

\$4 at Newsstands and Bookstores

SocialistViewpoint

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

MARCH/APRIL 2025 VOL. 25 NO. 2

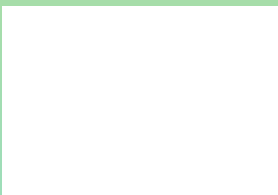


Only a Worker's United Front Against Capitalism Can Stop Fascism - Page 4

Catch US Now We're Falling - Page 34

The Truth About Immigration - Page 40

Is the U.S. Labor Movement Ready for Trump 2.0? - Page 48



Socialist Viewpoint Editorial

Workers everywhere are under attack!

The sharp turn toward fascism that the U.S. government—and governments around the world are carrying out—demands a massive, united opposition from the working class on an international scale.

We need a united effort to form an independent, democratically organized mass coalition of groups and individuals united in defense of workers everywhere. Independence for this movement means it cannot be controlled by the capitalist political parties—the Democrats and Republicans.

We need mass demonstrations in support of workers' rights!

Our goal is to organize a movement to oppose all the attacks on the working class by the Trump/Musk administration, attacks aimed at enriching the billionaires and impoverishing the workers.¹ This movement can begin with mass marches and rallies on the same day in defense of workers' rights, including immigrant rights, and against war and U.S. enabled genocide in Palestine and other areas in Southeast Asia and Africa.

We must defend the most vulnerable!

This movement must be independent of the Democratic and Republican Parties,

for whom support of capitalism is their reason for being—and all capitalist political parties of genocide around the world.

We must unite against racist, class-based and bigoted attacks on immigrants, people of color, trans and LGBTQ people, and all workers, organized and unorganized, housed and unhoused, who are struggling to make ends meet while the billionaires continue to increase their obscene wealth as they plunder and pollute the earth!

An attack against one is an attack on all!

The U.S. military is the most powerful and profitable military the world has ever seen. In addition to its bases at home, it has more than 750 bases² in over 80 countries that stretch across the continents. It is actively enabling genocide across the globe and threatens the very survival of our planet.

A united front against fascism must be built now!

The power of the working class is in our numbers and our common interests to live in peace, with economic and social equality and justice for all.

The only way to defend the world against fascism is to unite our collective

power over production—ultimately, to withhold our labor—to take charge of production and the profits we create for the good of all.



Hundreds gathered outside the Tesla building in San Francisco at the “Reject Musk-Trump Power Grab” protest on February 17, 2025. (Photo by Leon Kunstenaar)

1 In the weeks since President Donald Trump has assumed office, more than 200,000 federal workers at more than a dozen agencies have had their roles eliminated. In addition to those who've been fired, 75,000 federal workers have accepted buyouts. Here are the agencies where workers are facing termination: Department of Education, Department of Homeland Security (in which half the more than 400 cuts were in the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), the rest from the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Agency (CISA), and the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, and DHS Science and Technology.) Aside from Homeland Security, were cuts from the Department of Energy including the National Nuclear Security Administration, United States Agency for International Development (USAID), Consumer Financial Protection Bureau (CFPB), Department of Veterans Affairs, Department of Agriculture (USDA), Environmental Protection Agency, Department of Health and Human Services, and the Department of the Interior, among others.

<https://abcnews.go.com/US/agencies-federal-workers-fired/story?id=118901289>

Freedom of Information Act (FOIA): “CNN Made FOIA Request About DOGE—Only to Learn FOIA Staff Was Fired”

<https://www.commondreams.org/news/cnn-foia-office-of-personnel-management>

“Good luck with that, they just fired the whole privacy team,” an OPM email address wrote back, according to Tuesday reporting from CNN.

2 The number of U.S. bases may be higher because not all data is released by the Pentagon. “The U.S. Has 750 Overseas Military Bases, and Continues to Build More to Encircle China”

https://www.democracynow.org/2023/2/14/david_vine_us_bases_china_philippines#:~:text=The%20United%20States%20struck%20a,want%20war%2C%20says%20Vine.

SocialistViewpoint

March/April 2025 Vol. 25, No. 2

SOCIALIST VIEWPOINT
www.socialistviewpoint.org
email: info@socialistviewpoint.org

CONTENTS

U.S. and World Politics

Socialist Viewpoint Editorial.....	2
Only a Worker's United Front Against Capitalism Can Stop Fascism	4
<i>By Bonnie Weinstein</i>	
Gaza and Trump's Ethnic Cleansing of the Century Proposal	6
<i>By Jamal Kanj</i>	
Trump Proposes Takeover of Gaza Genocide	8
<i>By Owen Jones</i>	
The Palestinian Authority's Assault on the West Bank Resistance	11
<i>By Mariam Barghouti</i>	
Saudi Leader Tells Trump to Pound Sand	16
<i>By Prince Turki Al Faisal</i>	
We Can't Afford to Ignore This Threat to the People of Gaza	17
<i>By Abdullah Shihpar</i>	
The Boomerang Comes Back	18
<i>By Noura Erakat</i>	
On the Ceasefire in Gaza and the Road Ahead	22
<i>Statement by Arab Resource & Organizing Center</i>	
Swiss Police Arrest, Deport Palestinian American Journalist Ali Abunimah	24
<i>By Sharon Zhang</i>	
Inside the Hind Rajab Foundation, the Organization Hunting Israeli War Criminals	25
<i>By David Kattenburg</i>	
Rebuilding Gaza Now	27
<i>By Muhammad Ayyash</i>	
Israel's Brutal Torture of Palestinian Detainees	28
<i>By Amer Sultan</i>	
A "Ceasefire" That's Designed to Fail	31
<i>By Chris Kinder</i>	
Bowdoin College Students Launch First Gaza Solidarity Encampment of Trump Era	32
<i>By Brett Wilkins</i>	
Catch US Now We're Falling	34
<i>By Jeffrey St. Clair</i>	

"Truly Dystopian:" Trump Administration Threatens Public Schools with Funding Cuts	38
<i>By Jake Johnson</i>	
Quoting Napoleon, Trump Openly Declares He's Above the Law	39
The Truth About Immigration	40
<i>By Sarah Smith</i>	
Tennessee Immigration Plan Criminalizes Support for Sanctuary	43
<i>By Anita Washwani</i>	
Trump Plan for Migrant Prison Camp at Guantánamo Bay	44
<i>By Eloise Goldsmith</i>	
Unionization and the Fight Against Trump Starts with a Break from the Democrats	45
<i>By Adrian Ortega</i>	
Is the U.S. Labor Movement Ready for Trump 2.0?..	48
<i>By James Dennis Hoff and Jason Koslowski</i>	
South Africa Starved Dozens of Trapped Miners	53
<i>By Shola Lawal</i>	
Socialism or Barbarism: A Statement of Fact	55
<i>By Matt Willgres</i>	

