is pulled like taffy until it folds into its opposite. Ohio attempts to justify violating the separation of church and state by proclaiming that “Accurate historical instruction regarding verifiable, historical impacts of religion on American history...is not proselytization or a violation of the First Amendment.”

New Hampshire tries to hide its heavy-handed censorship beneath the guise of fighting “indoctrination while preserving academic freedom for neutral, factual discussions.” Patriotic neutrality apparently only tips over into excess when “partisan loyalty” or “total allegiance” is compelled. (It is telling that in defining what America’s core “civic principles” are, the Charlie Act only mentions liberty, equality, and what it terms “republican processes.” Democracy does not make the cut.)

Besides providing no practical guidelines for educators to work with, this sort of formulation normalizes a vast range of indoctrination by inflating the concept of “neutrality” to bursting. This can only make sense to someone who presumes that because the United States is so perfect, so exceptionally magnificent, that it would be irrational to question the glory of its institutions, history, or symbols. Indeed, New Hampshire’s Charlie Act says just this, stating that “Education should never cultivate a hostile... disposition against the founding of America or the constitutions of the United States or New Hampshire.”

New Hampshire’s Charlie Act is a prime example of how MAGA school

editorial laws have shifted from banning certain books and authors to defining vast areas of scholarly investigation off limits to schools. It defines a long list of what it calls “pedagogical practices and praxis” as prohibited indoctrination “compelling adherence to these world-views.” Broad areas of knowledge and interpretation are banned, including “Marxist dialectical analysis,” “critical pedagogy,” “critical race theory,” “critical legal theory,” “LGBTQ+ ideology,” and “liberation narratives.” This Charlie Act specifically bans several provable and undebatable historical facts. One of these thought crimes is asserting that the U.S. Constitution is “designed to perpetuate oppression based on race.” (Is it sufficient to note that the Constitution treats Indians as both non-citizens and non-persons?) Another is a broad ban on framing “history or current events as class, racial, or identity-based conflicts intended to foster division rather than resolution.” It is more difficult to think of an example of a contemporary conflict that doesn’t violate this reality-bending mandate than one that does.

So narrow is the needle which educators must thread to stay within the bounds of New Hampshire’s Charlie Act that it provides a couple of helpful examples as guidance. One example of “permissible pedagogical teaching” (note the idiotic repetition) includes “teaching the Civil Rights Act of 1964 as a historical achievement” (which it was) but at the same time “describing critical race theory as a Marxian-derived framework contrary to American legal principles” (which is quite debatable). Republicans seem committed to passing the Charlie Act, even though New Hampshire’s own Department of Justice publicly declared its opposition because the bill “presents constitutional concerns and risks conflicts with other laws.”

Likewise, Ohio’s HB 486, which passed the House with all 62 Republicans voting in favor and all 27

Democrats opposed, hides its true purpose behind the claim that its only goal is an “accurate and historical account of the influence of Christianity on the freedom and liberties ingrained in our culture...” This sounds well and good but is immediately followed by a list of two dozen purported statements of historical fact that range from half-truths to outright falsehoods. Some of the howlers include “Benjamin Franklin’s appeal for prayer at the constitutional convention and the hiring of chaplains that followed.” (Franklin did, in fact, make a motion for a morning prayer and for some “clergy of this city be requested to officiate” but the motion failed and no chaplains were hired.) Another supposedly “accurate” statement about Franklin, that he suggested to Thomas Paine that he burn his *The Age of Reason* is pure invention as the letter this claim is based upon was written long before Paine wrote his infamous book.

Throughout Ohio’s Charlie Act, “accurate and historical accounts” are slanted to establish a religious consensus among Americans that never actually existed. Take, for example, the law’s direction to teach the “history of the national motto: ‘In God We Trust,’ dating back to the national anthem and traced through its appearance on currency and the inclusion of ‘under God’ in the Pledge of Allegiance.” This sentence cobbles together a handful of unrelated facts in order to imply that Americans have been united beneath a religious motto since the early republic. Francis Scott Key did in fact include the line “And this be our motto: ‘In God is our Trust’” in the never-sung fourth stanza of the Star-Spangled Banner he penned in 1814. But no one noticed or cared about his song or his motto for more than a hundred years. Congress did not adopt that tune as the nation’s national anthem until 1931, didn’t get around to making the Pledge official till 1942, didn’t add the words “under God” to the Pledge until 1954,

didn't put the motto on paper currency till 1955, and didn't make the motto "In God We Trust" official until 1956.

Last week Idaho's SB 1336, a bill modeled on the "American Birthright" curriculum developed by a coalition of right-wing lobby groups, became law. Idaho already bans teaching "critical race theory" including historical facts that might make white kids feel uncomfortable, or as the law put it any suggestion that "individuals, by virtue of sex, race, ethnicity, religion, color, or national origin, are inherently responsible for actions committed in the past." SB 1336 goes beyond outlawing what teachers can't say by mandating what they must teach, in this case a boatload of chauvinistic ideas that American society and "common history and culture" is the "culmination of the Western tradition," "Christianity," and "the Western intellectual tradition" and "Anglo-American heritage." Every Idaho classroom is now required to post in a prominent location a state-approved portrait of George Washington and teachers must teach the "civic virtues" of the "Founding Fathers" and only mention their "efforts during the American Founding...to abolish slavery." Typical of all the bills pushed by right-wing educational groups, while the bill discusses Greek democracy three times, it never mentions that the United States was founded as one.

As 2026's legislative sessions are just beginning, it is clear that the old MAGA crusade to ban "CRT (Critical Race Theory) and DEI (Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion)" has lost steam but has been replaced by a broader movement to censor and control what teachers can teach and students can think. The range of topics being prohibited are quietly expanding and doing so with the flimsy claim that such bans are just restoring "neutrality" to the classroom, or worse, supporting accuracy and fact-based lessons. But these laws revealed a more

Continued on page 65

## How Flint Sit-Down Strikers Built Their Confidence

By GARRETT SHISHIDO STRAIN

On February 11, 1937—forty-four days after their occupations of the Fisher Body No. 1 and No. 2 plants began in Flint, Michigan—General Motors (GM) workers won a landmark agreement. The one-page document included commitments to union recognition and collective bargaining over wages, seniority, work-life balance, and other working conditions, and a prohibition on discrimination or retaliation against union members. In a supplementary letter sent to Michigan Governor Frank Murphy, GM also agreed, for a six-month period, not to support or bargain with company unions or any organization of GM workers other than the United Auto Workers (UAW).

Before the sit-downs, there were many reasons to believe conditions were not ripe for a breakthrough against the world's most powerful corporation. In June 1935, only 4,481 GM workers—less than three percent of GM's hourly workforce—were dues-paying UAW members. In Flint, only

757 out of over 40,000 workers were members, and many GM workers regarded this small minority as "paid agents of General Motors and would have nothing to do with them."

General Motors routinely flouted the law to undermine union drives—illegally firing and blacklisting union activists, employing spies to surveil union activity, and calling in police to bust up union meetings and strikes. The congressional La Follette Civil Liberties Committee exposed that GM spent millions on its vast anti-union espionage network and was the largest industrial client of the Pinkerton National Detective Agency. Flint was a paradigmatic company town: city ordinances forbade the distribution of union leaflets and the use of sound equipment for union demonstrations.

When UAW Vice President Wyndham Mortimer first canvassed the clapboard shacks of Flint workers' neighborhoods



Sit-down strikers occupying one of the Fisher Body plants in Flint, Michigan.

in 1936, he lamented that “a cloud of fear hung over the city, and it was next to impossible to find anyone who would even discuss the question of unionism.” As UAW Communications Coordinator Henry Kraus put it, “Suspicion—the result of years of stoolpigeon activity—had reached the stage of a mania among Flint workers. The usual remark was that you couldn’t trust your best friend; you couldn’t even trust your own brother.”

The sit-down strikers nevertheless succeeded spectacularly. By the middle of October 1937, just eight months after the sit-down settlement, 400,000 workers across multiple companies had joined the UAW-CIO (Congress of Industrial Organizations). By 1938, U.S. union membership more than doubled to 24 percent.

When GM workers held union representation elections in 1940, a majority of workers in forty-eight GM plants across the country voted to join UAW. By then, workers across the American economy—in transportation, meat-packing, electrical equipment, and steel—had joined together into new, mass-membership industrial unions.

What enabled a relatively small group of workers to engage in such dramatic action, and more importantly, what made them correct to assume that they had a majority of coworkers on their side? What made Flint workers believe that a successful sit-down was possible—especially when there was real potential for supervisors, police, and anti-union workers to violently suppress their occupation?

As the UAW celebrates its ninety-first anniversary this year amid an all-out assault by the billionaire class, returning to these questions of organization is more important than ever for charting labor’s future.

### **Class confidence**

One of the most common answers to these questions is simple: Flint workers—and workers in the 1930s more general-

ly—were highly class conscious. But what is meant by “class consciousness?”

In *The Making of the English Working Class*, historian E. P. Thompson defines class consciousness as “the consciousness of an identity of interests as between all these diverse groups of working people and as against the interests of other classes.” Similarly, sociologist Erik Olin Wright defines class consciousness as “the understanding by people within a class of their class interests.”

**In *The Making of the English Working Class*, historian E. P. Thompson defines class consciousness as “the consciousness of an identity of interests as between all these diverse groups of working people and as against the interests of other classes.”**

While understanding one’s class interests and their relationship to capital is certainly important for collective action, these definitions underspecify the psychological link between understanding and action. After all, most workers today understand that wealth and power are concentrated in the hands of a billionaire class and that unions are the most effective way to fight back—but too many remain hesitant to act on these beliefs by forming a union in their workplace.

Others define class consciousness teleologically, reading it backward from militant collective action. As labor sociologist Rick Fantasia notes, “the extraordinary degree of working-class solidarity expressed in the labor wars of the 1930s has served as a vir-

tual ideal-typical model of class consciousness. . . .” According to these accounts, you know class consciousness when you see it. But narratives of a spontaneous explosion of worker self-activity mystify the origins of class consciousness and collective action.

As any union leader or organizer knows, in addition to class consciousness, workers also need confidence. In order to take the necessary risks to prevail in fierce new organizing and contract fights, workers must not only know their interests but believe they can win them—and constantly exude this confidence in interactions with coworkers.

This confidence must also be grounded in reality: in the experience of and lessons from past struggles, in the righteousness of the current fight, and in a strong structure of workplace leaders. Reflecting on the sit-down success, Mortimer put it succinctly: “We had confidence and a spirit of sacrifice that eventually enabled us to accomplish what many had thought was impossible.”

Class confidence was an essential psychological precondition of the sit-downs, converting understanding of class interests into militant collective action. Many accounts of class consciousness certainly include some element of what I’m calling class confidence. But by pulling out and specifying this concept, we can better understand the mechanisms that lead from understanding to action and back again.

So how did class confidence come about in the case of the Flint sit-downs? Certainly, one factor was the prior accumulation of victories—especially at smaller employers—which gave workers in isolated communities a sense of collective momentum. But previous eras had seen individual victories fail to inspire worker action at scale.

What was key in Flint in the winter of 1936–37 to translating this momentum in the broader manufacturing industry into aggressive class confidence in workers’ immediate workplace was some-

thing else: a structure of trusted workplace leaders strong enough that dramatic disruption could be met with solidarity rather than fear and repression.

### **Momentum toward Flint**

In May 1936, French workers began what many claim were the first mass sit-down strikes in modern history. By June, one-fourth of all French workers were on strike, and nearly three-fourths of strikes were sit-downs. At a meeting with French automakers in September 1936, where they warned him about the French wave spreading across the Atlantic, General Motors Executive Vice President William Knudsen dismissed the threat: “No, that could not happen in the United States. . . . The American people would not stand for them.”

Just weeks later, the sit-downs arrived in the U.S. auto industry, starting at smaller suppliers in the early fall before reaching General Motors in November. Workers sat-in at parts maker Bendix in South Bend, Midland Steel and Kelsey-Hayes Wheel in Detroit, and finally, at General Motors plants in Atlanta, Kansas City, and Cleveland.

Each of these victories contributed to a sense of momentum and inevitability. They revived a belief in collective action after years of defeat—most notably Fisher Body No. 1’s previous failed strikes in 1930 and 1934, during which American Federation of Labor (AFL) leaders bungled negotiations with the company and GM fired and blacklisted many left-wing union leaders.

They also gave practical advice to would-be sit-downers. According to La Follette Committee investigator Charles Kramer, Flint worker-activists, especially those with ties to the Communist Party USA (CPUSA), had developed “a whole organizational plan as to what you do inside the plant and what you do outside the plant. This was an organizational plan that had been derived from the Polish experience, the French experience, and the Akron experience, and Midland Steel.”

Franklin D. Roosevelt’s election to a second term supercharged this growing wave. In the 1936 presidential elections, Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO) leader John L. Lewis declared that electing pro-labor federal and state officials was essential for organizing the mass-production industries. Lewis had good reason for this belief: anti-labor politicians and judges had allied with corporate interests to undermine Roosevelt’s New Deal agenda and stifle unionization efforts under the National Industrial Recovery Act.

**In order to take the necessary risks to prevail in fierce new organizing and contract fights, workers must not only know their interests but believe they can win them—and constantly exude this confidence in interactions with coworkers.**

Lewis and other CIO leaders created labor’s Non-Partisan League, committing greater union resources and boots on the ground to electing Roosevelt than in any previous election. When Roosevelt won decisively, “union sentiment flamed up throughout the whole plant like a fire before a wind,” according to one account. A UAW leaflet following the election declared, “You voted New Deal at the polls, and defeated the Auto Barons—now get a New Deal in the shop.”