Environment

Momentous Victory for Climate Justice	56
<i>By Julia Conley</i>	
Fire Weather	57
<i>By Chris Hedges</i>	
Geoeengineering Fails Again	60
<i>By Jessica Corbett</i>	
Ravaging the Soils of Gaza	61
<i>By Stan Cox</i>	

Incarceration Nation

Joe Biden Grants Clemency to Leonard Peltier	64
<i>By Jennifer Bendery</i>	
Howard Keylor: A Life of Labor and Liberation	67
<i>By Mumia Abu-Jamal</i>	

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

Periodicals Postage Paid at San Francisco, California.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Socialist Viewpoint, 60 29th Street, #429, San Francisco, CA 94110

Only a Worker's United Front Against Capitalism Can Stop Fascism

By BONNIE WEINSTEIN

February 8, 2025—Time and again catastrophic events such as wars, ecological disasters, racism, drug overdoses, illnesses like cancer and heart attacks are blamed on “human weaknesses”—that all the evil that befalls humanity is the fault of the inferiority of the masses—and not the class-based structure of society that places the wealthy capitalist class above the poor and working class.

All of Trump's dictatorial edicts such as annexing Greenland, Canada and the Panama Canal, deporting hundreds-of-thousands of migrants, cutting funds to the Environmental Protection Agency, and his pick of Robert F. Kennedy, Jr. as his Health Secretary, in his first few weeks in office has certainly been outdone on February 4, 2025, with his, and Netanyahu's plan to rid Gaza of all Palestinians, turn it into “The Riviera of the Middle East” and make it a U.S. territory.

The poor and working class are blamed for our very existence

It's as if the economic and social structure of society has nothing to do with war—with genocide in Gaza—and the massively unequal distribution of wealth across the globe:

- It is wars between capitalists for which workers shed their blood. It is the wanton polluting and pillaging of the environment for profit that causes ecological disasters. It is capitalism's need to pit worker against worker that causes racism and bigotry.
- It is the giant, hugely profitable, pharmaceutical industry that is to blame for opioid addictions and overdoses.
- And it's the giant junk food, cigarette, drug and alcohol industries with high-powered advertising that not only promotes all these

unhealthy things but raises prices on healthy foods. They even keep the supermarkets that sell healthy food out of the poorest communities altogether.

- The health insurance industry has made sure that healthcare is only available to those who can afford to pay—or who qualify for some kind of minimal healthcare plan—sometimes with impossibly huge deductibles.
- It is the poor and working class who fight and die in war—who are the cannon fodder for wars that benefit only the capitalists. The U.S. war industry is the most profitable industry in the world, and it is paid for with our lives and livelihoods—the capitalists collect the cash.

These crises are not the result of weakness in human nature. They are not “human-caused” at all—they are capitalist-caused human disasters on a massive scale.

When labor takes the lead, peace, liberty and justice will prevail

It seems, at the moment, we are silenced by shock. There should be millions on the streets in outrage over Trump's onslaught of ultra right-wing edicts and billionaire cronies at his beck and call. Not only has he dismantled U.S.A.I.D., but Trump is also halting all aid to South Africa claiming mistreatment of white landowners, while the fact is, “White South Africans, who make up seven percent of the population, own farmland that covers the majority of the country's territory.”¹

While it's indisputable that our outrage is growing, the necessary leadership to harness this outrage has not yet



After igniting outrage for raising a Nazi salute at a Trump inauguration event, Elon Musk tweeted: “So I am both a Zionist AND a Nazi?” He meant it mockingly, but the historical and ideological affinities between Zionism and white supremacy run deep.

coalesced. But there are some lights in this long, dark tunnel.

A statement by the General Executive Board of the United Electrical, Radio & Machine Workers of America (UE), on January 31, 2025, renewed their call for a labor party,² and student activists at Bowdoin College in Brunswick, Maine have launched what is believed to be the first Palestine solidarity encampment since President Donald Trump took office.³ And thousands across the country have been protesting Trump's anti-immigrant policies.⁴

Labor must take the lead

What is vitally needed is a reckoning among organized labor that it must break its allegiance to the Democratic and Republican Parties, and organize a massive, new party of the working class, completely independent of any capitalist party.

It is the only way to fight back against the ever-encroaching fascism that is the inevitable trajectory of capitalism in its final stages of destruction and decay.

Labor must take the lead in defense of all those who are being targeted by the capitalist class and its government.

Labor must organize massive protests in defense of immigrants, women and the LBGTQ community, students and children, all people of color, every unorganized and severely underpaid and oppressed worker in factories, Big-Box warehouses, farms, fields and wineries and service industries—people of all abilities—whose education opportunities and living standards have plummeted.

No matter how “liberal sounding” capitalist politicians are, they are, first and foremost, defenders of capitalism and their ownership and commanding control of the means of production whose system enslaves the working class.

It means breaking labor laws—organizing massive walkouts in defense of working people and our allies under assault by the government—including those under military assault by the U.S. across the globe.

Labor must claim our right to never cross a picket line again! To stand tall and firmly against injustice everywhere and to exercise our right to carry out the

fight to end capitalism and take the ownership of the means of production in our own hands for the benefit of everyone.

The first step is for the U.S. labor movement, *en masse*, to sign on to the UE call for a labor party and get organized and ready to win the fight of our lives. Our very survival depends upon it.

1 “Trump halts all aid to South Africa, claiming mistreatment of white landowners.” By Michael D. Shear and John Eligon, February 7, 2025

<https://www.nytimes.com/live/2025/02/08/us/trump-administration-news#trump-south-africa-aid-white-landowners>

2 UE News, January 31, 2025


<https://www.ueunion.org/political-action/2025/trump-government-of-billionaires-no-good-for-the-working-clas>

3 “Bowdoin College Students Launch First Gaza Solidarity Encampment of Trump Era” *Common Dreams*, February 7, 2025, reprinted in this issue of *Socialist Viewpoint*.

<https://www.commondreams.org/news/bowdoin-sjp>

4 “Businesses close to support ‘Day Without Immigrants,’ amid Trump’s immigration crackdown”

<https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/politics/2025/02/03/day-without-immigrants-businesses-close/78176470007/>



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

Labor Studies & Radical History

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

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

Gaza and Trump's Ethnic Cleansing of the Century Proposal

By JAMAL KANJ

Nearly eight years ago, Donald Trump and his Zionist son-in-law, Jared Kushner, unveiled the so-called “Deal of the Century”—a plan Palestinians aptly labeled the “Steal of the Century.” The so-called peace proposal sought to normalize illegal Jewish-only colonies in the West Bank, and deny Palestinians their aspirations for an independent state. Four years later, the only “Deal of the Century” turned out to be the \$2 billion investment Jared Kushner secured for his new fund from Saudi Arabia.

Now, Trump is proposing relocating Palestinians from Gaza, urging Arab regimes to “build housing at a different location where they can maybe live in peace for a change.” He floated the idea of displacing approximately 1.5 million people—a figure strikingly similar to the number of 1948 refugees now living in Gaza.

I agree with Trump—but let’s take it a step further. Instead of relocating 1.5 million people to another location, we

should relocate 1.6 million Palestinians back to their original homes from which they were ethnically cleansed in 1948, not to Egypt, not to Jordan.

The new “soft approach” to uproot Palestinians from their land echoes memories of the 1948 Nakba, when hundreds-of-thousands of Palestinians were “temporally” displaced to make room for the European Jewish immigrants escaping the Nazi atrocities.

Trump is reaching out to Abdel Fattah al-Sisi of Egypt, and King

Abdulla of Jordan when he should be talking to Benjamin Netanyahu. Rather than looking far east and west, he should be looking north and east of Gaza, demanding that Netanyahu return Palestinians to their original villages and cities. Any proposal to move Palestinians outside historical Palestine only compounds the original sin of the 1948 ethnic cleansing.

The essence of the old Trump’s misnomer, Deal of the Century, and current proposal to “. . . just clean out that whole thing” in Gaza stems from the same deeply rooted Zionist dehumanization of Palestinians. Trump’s proposal to displace Palestinians is nothing less than a regurgitation of the Israeli Likud Party’s racist agenda, aimed to maintain a Jewish apartheid state from the river to the sea. This idea is a grotesque inversion of justice, where the oppressed are further punished for their victimhood, while the oppressor is enabled and rewarded.

The immediate, and raw response to Trump’s racist proposal came from the hundreds-of-thousands who, despite immense hardship, waited in the cold to return to their homes—many reduced to rubble in northern Gaza. Their resilience and determination serve as a powerful rebuke to any plans to uproot them from their land.

This unwavering determination underscores the unbreakable bond between the Palestinian people and their homeland, a connection that endures even in the face of immense suffering and destruction. For these individuals, their homes—no matter how devastated—represent more than physical structures; they embody identity, history, and a profound connection to the land.

Trump’s presumptuous proposal is a continuation to the legacy of systemic Israeli apartheid policies that prioritize



YouTube screenshot of Gazans walking back to their homes—or what’s left of them—in Northern Gaza.

the expansion of illegal Jewish-only colonies on Palestinian land. It reflects an unabashed disregard to the rights of Palestinians and perpetuates oppression and dispossession under the guise of false compassion. Not surprising, the first two individuals who welcomed Trump's proposals were Israeli racist ministers Bezalel Smotrich and Itamar Ben Gvir.

Like the racist Israeli ministers Smotrich and Ben Gvir, Trump sees the very existence of Palestinians as an obstacle to peace. This mindset echoes the ideology of the Nazis, who viewed the presence of European Jews as a problem—an ideology that ultimately failed despite the horrors of the Holocaust. Similarly, Israel's attempts to ethnically cleanse Gaza have also failed, even after subjecting Gaza to more explosives than were dropped on Dresden, Hamburg, and London during WWII.

Blaming the victims only serves to deflect attention and absolve the aggressor from responsibility for the structural injustices and human rights violations it inflicts. Such a warped perspective allows Israel to persist with its malevolent policies while avoiding meaningful international scrutiny and accountability.

Palestinians in Gaza, enduring one of the most inhumane economic siege areas on Earth, have long resisted displacement. After persistent 15 months of genocidal war, during which 66 percent of homes were destroyed and more than ten percent of the population was murdered or injured, their resilience remains unbroken. The new "soft approach" to uproot Palestinians from their land echoes memories of the 1948 Nakba, when hundreds-of-thousands of Palestinians were "temporarily" displaced to make room for the European Jewish immigrants escaping the Nazi atrocities.

If there is any logic to the idea of relocation, it should start with Israeli leaders like Benjamin Netanyahu, Smotrich, and Ben Gvir—whose ancestry traces back to places like Poland,

Ukraine, and Iraq—and who might consider moving back to their ancestral lands rather than demanding the displacement of Native Palestinians from their homes.

Like the racist Israeli ministers Smotrich and Ben Gvir, Trump sees the very existence of Palestinians as an obstacle to peace. This mindset echoes the ideology of the Nazis, who viewed the presence of European Jews as a problem—an ideology that ultimately failed despite the horrors of the Holocaust. Similarly, Israel's attempts to ethnically cleanse Gaza have also failed, even after subjecting Gaza to more explosives than were dropped on Dresden, Hamburg, and London during WWII.

Any suggestion to displace Palestinians—whether overt or disguised—is a grave breach of the Fourth Geneva Convention, enables and emboldens Israeli right-wing policies that undermine Palestinian statehood and the right to self-determination. These actions are not only morally reprehensible but sets a dangerous precedent to legitimize ethnic cleansing under the guise of political pragmatism.

Yet, Trump's proposal should not come as a surprise, given that many of his cabinet members openly align with Israel's right-wing agenda. In fact, some of them appear to champion and prioritize Zionist interests even more fervently than Trump's so-called "America First" agenda.

Like his so-called "Deal of the Century," any proposal that perpetuates injustice cannot bring peace; it only fuels cycles of hatred and sows the seeds of endless conflict. Trump's plan is not only immoral but also emblematic of a broader pattern of anti-Palestinian racism, dehumanization, and dispossession. The people of Gaza deserve justice, not further humiliation—dignity, not ethnic cleansing.