Equally important was the election of Michigan Governor Murphy, one of many New Deal governors who took office in 1937. Previous governors had used state police to break up strikes. Murphy pledged to support workers’ right to organize. So important was

Murphy to the union’s strike strategy that UAW leaders had originally planned for the Flint sit-down to start in January 1937, after Murphy assumed office. Toward the end of the strike, Murphy delayed deploying state authorities to enforce an injunction, giving union leaders critical space to reach an agreement with GM.

### **Structure of leaders as engine of confidence**

Too many accounts of the 1930s upsurge begin and end with momentum and ripe political conditions, leading to a false sense of inevitability. What’s left unexplained is how precisely the sit-down momentum took hold in Flint.

This remarkable upsurge of militancy could have ended, as it did at many previous moments in labor history, in heart-break, with the sit-downs isolated and defeated, never arriving in Flint. Most GM factories were not directly involved in the sit-downs, so clearly factors beyond momentum were involved in making the Flint sit-downs successful.

Here I will show how a carefully built structure of workplace leaders fostered collective experiences that gave workers the confidence to sit down or leave their stations and support the strike from the outside. This structure was also crucial for the seizure of Plant 4 and other moments that brought the strike to ultimate victory, but the focus of this analysis will be on what enabled the Flint sit-downs to happen successfully in the first place.

In June 1936, Mortimer arrived in Flint to help prepare for a decisive confrontation with General Motors. A long-time autoworker who rose to prominence after leading an organizing drive at the White Motor Company, Mortimer understood that winning union recognition at GM required organizing “on a national scale for a national strike to win a national agreement.” Flint, a crucial node in GM’s supply chain, was essential to this objective.

Mortimer built on previous years of organizing by the Socialist Party's League for Industrial Democracy (LID) and other left-wing groups, working with a small core of seasoned shop-floor leaders to rebuild a network of workplace leaders in Flint.

He bought a copy of the Flint directory to look up the addresses of five thousand workers who had formerly been part of Flint's defunct AFL auto unions and sent those workers a series of letters. Each letter, according to Mortimer, "dealt with a specific issue" and "hammered home the fact that the answer to the problem was the union." Here's one letter that took the issue of fear head-on:

"It is fear of losing the job that keeps you from signing an application for membership in the union. I do not blame anyone for protecting his job. . . . But the hard cold fact is that you will lose that job sooner or later. If you do not lose it as a result of joining the union, you will lose it because a new machine will replace you . . . or because gray hairs appear around your brow. . . . You will lose the job for any number of reasons beyond your control, because the job does not belong to you. It belongs to General Motors, and your chances of keeping that job will be infinitely better when you join with your fellows in a union, and fight for job security. . . ."

Any worker who responded positively to these letters was asked to organize a house meeting with trusted coworkers, outside the view of GM management and their spies, to discuss unionization. Attendees were asked to organize other house meetings and invite more coworkers. Many attendees had been active in previous failed strikes and were persuaded through this process that the UAW's industrial approach marked a break from the AFL's timid, craft union approach. Mortimer called this systematic approach to recruiting leaders, "breaking the hard ground" and "leavening the dough."

Over time, workers built a fairly representative structure of pro-union

leaders across most areas in the plant. Here's how Bud Simons describes the process and the result of their efforts:

"Yeah, most of 'em [Fisher Body No. 1 workers] were scared. So, we had . . . volunteer organizers that we'd set up. And I'd take them over into the [union] hall and [Mortimer] would sign his name on their organizing card, see. Volunteer organizers. . . . Well, then they knew someone, had a brother or somebody in the tool shop or the press room or any place else and they'd get a hold of him, see.

"And Mort, he'd come out about once a week. And here's all the guys that are volunteer organizers. Well, they brought their friends and got them signed as volunteer organizers. We had the goddamn place full of them. *Hell, we must have had two hundred and fifty volunteer organizers in there.* (emphasis added)."

These volunteer organizers informed their coworkers about successful strikes at other plants, answered workers' questions about unionization, built unity, countered anti-union intimidation and misinformation, and recruited more organizers.

Months later, Bob Travis replaced Mortimer as the International Union's primary organizer in Flint but continued the organizing program Mortimer set in motion. In Travis's words, "I always indicated that someday maybe it would be necessary for us to have a strike. But we wanted to make sure that when we did that, we would be able to protect our strike and win the strike." Travis reiterated to worker leaders the importance of enlarging their leadership structure "so as to get representation on it from all departments."

Intermediate victories accelerated leadership recruitment across departments. One of the most important of these occurred in November when "body-in-white" department workers at Fisher Body No. 1 held a mini sit-down over the firing of workers pro-

testing speed-ups—the auto industry's most deeply and widely felt issue—on their line. Within hours, the fired workers were back at work.

Strike Committee Chair Simons summarized the lesson from the victory: "Fellows, you've seen what you can get by sticking together. All I want you to do is remember that." In the following weeks, "organization shot out from body-in-white into [the] paint, trim, assembly, and press-and-metal [departments]."

To be sure, Flint's workplace leadership structure still had major gaps that could have ultimately imperiled the strike. GM employed 47,000 workers across more than ten factories in Flint. The company's massive Buick, AC Spark Plug, and Chevrolet plants had limited pro-union leadership coverage. When the strike began suddenly on December 30, these gaps enabled the company to stoke an anti-union backlash when the sit-downs idled or slowed production at Flint's non-struck plants.

GM channeled anti-union discontent into a front group called the "Flint Alliance for the Security of Our Jobs, Our Homes, and Our Community." This organization engaged in vigilante violence against pro-union workers and demanded Governor Murphy enforce an injunction to eject the sit-downers.

The late labor organizer and scholar Jane McAlevey popularized a "structure-based organizing" approach that Flint in many ways exemplifies. But contrary to a central tenet of McAlevey's approach, Flint Fisher Body workers did not engage in a rigorous, majority-participation structure test before sitting down. There were several reasons for this, including concerns that exposing pro-union workers before the sit-down would result in mass firings and blacklisting as well as concerns that their factories would prematurely shut down if they delayed a sit-down, due to parts shortages stemming from other sit-downs.

This didn't mean Flint unionists expected "momentum" from broader

industry victories to spontaneously spur masses to action. They knew that without workplace leaders across every department instilling confidence and maintaining unity, the company could easily divide, intimidate, and confuse their coworkers into inaction.

That's why they focused on building a dense, representative leadership structure, while recognizing their limited ability to preemptively "test" this structure in confrontational action. But through leader-driven, confidence-building activities—house meetings, delegations to supervisors over workplace issues, and mass meetings in the lead-up to December 30—they generated enough solidarity to achieve majority support at the decisive moment, even while only a minority of workers sat down. As Victor Reuther put it, "The company's return-to-work movement was not able to persuade the majority outside the plant to act against the minority inside."

I would argue that this approach is key to building class confidence: not necessarily a "verifiable" majority or supermajority in preparation for collective action but a determined, representative minority that has both a majoritarian focus and enough of an understanding of and an embeddedness within their workplaces to make mass collective action happen.

In many ways, the current regime of labor law has veiled this key dynamic that was at the heart of the biggest labor upsurge in American history. As that regime crumbles under Republican aggression and Democratic fecklessness, it's an opportune time to revisit the basics of building class confidence.

### **Rebuilding class confidence today**

Just as in the early '30s, today a high degree of public support for unions exists alongside a historically low unionization rate and extreme concentrations of wealth and political power. To break out of this interregnum, we

must train our focus on tactics and strategies that rebuild class confidence. What can we learn from the sit-downs about how to do this?

A key lesson I've tried to draw out here concerns the twin dangers today of overly rigid structure testing and minority vanguardism. If Flint sit-downers had insisted on completing a majority structure test before their strike, they likely would have missed their moment. This lesson contravenes more rigid applications of structure-based organizing, according to which no leadership structure can be considered ready for militant majority action unless it has proven its capacity to engage a majority in lower-stakes action.

The opposite is also true: unions have lost elections and strikes by falsely concluding that a majority of workers signing cards or a petition necessarily means you have a strong, confident network of pro-union workers who can lead their coworkers through the boss campaign to victory.

William Z. Foster summarizes the other danger of minority vanguardism in *Organizing Methods in the Steel Industry*, cautioning that organizing campaigns must "prevent the movement from being wrecked by company-inspired local strikes and other disruptive tendencies. The necessary discipline cannot be attained by issuing drastic orders, but must be based upon wide education work among the rank and file and the development of confidence among them." Flint organizers certainly agreed with these ideas and sought to avoid premature strikes called by a righteous but isolated few. Still, the lack of organization in Flint's larger factories nearly proved fatal to the sit-down wave.

How to navigate between these twin dangers? In order to organize today's massive, high-turnover workplaces—auto factories, logistics hubs, and more—it's necessary to recruit and train a broad, representative layer of pro-

union workers across work areas, departments, and shifts who are willing to help organize their coworkers. Not everyone in this layer will be so-called "organic leaders" in the strict sense of the term—their degree of influence will vary. But without this broad layer taking various actions to build their coworkers' confidence, the most influential workers will likely sit out the fight.

The sit-down experience shows the virtue of recruiting any and all trusted, pro-union workers who are willing to do at least some amount of organizing, tracking the growth of this structure over time, and drawing on it to mobilize workers to mass meetings and other collective experiences that further build class confidence.

The sit-downs are also evidence that big wins tend to happen in the right political conditions and with existing organizing momentum. Today we must look for opportunities to win elections, strikes, and first contracts at smaller, less-resourced employers to help set off industry-based momentum.

But for this momentum to breach a Tesla or an Amazon, we must do the spadework of recruiting and training leaders, across every area and shift, at the largest, most strategically important worksites. Only then will workers have the confidence to believe in Eugene Debs's famous declaration that the labor movement's triumph "is as certain of ultimate realization as is the setting of the sun."

*Garrett Shishido Strain is a union organizer based in Richmond, California.*

—*Jacobin*, April 16, 2026

<https://jacobin.com/2026/04/flint-sit-down-strikes-class-confidence>

## Fukushima, 15 Years On

By JOSHUA FRANK

March 20, 2026—Nine countries now possess nuclear weapons, and we have just seen the start of a new war in the Middle East over one more nation supposedly trying to acquire them. While we consider the dangers of such weapons and their capacity to cause massive destruction, we often overlook the risks associated with what still passes for “peaceful” nuclear power. With that in mind, let me revisit a moment when that reality should have become far clearer.

I had crawled into bed on March 10, 2011, opened my phone, and scrolled through my Instagram feed. The app was still fairly new then, and I was only following a dozen or so accounts, several from Japan. One amateur photographer there had posted photos minutes earlier of a fractured sidewalk and a toppled bookshelf. A massive earthquake had just rattled Tokyo.

A news article confirmed that a magnitude 7.9 quake had struck 80 miles off the coast of Japan. Later, it was upgraded to 9.0, 1,000 times more powerful in terms of energy released. Holy shit, I thought. That’s huge! Worried, I emailed my old college friend Ichiro, who lived in Tokyo, to make sure his family was safe. A short while later, he replied that they were fine, but that a massive tsunami had flooded the Tohoku region north of Tokyo. Many were dead.

“It’s horrible. It’s chaos,” he wrote me.

By the time Ichiro’s message arrived, distressing images of the tsunami were already circulating online, and the death toll was rising fast, though the floodwaters were by then receding. As I watched heartbreaking videos of screaming onlookers, capsized boats, floating debris, and cars submerged like

toys in a bathtub, another tragedy was unfolding that few, even inside the Japanese government, were aware of. A nuclear plant in Fukushima, operated by TEPCO (the Tokyo Electric Power Company), had been swamped by the tremendous flooding and lost all power.

The Fukushima Daiichi nuclear plant, built by General Electric (GE) in the mid-1960s, was designed to withstand natural disasters, but its creators never foresaw an earthquake like that. When the plant’s sensors detected the quake, its reactors automatically shut down. That emergency shutdown (or scram) halted its fission process, triggering backup power to keep cold seawater flowing through the reactors and spent-fuel containers to prevent overheating. Things at Fukushima were going according to plan until that massive tsunami battered the plant, washing away transmission towers and damaging electrical systems. There were backup generators in the basement, but those, too, had been inundated by waves of seawater, and an already bad situation was about to get far worse.

A power outage at a nuclear power plant is known as a “station blackout.” As you might imagine, it’s one of the worst scenarios any nuclear facility could possibly experience. If all electricity is lost, that means water is no longer being pumped into the reactor’s scalding-hot core to cool it down. And if that core isn’t constantly being cooled, one thing is certain: disaster will ensue. The fission process itself may be complicated, but that’s basic physics. To make matters worse, there were three operating reactors at Fukushima Daiichi. Luckily, three others had already been shut down for maintenance. If power wasn’t restored



IAEA experts depart Unit 4 of TEPCO’s Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Station on April 17, 2013 as part of a mission to review Japan’s plans to decommission the facility. Photo Credit: Greg Webb / IAEA

in short order, that would mean that all three of Fukushima's reactors were in very big trouble.

We would later learn that no one— not at TEPCO, GE, or among Japanese regulators—had ever considered the possibility that all the reactors might lose electricity at once. They had only drawn up plans for one reactor to go down, in which case the others could keep the plant running. But all of them offline, and every generator out of commission? There was no precedent or playbook for that.

The nuclear industry has a reasonably polite name for a disaster like the one that was rocking Fukushima. They refer to it as a “beyond design-basis accident” because no single nuclear plant design can account for every possible problem it might encounter in its lifetime. The fact that there's a term for this should make you anxious.

### Meltdowns and fallout

Over the next several days, the emergency at Fukushima Daiichi only worsened. Every effort to restore power to its reactors hit a dead end. On-site radiation-detection equipment, which would have triggered warnings and guided evacuation efforts for those in danger, was no longer functioning. Plans to pump water into the reactors to cool them had faltered. Their cores kept overheating, and the boiling pools of spent fuel were at risk of drying out, potentially triggering a massive fire that would release extreme amounts of radiation.