Jamal Kanj is the author of Children of Catastrophe: Journey from a Palestinian Refugee Camp to America, and other books. He writes frequently on Arab world issues for various national and international commentaries.

—CounterPunch, January 29, 2025

<https://www.counterpunch.org/2025/01/29/gaza-and-trumps-ethnic-cleansing-of-the-century-proposal/>

Trump Proposes Takeover of Gaza Genocide

Our media normalizes it

BY OWEN JONES

Wednesday, February 5, 2025—Right now there is a basic test for every journalist, every media outlet, and every politician. It is a defining litmus test. Donald Trump, the President of the United States, has committed his country—the world’s only superpower—to commit an abominable crime.

He has committed the U.S. to illegally occupy and annex Gaza and ethnically cleanse its entire population. This is a grave and indisputable crime.

The bare minimum right now is to just state the facts. That what Donald Trump has proposed is ethnic cleansing, a fact, that’s number one; and that this is an objective violation of international law, that’s number two.

Well, we have seen how our journalists, media outlets and politicians have failed, disastrously failed, and how they have helped to normalize and indeed facilitate genocide.

Let’s start with Trump’s comments. His first notable intervention came before his press conference with Benjamin Netanyahu, prime minister of Israel and wanted man by virtue of the arrest war-

rants issued by the international criminal court for war crimes and crimes against humanity. (This itself being a fact which should be relayed by Western media outlets to their viewers, listeners and readers as a matter of course.)

There can never be peace when there is oppression, which is one of the most basic history lessons there is.

He casually declares about the homeland of people: “The Gaza thing has not worked. It’s never worked.”

What hasn’t worked, to be very clear, is the Israeli state repeatedly murderously driving the Palestinian people from their homes, including three-quarters-of-a-million people in 1948, which was achieved by slaughtering around 15,000 people.

The deprivation of a people’s right to national self-determination, occupying their land, stealing their land, coloniz-

ing their land, besieging their land, subjugating them through apartheid—this has not worked. It has only led to violence, instability and chaos. That has not produced peace or security or whatever of those words you wish to choose.

That is not a Gaza-specific problem. That is a problem of oppression. There can never be peace when there is oppression, which is one of the most basic history lessons there is.

Trump talks about giving the people of Gaza “a good, fresh, beautiful piece of land.” Well firstly, the people of Gaza do not want to leave their homeland (one they would already describe as a “beautiful piece of land.” It is their homeland. And they know from their history that leaving their homeland means they are never allowed back.

If Trump wants to talk about the people of Gaza getting a good, fresh, beautiful piece of land, then Riyad Mansour, Palestine’s Ambassador to the UN has an idea:

“For those who want to send the Palestinian people to a ‘nice place’, allow them to go back to their original homes in what is now Israel.”

That’s because the vast majority of people in Gaza are the families of refugees forced to flee from what is now Israel back in 1948 in particular.

Trump just casually describes Gaza as a demolition site. In doing so, he casually accepts that Israel must have committed an abominable crime, because that’s what flattening an entire land constitutes. This actually puts Joe Biden, perversely, to shame, because he never admitted what Israel had actually done with the weapons he’d supplied.

These comments were then followed by the press conference with Benjamin Netanyahu.



Benjamin Netanyahu and Donald Trump in the White House on February 4, 2025.

Trump makes absolutely clear, with no ambiguity, that he wants the permanent ethnic cleansing of the Palestinian people of Gaza.

If you speak to almost anyone in Gaza, they will tell you of their love for, their devotion towards Gaza—their home. When Trump says it’s been one of “the meanest, toughest places on earth” and says they’ve experienced “nothing but death and destruction.” Why does he think that’s the case? Perhaps sitting next to Netanyahu may offer some clues?

“For those who want to send the Palestinian people to a ‘nice place’, allow them to go back to their original homes in what is now Israel.”

An accurate explanation would be that Gaza was subjected to direct military occupation and then a brutal siege and repeated Israeli onslaughts prior to October 7th in which a litany of war crimes were committed. Amnesty International, for example, detailed Israel’s war crimes in murderous onslaughts against Gaza in 2009 and 2014. Just months before October 7th, Israel bombed Gaza and killed several children. All of this happened under an array of Israeli leaders and officials—let’s not just make Netanyahu a convenient bogeyman. And all of this was facilitated by Israel’s patron, the United States.

It should be noted that Trump’s call for a “beautiful area” for Palestinians to “settle permanently” is a nonsense. He’s called for Jordan and Egypt to take in the people of Gaza. They have both declared they will refuse to do that. It should be noted that the majority of Jordan’s population is Palestinian or of Palestinian heritage—that is those who were expelled or forced to flee Palestine.

If either of these regimes complied with this grotesque crime, there would be a mass uprising on the streets of those countries which would quite conceivably overthrow them both.

Which is why *Middle East Eye* has been briefed that Jordan would go to war with Israel if it sought to expel Palestinians to its territory. The article notes that it would be an “existential issue” for Jordan and its Hashemite royal family, because Jordan has the third poorest water supply on earth, and it’s 12 million citizens largely live in a strip of land which runs across Israel’s border, so it would not be possible to host any significant number of refugees—the morality of facilitating ethnic cleansing aside.

It is notable too in Trump’s comments that he talks about other rich countries providing “a lot of money” to build these new settlements for the ethnically cleansed Palestinians. Who is going to spend a vast sum of money facilitating the crime of ethnic cleansing committed by the U.S. and Israel, and why?

It is worth observing the grin painted on Netanyahu’s face as Trump describes Gaza being “absolute hell,” and whilst he discusses the death and destruction there. He no doubt thought of the orders he gave, the instructions he issued, and the resulting carnage.

But also, as Israeli anti-genocide writer and activist Asaf Ronel, tells me:

“Netanyahu knows he can’t do anything other than smile. If he says a single word of support, it will be added to the @IntlCrimCourt case against him.”

A chilling detail

There is another chilling detail from Trump’s performance alongside Netanyahu.

He says he wants to remove Gaza’s entire population, which he says is “1.7 million people maybe 1.8 [million].”

There were up to 2.3 million people in Gaza before the genocide began.

This would still suggest Trump believes hundreds-of-thousands of Palestinians have been killed in Gaza. We should conclude that he has access to high level data from the U.S. and Israeli intelligence services that we don’t.