Within three days, following a series of fires, hydrogen explosions, and panic among those aware of what was happening, Fukushima's Units 1, 2, and 3 experienced full-scale core meltdowns. Over 150,000 people within an 18-mile radius had already been forced to evacuate, and radiation plumes would take two weeks to spread across the northern hemisphere, although the Japanese government wouldn't admit publicly that any meltdown had occurred until June 2011, three months later.

The only good news for the 13 million people living 150 miles south in Tokyo was that, during and immediately after the meltdowns, prevailing winds carried much of Fukushima's radioactive material away from the smoldering reactors and out to sea. It's estimated that 80 percent of the fallout from Fukushima ended up in the ocean, meaning most of it headed east rather than toward population centers to the south and west. The other fortunate news was that the spent fuel containers had somehow survived it all. If their water levels in the pools had been drained, far more radiation would have been released.

**...no one can guarantee that nuclear plants or radioactive storage tanks are safe in war zones, or that the rivers and lakes needed to cool reactors globally won't one day run dry or become too hot to do so—something that has already happened in Europe**

But Tokyo wasn't completely spared. After years of research, scientists discovered that cesium-rich microparticles had blanketed the greater Tokyo area, an unpopular discovery that drew backlash and threats of academic censorship. Areas around the Fukushima exclusion zones recorded the highest radiation levels. Japanese government officials continually downplayed the dangers of the accident and were reluctant to even classify the event as a Level 7 nuclear disaster, the highest rating on the International Nuclear Event Scale, which would have placed it on a par with the 1986 Chernobyl nuclear disas-

ter. Japanese officials have also failed to conduct long-term epidemiological studies that would include baseline measurements of cancer rates, which has cast doubt on thyroid screenings that found troubling incidents of cancer far higher than researchers expected.

### Radioactive fish

Prior to the earthquake, the ocean's cesium-137 levels near Fukushima were two Becquerels (a unit of radioactivity) per cubic meter, well below the recommended drinking water threshold of 10,000 Becquerels. Just after March 11, 2011, cesium-137 levels there spiked to fifty million before decreasing as sea currents dispersed the radioactive particles away from the coast. The ocean, however, had been poisoned.

In the years that followed the Fukushima nuclear disaster, researchers documented a frightening, yet predictable trend. Radioactive isotopes in seawater were taken up by marine plants (phytoplankton), which then moved up the food chain into tiny marine animals (zooplankton) and, eventually, to fish. Cesium-137 consumed by fish can reside in their bodies for months, while Strontium-90 remains in their bones for years. If humans then eat such fish, they will also be exposed to those radioactive particles. The more contaminated fish they eat, the greater the radioactive buildup will be.

In 2023, over a decade after the incident, radiation levels remained sky-high in black rockfish caught off the Fukushima coast. Other bottom-dwelling species have been found to be laden with radioactivity, too, including eel and rock trout. Further concerns have been raised about the treated radioactive water that TEPCO continued to release into the ocean, prompting China to suspend seafood imports from Japan. Aside from those findings, there have been very few studies examining the effects of Fukushima's radiation on ecosystems or on the people of Japan.

“Japan has clamped down on scientific efforts to study the nuclear catas-

trophe,” claims pediatrician Alex Rosen of International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War. “There is hardly any literature, any publicized research, on the health effects on humans, and those that are published come from a small group of researchers at Fukushima Medical University.”

Recognizing such levels of radiation, even if confined to the waters near Fukushima, would cast the country’s nuclear industry as a significant threat—not only to Japan but globally. Any admission that Fukushima’s radiation is linked to increased cancer rates would raise broader concerns about nuclear power’s future viability. Radiation exposure is cumulative and, although Fukushima didn’t immediately cause mass casualties, it wasn’t a benign accident either. It took decades before it was accepted that Chernobyl had caused tens-of-thousands of excess cancer deaths. It may take even longer to completely understand Fukushima’s full effects. In the meantime, the still ongoing cleanup of the burned-out facilities may cost as much as 80 trillion yen (\$500 billion).

It’s been 15 years since Fukushima’s reactors experienced those meltdowns and we still don’t fully understand their long-term repercussions. Nuclear power advocates will argue that Fukushima wasn’t a serious incident and that nuclear technology is still safe. They’ll minimize radiation threats, remain optimistic that new reactor designs will never falter, dismiss the fact that there’s simply no permanent solution for radioactive waste, and overlook the inseparable connection between nuclear power and atomic weapons. After all, among other things, we’ll undoubtedly need nuclear energy to help power the artificial intelligence craze, right?

The operators and regulators at Fukushima were wholly unprepared for what unfolded on that fateful day in 2011. They never imagined that an earthquake of such magnitude could

trigger a tsunami so immense that it would destroy the power grid, knock out water pumps, and disable backup generators. Likewise, no one can guarantee that nuclear plants or radioactive storage tanks are safe in war zones, or that the rivers and lakes needed to cool reactors globally won’t one day run dry or become too hot to do so—something that has already happened in Europe. Ultimately, we can’t anticipate every mishap, human error, or—especially in the age of climate chaos—every natural disaster that may come down the pike. The world is unpredictable, and even the safest nuclear power plant can’t guarantee that it will hold up against whatever tragedy is coming next.

Fifty miles south of where I live in Southern California, an old nuclear facility sits idle on the Pacific coast in an earthquake-and-tsunami-hazard zone, not unlike the site where Fukushima was built. It’s not the only such plant in California, but it’s the one I often visit. When I’m there, I think about Fukushima and imagine what would happen if a similar, unexpected disaster reached California’s shores and how such an event would forever alter this land.

### **Searching for solace at San Onofre**

The morning light was peaking over the sandstone bluff, and the offshore breeze was soft and brisk. I’m barefoot in a wetsuit, trudging my surfboard down a dirt road at San Onofre, a state park in northern San Diego County, for a “dawn patrol” surf session. A series of high tides—likely made more extreme by rising sea levels—has eroded a large portion of the parking lot below, so the beach can only be reached on foot or by bike. I’m not complaining. It’s worth the short trek. The absence of vehicles down here also means fewer surfers in the water.

San O, as it’s lovingly referred to, has a rich surf history spanning 100 years. Duke Kahanamoku, the “father of modern surfing,” who popularized the

ancient Hawaiian sport in Southern California and often visited San O in the 1940s, helped to solidify it as one of the region’s premier breaks and an early hub of SoCal surf culture. The waves are long and rolling thanks to an extensive cobblestone reef. It’s a magical place.

Things around here have changed quite a bit, however, since “The Duke” first paddled his heavy wooden board into the surf. Just down the beach, the San Onofre Nuclear Generating Station sits precariously perched 100 feet from the water. Its two large domes are an ominous sight. Constructed in the 1960s, the plant is no longer producing electricity, but the station’s 123 large concrete-and-steel storage vessels remain, housing 3.6 million pounds of highly radioactive waste. Since nobody wants the toxic stuff, it just sits there, looming, awaiting the next big earthquake like the one that shook Fukushima. San Onofre is designed to withstand a 7.0 shaker, but scientists believe the area is capable of producing one ten-times larger and 32 times stronger. With 8.4 million people living within a 50-mile radius, any geological upheaval at San O could make a hell of a mess. It’s a worrisome thought I’d rather not dwell on.