And then came the extraordinary moment when Trump declared that the U.S. would “take control” of Gaza. Casually declaring that the U.S. will annex Gaza. This is clearly completely and utterly insane even by the standards of this man. The U.S. President is publicly declaring that he will annex and violently expel the population of Gaza.

Before we look at some of the media responses, we should listen to Heidi Matthews, associate professor of law and expert on international law and particularly questions of genocide. She says:

“Many are calling this idea ‘ethnic cleansing’—that’s not it. In this context of mass atrocity and destruction, forced transfer would be genocide.”

The U.S. President is publicly declaring that he will annex and violently expel the population of Gaza.

Indeed, it’s worth noting what Omer Bartov—the Israeli-American Professor of Holocaust and Genocide Studies at Brown University—told me towards the beginning of this horror, about the fine line between ethnic cleansing and genocide. He declared ethnic cleansing frequently became genocide because—brutally speaking—people do not want to be ethnic cleansed and therefore they are murdered. Indeed, genocide means the intent to destroy a national ethnic, racial or religious group, “in whole or in part.” This is genocide.

But the bar is on the floor here and the least we can expect is for unambiguous ethnic cleansing to be called ethnic cleansing.

Yet most of our leading journalists are cowardly, spineless, and complicit. At the press conference, Trump and Netanyahu declared that “babies were burned alive” on October 7th.

“Many are calling this idea ‘ethnic cleansing’—that’s not it. In this context of mass atrocity and destruction, forced transfer would be genocide.”

It is a lie to say that babies were burned alive on October 7th. A total unambiguous lie. One Israeli baby was killed by Hamas militants on October 7th. Her name was Mila Cohen. She was eight months old. And she was shot dead through the door of a safe room. There was another horrible case of a pregnant woman who was shot, killing her unborn baby on October 7th.

These are grave crimes—no question. The point is if they are grave crimes, which they are, where does that leave the at least 1,091 Palestinian babies killed through Israeli bombs, explosives, shelling and bullets?

Why this lie about burning babies? Because it is an attempt to make a distinction between the form of violence deployed by Israel compared to its enemies in order to justify genocide: “We may kill far more, but they’re savages.” And it’s particularly perverse because many of the Palestinian babies slaughtered were burned alive because of missiles, explosives and so on, fired by the Israeli army.

No journalist—not one—challenged these lies, with Trump there

talking about slaughtering innocent men, women and children when tens-of-thousands of innocent Palestinian men women and children have been slaughtered. But they don’t qualify as human beings to him.

Mark Stone, the U.S. Correspondent of *Sky News*, talked about “The idea that Gazans should leave and move somewhere else and that a new home should be built for them elsewhere...” Why this convoluted nonsense when he should say this is ethnic cleansing and note that it is a crime as per international law. Who is this man scared of? His editors? The White House? A suggestion: if you can’t do your job, resign and let someone who knows what they’re talking about and/or isn’t a coward take your place.

Let’s look at how the *BBC* splashed on this announcement on their website front page, which is the most read news website on earth.

“Trump suggests U.S. could ‘take over’ and redevelop Gaza as he hosts Netanyahu.” A farcically disturbing spin on the grave crime of ethnic cleansing.

What about the *Telegraph*?

“Trump offers to turn Gaza into ‘Riviera of Middle East.’” Pure, unadulterated Trumpian spinning of a grave war crime.

The *Times* newspaper:

“Trump says U.S. will take over Gaza and make it ‘Riviera of Middle East.’” Almost identical: are these newspapers allowing Trump’s press officers to dictate their headlines?

The *Independent* newspaper, where I once worked:

“Trump says U.S. wants to ‘take over’ Gaza and create a ‘Riviera of the Middle East,’” with the subheading: “We’ll own it and be responsible for dismantling all unexploded bombs,” U.S. president says at White House press conference with Israeli counterpart Benjamin Netanyahu.”

You would think this was a humanitarian gesture: what a sick joke from a newspaper which long lost any meaningful reason to exist.

The headline of *Reuters*:

“Trump suggests permanently displacing Palestinians from Gaza.” Nothing about ethnic cleansing.

The New York Times splash:

“With Gaza Takeover Plan, an Unbound Trump Pushes an Improbable Idea,” is the headline. That’s their main takeaway—not about criminality, but about practicality? It gets worse. A *New York Times* article literally described it as “one of the most audacious ideas that any American leader has advanced in years.”

It sounds like Trump being praised for thinking outside the box.

The vast majority of media outlets and journalists did not describe this for what it is, and they thus helped normalize and facilitate genocide. They will never scrub the shame away—and nor should we let them.

Many journalists like to think they are courageous truth tellers. Speaking out without fear or favor. Holding the powerful to account whoever they are.

Well, Israel’s genocide in Gaza really was the litmus test of our age. A crime from start to finish—an abominable crime, consisting of countless atrocities which were broadcast to the world, shamelessly and unapologetically bragged about by Israeli leaders and officials and their cheerleaders and allies.

The vast majority of media outlets and journalists did not describe this for

what it is, and they thus helped normalize and facilitate genocide. They will never scrub the shame away—and nor should we let them.

As I've said from the start, those who directly facilitated this crime, for example by providing weapons, must go to jail.

And I've also said, careers must end. We have to make these media outlets pay for what they have done. And the reason we have to do all of this is because if there is no accountability, then we allow the normalization of the most extreme depravity imaginable—and then our whole world will burn.

The sort of crime now being proposed on top of the crime already committed will break whatever we call “the international order.” It will also lead to the end of what we call “Western democracy.”

At the end of the 19th century, something called “The Anti-Imperialist League” was founded. It was not founded by people on the left, far from it. It was in the aftermath of the Spanish-American war, when there were fears that the U.S. would become an empire because of the proposed annexation and colonization of the Philippines. They feared that the U.S. would go from being a Republic and turn into an Empire.

Trump—discussing annexing Gaza and frankly annexing Canada—is not joking around. He clearly wants to build some sort of empire with him as emperor. That will end democracy as we understand it, normalize aggressive expansionism, and plunge the world into total violent disorder. That is the cost of normalizing crimes of this scale. And we cannot allow it.

—Owen Jones *Battlelines*, UK, February 5, 2025

https://www.owenjones.news/p/trump-proposes-the-us-taking-over?utm_source=post-email

The Palestinian Authority's Assault on the West Bank Resistance

BY MARIAM BARGHOUTI

Jenin—On December 28, 21-year-old Palestinian journalist Shatha Sabbagh was standing on the stairs of her home on the outskirts of the Jenin refugee camp when she was shot and killed. The bullets weren't fired by Israeli troops but, according to eyewitnesses and forensic evidence, by Palestinian Authority security forces. The Palestinian Authority has been conducting a large-scale military operation in Jenin since early December, dubbing it “Operation Homeland Protection.”