Although it is a state park, the ground that San Onofre sits upon is leased from the federal government because it lies within the 195-square-mile boundary of the Camp Pendleton Marine Corps base. More than a base, Camp Pendleton is a testing ground, where heavy artillery often booms in the distance. An occasional mock raid can occupy the beaches; helicopters sometimes swarm, and Amphibious Combat Vehicles crawl ashore. There’s even a faux Afghan village that was built at Camp Pendleton, costing taxpayers \$170 million, where Marines can imagine terrorizing towns from Iran to Gaza. So strange that amid all this madness, San Onofre is where I search for solace.

In 2013, a radioactive gas leak from one of the nuclear plant's steam generators, which are also within the military reserve, led to its closure. Southern California Edison (SCE), which operates the facility, reassured the public that there was nothing to be concerned about. Few, however, would consider SCE a trustworthy source. Over the years, the company has been caught in a series of lies about the safety of San Onofre, including falsifying firewatch records and grossly mishandling waste. Not dissimilar to TEPCO's Fukushima deceit.

Like all nuclear power plants, San Onofre needed a lot of water to cool its three reactors, sucking in an astonishing 2.4 billion gallons of seawater a day. As you can imagine that thirst had a serious impact on ocean ecology, killing fish and wrecking kelp beds. It's taken over a decade, but some of what was destroyed is finally coming back to life after years of restoration. Despite the progress, discharge pipes still release radioactive effluent laced with cesium-137, cobalt-60, and tritium—a mile

offshore 170 times a year. But SCE says there's nothing to worry about. They also insist they don't have much of a choice. All that leftover waste needs to be kept from overheating, and using seawater is the only option available.

It's better not to think too much about a future Armageddon or what might be swimming beneath me while I'm out there bobbing between sets of waves. Surfing is supposed to help relieve my anxiety, not exacerbate it. It's a little like backpacking in the wilds of Montana, which I also love to do, without constantly worrying about being chomped by a grizzly bear while in my sleeping bag. There are hazards to living in this crazy world—the worst of which, I've come to believe, are of the man-made variety.

As I slide my surfboard into the back of my van and peel off my wetsuit, I glance at San Onofre's domes, which will start to be dismantled this year, and ponder the horrors still affecting Japan, fearing that someday a destructive tsunami may batter this beach, too. Sadly, it's almost inevitable.

With nine nuclear-armed nations and roughly 12,000 nuclear warheads on this planet, worries about nuclear war are unavoidable. However, the danger of a nuclear disaster at a seemingly "peaceful" nuclear facility is often ignored. The future of atomic energy remains uncertain, but it is our duty to eliminate this hazardous energy source before another Fukushima triggers a war-like catastrophe all its own.

*Joshua Frank is co-editor of CounterPunch and co-host of CounterPunch Radio. He is the author of Atomic Days: The Untold Story of the Most Toxic Place in America, and the forthcoming, Bad Energy: The AI Hucksters, Rogue Lithium Extractors, and Wind Industrialists Who are Selling Off Our Future, both with Haymarket Books.*

—CounterPunch, March 20, 2026

<https://www.counterpunch.org/2026/03/20/the-relentless-nightmare-of-fukushima-15-years-on/>

## INCARCERATION NATION

### Israel's Mandatory Death Penalty for Palestinians

BY KEVIN COOPER

*This statement was delivered April 18, 2026, to commemorate the 52nd Annual Palestinian Prisoners' Day in Oakland, California.*

Our human rights are not negotiable. They never have been and never will be.

Each and every human being has a universal right to life, no matter what anyone, or any government says, we ALL have the right to life.

But throughout the tortured history of this planet we call Earth, certain human beings have taken it upon themselves to decide that certain other human beings are expendable.

This tortured history, and evilness, is also here in the divided states of America, where the color of one's skin has made them not only expendable, but deemed by the powers that be, as not worthy of life.

This modern day and historical truth has been proven, especially within this country's so-called criminal justice system, where Black people and especially Black men like me, have been sentenced to death and executed by being accused of, or convicted of—rightly or wrongly—the murder of white people.

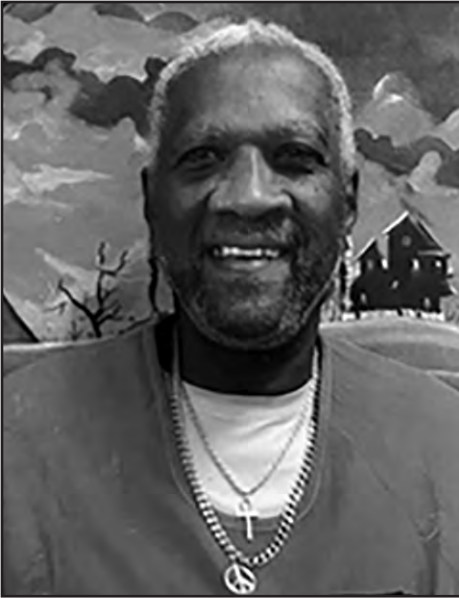
This racist mindset and ideology was also used in other racist, classist

and oppressive countries, such as South Africa during apartheid.

Nazi Germany learned from the United States of America, how to use racism to divide and segregate Black people from white people and dehumanize them in the process.

So much so that the Nazis did this to Jewish people. And this included the death penalty where Jewish people were executed for just being who they were as they were born to be.

Now here, in 2026, the government of Israel is doing to the Palestinian people, what the Nazis did to the population of the Jewish people, before and



Kevin Cooper

during World War II, and what the United States of America has historically done, and is still doing to poor

people, and to people of color—executing us for political, religious, racist, and all inhumane reasons.

It is now or never to get up, stand up, speak out, and get involved to stop our Palestinian sisters and brothers from being railroaded into the death chambers in Israel for being who they are as they were born to be—Palestinian people.

How can this country called Israel, do to the Palestinian people what the Nazis did to them?

Haven't they learned anything from history? Executing people based on the color of their skin or their class or any other type of reason is wrong.

It's humanely wrong. It's morally wrong. There's no other reason to do it other than racist, and racism, and classism. And scapegoating.

We're tired of being executed. We're tired of being murdered. My God, when is this gonna end?

Please, get involved to bring an end to this man-made madness, because if human beings can start it, then human beings can stop it.

In struggle and solidarity, from death row, at Stockton prison in California. I'm Kevin Cooper.