A stronghold of Palestinian armed resistance in the occupied West Bank, the city of Jenin and the refugee camp within it have been repeatedly raided, bombed, and besieged by the Israeli military in an attempt to crush the Jenin Brigade—a politically diverse militant group of mostly third-generation refugees who believe armed resistance is key to liberating Palestinian lands from Israeli occupation and annexation. Over the past 15 months,

the Israeli military has killed at least 225 Palestinians in Jenin, making it the deadliest area in the West Bank.

But the current operation, which is being billed as a campaign to “restore law and order,” is the longest and most lethal assault by Palestinian security forces in recent memory. While the PA claims to be rooting out armed factions and individuals accused of being “Iranian-backed outlaws,” according to multiple residents and eyewitnesses, the operation is a suffocating siege, with indiscriminate violence, mass arrests, and collective punishment.

Sixteen Palestinians have been killed so far, with security forces setting up checkpoints around the city and refugee camp, cutting electricity to the area, and engaging in fierce gun battles. Among those killed are six members of the security forces and one resistance fighter, Yazeed Ja'aysa. Yet the overwhelming majority of those killed have been civilians, including Sabbagh, and



Armed resistance fighters of the Jenin Brigade in Jenin refugee camp. December 29, 2024. Credit: The photographer has chosen to remain anonymous for fear of reprisal by the Palestinian Authority.

at least three children: Majd Zeidan, 16, Qasm Hajj, 14, and Mohammad Al-Amer, 13.

“It’s reached levels I have never seen before. Even journalists aren’t allowed to cover it,” M., 24, a local journalist and resident of Jenin, told *Drop Site News* on condition of anonymity for fear of being arrested or targeted by PA security forces. Dozens of residents, including journalists, have been arrested from Jenin and across the West Bank by the PA in the past six weeks under the pretext of supporting the so-called Iranian-backed “outlaws.”

PA security forces spokesperson Brigadier General Anwar Rajab has justified the assault as “in response to the supreme national interest of the Palestinian people, and within the framework of ongoing continued efforts to maintain security and civil peace, establish the rule of law, and eradicate sedition and chaos.”

But the real aim, residents say, is to crush Palestinian armed resistance at the behest of Israel. Dubbed the “Wasps’ Nest” by Israeli officials, Jenin refugee camp has posed a constant threat to Israel’s settler colonial project.

Siege on Jenin

Just one week into the operation, on December 12, PA security forces shot and killed the first civilian, 19-year-old Ribhi Shalabi, and injured his 15-year-old brother in the head. Although the PA initially denied killing Shalabi and claimed he was targeting its security forces with IEDs, video captured by CCTV shows Ribhi being shot execution-style while riding his Vespa.

The PA later admitted to killing Shalabi, saying “the Palestinian National Authority bears full responsibility for his martyrdom, and announces that it is committed to dealing with the repercussions of the incident in a manner consistent with and in accordance with the law, ensuring justice and respect for rights.”

Just two days later, the PA began escalating their attack on Jenin. At approximately 5:00 A.M. on December 14, the Palestinian Authority officially declared the large-scale operation, dubbing it “Himayat Watan” or “Homeland Protection.” By 8:00 A.M., Jenin refugee camp was under siege and two more Palestinians had been killed, including prominent Palestinian resistance fighter Yazeed Ja’aisa, and 13-year-old Mohammad Al-Amer. At least two other children were injured with live ammunition.

Jenin refugee camp has posed a constant threat to Israel’s settler colonial project.

The roads leading to Jenin are now riddled with Israeli checkpoints while the entrance to the city is surrounded by PA armored vehicles and security forces brandishing assault rifles, their faces hidden behind black balaclavas.

Eerily reminiscent of past Israeli incursions, snipers fire continuously from within the PA security headquarters toward the refugee camp just to the west, sending the sound of live ammunition echoing through the city. The PA also imposed a curfew on the city of Jenin, warning residents that anyone moving in the streets would be shot.

The takeover of Jenin public hospital

PA counterterrorism units have also been stationed at the entrance to Jenin’s public hospital, while the National Guard blocked roads with armored vehicles and personnel carriers, denying entry to journalists. When I attempted to reach the hospital on December 14th with another journalist to gather information for *Drop Site* on the injuries sustained during the earlier fire and follow up on the killing of Al-Amer, the 13-year-old, armed and masked PA

security forces claimed the area was a closed security zone. When we attempted to carry out field interviews outside the camp instead, two armed men in civilian clothing who identified themselves as members of the mukhabarat—Palestinian General Intelligence—requested that we leave the area.

“If you stay here, you might get shot by the outlaws,” he warned. Yet, from where we stood between the hospital, the PA security headquarters, and Jenin refugee camp, the only bullets being fired were coming from the direction of the PA headquarters towards the camp.

PA security forces also appear to have been using one of the hospital wards as a makeshift detention center where detainees are being mistreated. While Brigadier General Rajab, the PA’s spokesperson, denied this; several young men detained by the PA told *Drop Site* they were taken to the third floor of Jenin public hospital where they were interrogated and beaten.

“They kept asking me about the fighters,” said A., a 31-year-old medical service provider from Jenin refugee camp, who says he was held for hours, blindfolded, and denied legal representation. “They kept beating me, cursing at me, asking me questions that I don’t have answers for.” Since his arbitrary detention, A. has not returned to work out of fear of being arrested and abused again.

According to residents, the PA also stationed snipers in the hospital, firing at the camp from inside the facility. During the past six weeks, according to interviews with several medics in Jenin, PA security forces shot at medics, burned two medical vehicles, beat paramedics, and detained medical workers throughout the siege.

“What exactly are they protecting?” Abu Yasir, 50, asks as he stands outside the hospital, waiting for any news of the security operation to end. A father of three, Abu Yasir grew up in the

Jenin refugee camp. “There are people being killed in the camp just for being there. They didn’t do anything,” he told *Drop Site* as he burst into tears.

Jenin refugee camp: attempt to break the siege

By December 14th, with Operation Homeland Protection entering its tenth day, families in the refugee camp had run out of food, the chronically ill needed life-saving medication, and with electricity and water punitively cut from the camp, families found themselves under siege and increasingly desperate.

Women and their children tried to protest in an attempt to break the PA-imposed blockade. They also wanted to challenge the PA’s claim of targeting outlaws. As the women gathered in the dark towards the edge of the camp, several men worked to fix an electricity box to restore power to the camp. When the lights came on, cheers echoed in the camp—but barely 15 minutes later, PA forces shot at the box, plunging the area into darkness again. According to residents of the camp, over the course of ten days, the PA shot at the electric power boxes more than a dozen times, denying families electricity just as temperatures began to plummet.

Elderly women confronted soldiers of the Special Administrative Tasks squad (S.A.T.), a specialized branch of the PA security forces. S.A.T is trained by the Office of the United States Security Coordinator (USSC) and is responsible for coordinating operations with the United States and Israel, including joint-operations and intelligence sharing.

“I yelled at them,” said Umm Salamah, 62. “They burst through the door, and at first, I thought they were Israelis” she told *Drop Site*, pointing to the destroyed door. “I told them I have children in the house. But they forced their way in.”

“I told them we already have the Israeli army constantly raiding us, and now you?”

Not only were homes raided, according to Umm Salameh, but PA security forces also fired at water tanks, effectively cutting water supplies to the camp. Jenin refugee camp had already been severely damaged in the last Israeli invasion, during which Israeli military and border-police bulldozed the city’s civilian infrastructure, turning streets into hills of rubble.

Operation Homeland Protection comes just three months following “Operation Summer Camps,” Israel’s large-scale military operation between August and October. Under the pretext of targeting “Iran-backed terrorists,” Israeli forces destroyed large swathes of civilian infrastructure in the northern districts of the West Bank, namely Jenin, Tulkarem, Nablus and Tubas, and killed more than 150 Palestinians over three months, a fifth of whom were children.

“This is not solely the PA. This is also the United States and Israel’s attempt to crush resistance in the West Bank,”

Outside in the mud-filled streets, the group of women began to chant “Kateebah!” (Brigade) in support of the Jenin Brigade, and in protest of the PA’s attempt to frame them as “outlaws” and a “threat to national security.”

Within minutes, the S.A.T unit responded with teargas and stun grenades fired directly at the crowd, which included journalists clearly marked with fluorescent PRESS insignia. While elderly women tripped and fell to the ground, children ran back towards the camp as PA security forces kept lob-

bing stun grenades at the fleeing crowd.

In an interview with *Drop Site* that evening, Brigadier General Rajab affirmed that “this operation comes to achieve its goals which are the reclaiming of safety and security of Palestinians and reclaiming Jenin refugee camp from the outlaws that kidnapped it and spread corruption in it while threatening the lives of civilians.”

Expansion in Tulkarem

Days later, the PA had expanded its operations to Tulkarem, where clashes between resistance fighters and PA security forces erupted on December 19th. This came just one day following an Israeli airstrike which killed three Palestinian fighters in Tulkarem refugee camp: Dusam Al-Oufi, Mohammad Al-Oufi, and Mohammad Rahayma.

On December 22, Saher Irheil, a Palestinian officer in the PA’s presidential guard was killed in Jenin, and two others injured. According to official state media and statements by the PA, Lieutenant Irheil was killed by the “outlaws” of Jenin refugee camp. Colonel Brigadier Rajab claimed, “this heinous crime will only increase [the PA’s] determination to pursue those outside the law and impose the rule of law, in order to preserve the security and safety of our people.”

By military order, speakers from mosques across the West Bank echoed in a public tribute to the fallen officer. The same was not done for those killed by the PA, including Shalabi, the 19-year-old whom the PA dubbed “a martyr of the nation” after being forced to admit they killed him.

That week, PA security forces escalated their attack on the Jenin refugee camp, using rocket-propelled grenades and firing indiscriminately at families sheltering in their own homes. PA security officers even posted photos and videos of themselves online, similar to those taken by Israeli soldiers while invading the camp in August and September.

On December 23, security forces shot and killed 16-year-old Majd Zeidan while he was returning to his home from a nearby corner store. The PA claimed Zeidan was an Iranian-backed saboteur.

“They killed him, then said he was a 26-year-old Iranian-backed outlaw,” Zeidan’s mother, Yusra, told *Drop Site*. “Look,” she said while pulling her son’s ID card from her pocket. “My son was 16-years-old, killed while returning from the store with a bag of chips.”

According to Yusra, not only was her son killed, but her brother who lives in Nablus, was arrested by the PA a few days later for holding a wake for his slain nephew. “The Preventative Security are detaining my brother because he was mourning a *mukhareb*,” she said. The term “*mukhareb*” which roughly translates to “saboteur” is a term derived from the Israeli term “*mekhablim*” which is commonly used when arresting Palestinians.

A few days later, on December 28th, Shatha Sabbagh, a young journalist, was shot and killed as she stood on the stairs of her home at the edges of the camp. Official PA statements claim that Sabbagh was killed by resistance fighters, not its security forces. However, accounts by eyewitnesses and the victim’s family belie those claims.

According to testimonies from her family and residents, Sabbagh was killed while holding her 18-month-old nephew; her sister lives nearby, on Mahyoub St. in the refugee camp—the same area PA snipers were targeting. Initial autopsy findings shared with *Drop Site* show that the bullet that struck her came from the area in which PA snipers were positioned in the camp.

Known for her reliable reporting during both Israeli and PA raids on Jenin, local residents claim that PA loyalists had been inciting against Sabbagh for some time. Further inflaming tensions, Sabbagh’s killing underscored the risks faced by Palestinian journalists

in documenting what the PA would rather conceal.

Soon afterward, Brigadier General Rajab spoke about the killing of Sabbagh in a live interview with *Al Jazeera*. He turned off his camera and left the interview, however, as soon as Sabbagh’s mother was brought on the air. Sabbagh’s mother, Umm Al-Mutasem, was next to her daughter when she was killed.

“Right now, the PA is trying to prove itself to the United States to take over Gaza, but there was no position taken to defend Gaza.”

Two days after Sabbagh’s killing, the Palestinian Journalist Syndicate, which is closely affiliated with the PA, released a statement accusing *Al Jazeera* of incitement, bias and attempts to stir internal discord. On January 5th, the Magistrate Court of Ramallah announced a suspension of *Al Jazeera*’s broadcasting operations in the West Bank, citing a “failure to meet regulations.” This move followed Israel’s closure of *Al Jazeera* offices during Operation Summer Camps in September of last year.