Kevin Cooper is an innocent man on death row. He continues to struggle for exoneration and to abolish the death penalty. Learn more about his case at: [www.kevincooper.org](http://www.kevincooper.org)

Write to Kevin Cooper at:

Kevin Cooper C65304

CHCF Unit E1C 101

P.O. Box 213040

Stockton, CA 95213-9040

[www.freekevincooper.org](http://www.freekevincooper.org)

## Zorro Jailhouse Lawyer's Saga—An Interview with Bryant Arroyo

BY BETSEY PIETTE

*Unlike the myth of Zorro—who wielded his sword at a moment's notice to win justice on behalf of a disenfranchised town—in real life Bryant Arroyo, imprisoned in Pennsylvania, is in the vanguard, whipping out his pen like Zorro's sword to challenge the Pennsylvania Department of Corrections when it violates prisoners' constitutional rights.*

*Workers World recently interviewed Arroyo, whose Zorro jailhouse lawyer saga began in January 2024 when he challenged the Pennsylvania State Correctional Institution at Coal Township over medical negligence in failing to accommodate inmates with disabilities under the Americans with Disabilities Act.*

**Workers World:** Can you tell us more about this conflict?

**Bryant Arroyo:** When I assisted comrade William (Billy) Rinick to get a prosthetic for his left knee and surgery for his atrophied right foot, I was confronted by a posse of officers from the

Security Department who expeditiously had me cuffed and whisked away to the Restricted Housing Unit.

My only alleged misconduct charge was rule #29—"engaging in or encouraging unauthorized Group Activity"—for assisting Mr. Rinick to exercise his constitutional rights to receive adequate medical care. While in the Restricted Housing Unit at Coal Township, I was then given three separate misconducts—on February 5, 8 and 20.

**Workers World:** What happened with these charges?

**Bryant Arroyo:** The misconduct charges were heard by three different Hearing Examiners. Hearing Examiner T. Knepper dismissed the first misconduct and Hearing Examiner B. Rudzienski dismissed the second misconduct. But Hearing Examiner Rudzienski intentionally failed to dismiss the second misconduct with prejudice, which would have prevented the

same unconstitutional charge from being re-filed.

Instead, this irregularity spuriously motivated prison officials to file a third misconduct, which then ended in dismissal with prejudice by Pine Grove's Hearing Examiner (F. Nunez), whose moniker in general population is "90-day Nunez"—due to his pattern and practice of sanctioning inmates to 90



Bryant Arroyo

days' disciplinary status in the Restricted Housing Unit.

**Workers World:** What happened next?

**Bryant Arroyo:** The misconduct charges revealed a disturbing pattern and practice of retaliation and a concerted, active "campaign of harassment" by the Department of Corrections for exercising my First Amendment Constitutional rights.

I was then transferred ten hours away from my home (Eastern Pennsylvania) to SCI-Pine Grove (near Erie). There, prison officials began to shackle me with belts and cuffs during my legal virtual visitation calls. The punitive shackling prevented me from participating in legal virtual visits to "access the courts," rendering me unable to hold the phone, share documents, write or use the bathroom.

Pine Grove's administration has created an unconstitutional "chilling effect" as I prepare to prosecute my civil action in federal court for jury trial and has impeded my access to obtain newly-discovered evidence in my criminal case under the Post Conviction Relief Act (PCRA) in the Court of Common Pleas to obtain an evidentiary hearing to win a new trial.

**Workers World:** How did you challenge this unconstitutional policy?

**Bryant Arroyo:** I filed a grievance on September 25 against prison officials at Pine Grove—Facility Manager Mark Brothers, Deputy Martha Cree, Security Captain E. Box and Captain J. Bouch, the Captain of the Restricted Housing Unit. My grievance asserted that those officials were engaged in a concerted "campaign of harassment" with prison officials at my prior institution—SCI-Coal Township.

In that grievance, I described how I had been unrestrained for the prior 70 weeks of virtual legal visits; but that as soon as prison officials attempted to transfer me to yet another prison and then backed down from that attempt, the shackling began.

In response to my grievance, Major Sumner (C.O. IV) declared, "You are housed in a level 5 housing unit, which requires certain security measures to be followed, which includes 6.5.1 Section K., No. 8 sub. section No. 9, which states 'appropriate restraints shall remain on the inmate while he/she is in the visiting area.'"

**Workers World:** So, you challenged Major Sumner by pointing out the ambiguous, punitive and unconstitutional nature of the policy which was selectively and vindictively applied for several reasons. Can you tell us more?

**...he has been  
on the receiving end  
of unconstitutional,  
vengeful, unlawful and  
retaliatory actions by  
prison officials for  
exercising his First  
Amendment rights...**

**Bryant Arroyo:** First, it applies to general visiting areas, not to virtual visitation held in an adjacent, secured room; and especially, not to virtual legal visitations held in a secured room installed with an aperture for removing the restraints. Secondly, the arbitrary policy violated my constitutional right to "access the courts" [*Bounds v. Smith*, 430 U.S. 817 (1977)] and my Sixth Amendment Constitutional rights, because it renders me unable to hold the phone, share notes and even use the bathroom during legal visits.

The courts have also recognized a Constitutional right to receive adequate assistance from persons trained in the law [*Younger v. Gilmore*, 404 U.S. 15 (1971)]. Furthermore, the U.S. Supreme Court has ruled that the general doctrine of deference to prison officials in these matters does not apply

to communications between inmates and legal counsel [*Procunier v. Martinez*, 416 U.S. 396 (1974)].

**Workers World:** Despite the Zorro jailhouse lawyer Arroyo's medical diagnoses of carpal tunnel syndrome and arthritis in both hands, he has defiantly managed to file grievances, and his federal lawsuit (U.S. District Court for the Middle District of Pennsylvania—Civ. No. 1:23-cv-01083) unprecedentedly brought against all three State Correctional Institutions—Frickville, Coal Township and Pine Grove (each of them moving him further and further away from his family), all serve as evidence that he has been on the receiving end of unconstitutional, vengeful, unlawful and retaliatory actions by prison officials for exercising his First Amendment rights.

His is a saga of David versus Goliath—part of the ongoing daily struggle of inmates within the prison-industrial complex in the United States to fight injustice and uphold their basic humanity. This Zorro jailhouse lawyer knows his pen is mightier than the sword to write out his ironclad Constitutional defenses; to win the dismissal of all three misconducts; and to continue to highlight the pattern and use of retaliation by the the prison-industrial complex which create a "chilling effect" on prison advocacy and on prisoners like him.

Arroyo concluded our interview: "No good deed goes unpunished! The key to freedom is in your mind! Use your pen! Refuse to cower! Speak truth to power! Peace, liberty, justice and freedom to my brothers and sisters!"

—*Workers World*, December 19, 2025

<https://www.workers.org/2025/12/89627/>

Write to Bryant Arroyo:  
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# Massachusetts Federal Court Ignores Nazi-Style Crimes in State Prisons

By JORDAN MARTELL RICE

In 1963, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. warned in his “Letter From Birmingham Jail” that “injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere.” Writing from a jail cell in Birmingham, he understood that the struggle for civil rights would not end with a single victory. His words echo powerfully today. The injustices festering inside America’s prison sys-

tem threaten not only those behind the walls, but the integrity of justice itself.

I am Jordan Martell Rice, a *pro se* prisoner incarcerated at Souza-Baranowski Correctional Center (SBCC) in Shirley. I have spent years attempting to litigate clear constitutional violations through the federal courts. What I have encountered instead

is obstruction, retaliation, and what I describe as systemic abuse shielded from meaningful judicial scrutiny.

On June 6, 2017, I filed a civil lawsuit in the U.S. District Court for the District of Massachusetts alleging malicious prosecution, civil rights conspiracy, and violent retaliation by correctional staff. The case, *Rice v. Resendes*, was presided over by U.S. District Court Judge Leo T. Sorokin. Despite the complexity and gravity of my claims, I was denied appointed counsel and forced to proceed *pro se*.

After surviving a motion to dismiss and entering discovery, I allege that retaliation intensified. At Old Colony Correctional Center in Bridgewater, I submitted written grievances warning that staff members were threatening my safety but, Superintendent Steven Kennedy ignored those warnings. On May 15, 2021, I was assaulted in my cell by another prisoner. Although I acted in self-defense, I was placed in punitive segregation, while video evidence was reportedly unavailable due to alleged equipment failure.

Post assault, I filed grievances challenging my legal and personal property being damaged, stolen, and lost. While I was reimbursed for certain items, critical legal materials could not be located. When the prison’s defense counsel later represented to the court that administrators were unaware of my complaints, I presented documentation bearing Kennedy’s signature. Nonetheless, the court ruled in favor of the defendants and again denied my request for counsel, even as I attempted to litigate without access to essential materials that resulted in a defense win.

In 2023, I filed a second federal lawsuit, *Rice v. Kennedy*, overseen by U.S. District Court Judge Nathaniel M. Gorton and U.S. Magistrate Judge M. Page Kelley. By that time, Kennedy was



Jordan M. Rice

transferred to SBCC as the Superintendent. The same obstructive patterns continued with the confiscation of legal books, denial of law library access, censorship of mail, and failure to protect me from further assaults. My attempts to replace essential legal texts—including the widely used “Prisoners’ Self-Help Litigation Manual”—were denied as “contraband” due to size restrictions, despite prior approval of identical materials.

I further allege that I have endured excessive force incidents, denial of adequate medical and mental health care, racial slurs, and targeted violence by other prisoners. In December 2024 and May 2025, I report that I suffered serious physical injuries during separate incidents in which staff allegedly failed to intervene or actively participated. I sustained a broken nose, and a concussion, yet have been denied proper treatment. Court officials ignored the blatant and inhumane crimes against me for being a voice for my constitutional rights.

These personal allegations unfold against a broader backdrop. In 2022, a class-action lawsuit, *Diggs v. Mici*, was filed before U.S. District Court Judge Margaret R. Guzman, alleging systemic racist violence at SBCC against more than 150 Black and Brown prisoners. The Massachusetts Department of Correction ultimately agreed to a reported \$6 million settlement. While that case did not resolve my individual claims, it underscores that concerns about violence and oversight at SBCC are not isolated.

I have written to numerous state and federal officials—including Attorney General Andrea Campbell, Governor Maura Healey, FBI Agent Sarah De Laid and others—seeking investigation and intervention. To date, my complaints have gone unanswered.

The federal courts are meant to serve as gatekeepers of constitutional rights, particularly for those with the least power. Yet, from my perspective, I have been required to litigate complex civil rights cases while deprived of the very tools necessary to do

so. I maintain that this pattern effectively forecloses meaningful access to the courts.

Dr. King’s warning remains urgent. If constitutional protections can be eroded in silence behind prison walls, they can be weakened anywhere. My hope is that public awareness and independent scrutiny will bring transparency to conditions inside Massachusetts prisons and restore faith that justice applies to all free citizens and prisoners alike.”

If you would like to contact me then the only absolute way to ensure contact is by emailing my outside contact, Brianna Adams, who oversees the Committee to Free Me, and she will explain how to sign up to email me. Our e-mail address is: [freedomreign1@hotmail.com](mailto:freedomreign1@hotmail.com).

<sup>1</sup> “*Pro se*” (Latin for “for oneself”) refers to the legal right to represent yourself in court without an attorney.

Write to Jordan:  
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Continued from page 19

sequencing, to sync its fronts, and to make the hours run together faster than the war machine can pull them apart. It is a fight for time as much as for land—a struggle to take the clock from the hand that has held it for a century and insists, with champagne and statute and strikes from the air, that the hour of every reckoning belongs to it alone.

It is, in Tuqan’s image, the attempt to jostle—to refuse the order the scaffold imposes, to race toward the hour rather than wait for it to arrive, in the hope that when enough hands reach for it at once, the schedule itself breaks down.

*Abdaljawad Omar is a writer and Assistant Professor at Birzeit University, Palestine.*

—Mondoweiss, April 2, 2026

<https://mondoweiss.net/2026/04/the-rope-is-for-arabs-only-israels-new-death-penalty-law-for-palestinians->

Continued from page 53

troubling essence of where MAGA thinking is heading: the world is not knowable but known and education exists simply to inculcate official versions of it.

*Timothy F. Messer-Kruse is an American historian who specializes in American labor history.*

—CounterPunch+, April 19, 2026

<https://www.counterpunch.org/2026/04/19/gop-school-censorship-2-0/>

# SOCIALIST VIEWPOINT

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## **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.

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# War: It's All About Money

BY MUMIA ABU-JAMAL



Mumia Abu-Jamal

What's really behind the war that's happening on our TV screens and on our devices? In a word, it's money. When you think about what happened in Venezuela, think not of the kidnapping of the President and his wife, or even the imposition of the vice president. Think about the tons of oil that was taken and shipped to the United States. War is always about natural resources. It always has been. It always will be, because natural resources are the properties upon which corporations make their loot. Wars are about power, money, ego, but always about money. And when you see what's happening in Iran, don't be surprised if a vast amount of oil disappears, because



Residents in front of buildings damaged by airstrikes in Karaj, Iran, on April 3, 2026.

ultimately, that's what they thirst for, that's what they're interested in—not the people of Iran, not even the leaders of Iran—but the natural resources of Iran. Were it not for the natural resources of the Middle East, there wouldn't be an American in the whole area, not to mention a corporation. When you ask what it's about, remember, it's about money.

—Prison Radio, March 10, 2026

<https://www.prisonradio.org/commentary/war-its-all-about-money/>

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Palestinians protesting the Knesset's passing of the death penalty law exclusively for Palestinians, Gaza City on April 1, 2026. (Photo: Hashem Zimmo/APA Images) Read *"The Rope is for Arabs Only"* on page 18.

On the Front Cover: Thousands gather March 7, 2026, at the foot of Market Street, San Francisco, in protest of the U.S. war on Iran. (Shutterstock) Read *Guns vs. Butter—It's Our Choice* on page 4.



Sit-down strikers occupying one of the Fisher Body plants in Flint, Michigan. Read *How Flint Sit-Down Strikers Built Their Confidence* on page 53.



Photograph by Nathaniel St. Clair. Read *How the World Fuels Sudan's War* on page 45.

★ ★ ★ **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.”