The Preventative Security, an internal intelligence organization led by the Minister of Interior, and part of the Palestinian Security Services, arrested more than a hundred Palestinians as part of Operation Homeland Protection, including five journalists in Nablus and Jenin. Palestinians were summoned and interrogated, at times tortured, and detained without legal representation.

The PA not only targeted residents of the camp but also expanded its repressive campaign to target anyone that would sympathize with the camp or is suspected of having any solidarity with the armed resistance.

Amro Shami, 22, who was arrested by the PA from his home in Jenin on December 25 had markings of torture on his body during his court hearing in the Nablus Court the following day. Shami was reported to have bruising on his body and was unable to lift his arms in court. Despite appeals by his lawyer, the court denied Amro release on bail. Amro’s lawyer was only able to visit 15 days later when he reported additional torture against Amro, including breaking his leg.

Inside the camp

At the very end of December, as the operation stretched into its fifth week, journalists were able to enter the camp at their own risk. With water and electricity cut off, families huddled outside, burning wood and paper in old metal barrels to try and keep warm. The camp reeked with uncollected trash piled in the alleyways due to the PA cutting all social services from the camp.

Inside the camp, armed resistance fighters patrolled the streets. After confirming our IDs as journalists, they helped us move safely in the dark. “In the beginning there were clashes between the Brigade and the PA, but we told them we are willing to collaborate with anything that does not harm the community,” H., a 26-year-old fighter with the brigade, told *Drop Site*. The young fighter was referring to the PA’s claims that they are targeting “outlaws,” in which the Jenin Brigade agreed to hand over anyone that is indeed breaking the law. However, the PA seemed more interested in the resistance fighters.

Spokesmen of the Jenin Brigade have made several public statements informing the PA that as long as the operation was not targeting resistance efforts, they would fully comply and coordinate to ensure law and order.

“We are with the law; we are not outside the law. We are with the enforcement of law, but which law? When an Israeli jeep comes into Jenin

to kill me, where are you as law enforcement?” Abu Issam, a spokesman for the Jenin Brigade told *Drop Site*. “As I speak right now, the PA armored vehicles and jeeps are parked over our planted IEDs, and we are not detonating them,” he said.

A former member of the PA presidential guard, Abu Issam is no stranger to the PA’s repressive tactics to quell resistance. “Our compass is clear, it’s against the occupation,” he said. “Come protect us from the Israeli settlers, and by all means here is my gun as a gift. Get them out of our lands and execute me.”

“We were surprised with the demands of the PA. They offered us three choices: to turn ourselves in along with our weapons, offering us jobs for amnesty; to leave the camp and allow the PA to take over; or to confront them. We have no choice but to confront,” he says, holding his M16 to his chest. “We want a dignified life, a free life, not a life of security coordination with our oppressors,” H. said.

“We are dying a hundred times”

By the second week of January, not only did the PA expand its security operations to Tulkarem and Tubas but intensified its violence against Palestinians in Jenin refugee camp as well. On January 3, PA snipers shot and killed 43-year-old Mahmoud Al-Jaqlamoussi and his 14-year-son, Qasm, as they were gathering water. Two days later, PA security forces began burning homes of residents near the Ghubz quarter of the camp.

“Why burn it? I didn’t build this home in an hour, it was years of work, why burn it?” Issam Abu Ameira asks while standing in front of the charred walls of his home.

The operation, ostensibly intended to restore security and order, has instead brought devastation, raising troubling questions about governance and resistance in the West Bank.

“This is not solely the PA. This is also the United States and Israel’s attempt to crush resistance in the West Bank,” H. said. Like him, other fighters find the timing of the operation to be questionable.

“This is an organization that negotiated with the occupation for more than 30 years, but can’t sit and talk with the Jenin refugee camp for 30 hours?” Abu Al-Nathmi, a spokesperson for the Jenin Brigade, said as he huddled inside the camp while fighters patrolled around us and live ammunition fired continuously in the area.

“The PA is acting like a group of gangs, each trying to prove their power and dominance at the expense of Jenin refugee camp,” Abu Al-Nathmi tells *Drop Site*. “Right now, the PA is trying to prove itself to the United States to take over Gaza, but there was no position taken to defend Gaza.”

Last week, the PA requested an additional 680 million dollars from the U.S. for security assistance. “What the PA is doing now is destroying the homeland, and breaking the law” Abu Al-Nathmi said.

While the PA continued its attack on Jenin refugee camp, the Israeli military waged military operations on the neighboring villages of Jenin, as well as Tubas and Tulkarem where 11 Palestinians were killed in the first week of January, three of whom were children.

In the 39 days since the PA launched Operation Homeland Protection, more than 40 Palestinians have been killed by the Israeli military in the West Bank, including six children. Over that same time period, Israeli courts have issued confiscation orders for thousands of acres of land belonging to Palestinians in the West Bank.

The PA is failing to provide protection to the Palestinian people against continuous settler expansion and amid an ongoing genocide in Gaza, residents of the Jenin refugee camp say.

“The PA is claiming they don’t want

what happened to Gaza to happen here, but here we are dying a hundred times,” Abu Amjad, 50, told *Drop Site*. Huddled near a fire outside the rubble of his home, he cries “we are being humiliated, attacked, beaten, and told there’s nothing we can do about it. In this way, it’s better to die.”

—*Drop Site*, January 13, 2025

https://www.dropsitenews.com/p/palestinian-authority-west-bank-jenin-assault?utm_source=post-

Saudi Leader Tells Trump to Pound Sand

BY PRINCE TURKI AL FAISAL



Former Saudi ambassador to the U.S. Prince Turki Al Faisal.

In an opinion piece on February 3, 2025, influential Prince Turki Al Faisal, the former Saudi ambassador to Washington and London and director-general of Saudi Arabia's intelligence agency gives President Trump a history lesson about the Palestinian struggle and the probable Saudi official response to Trump's off-the-wall declaration that the U.S. will "own Gaza and turn it into a resort."—Colonel Ann Wright, Retired

Here is Prince Turki Al Faisal's entire letter to President Trump:

Prince Turki Al Faisal: Mr. Trump, it's time for America to recognize Palestine

February 3, 2025

On the occasion of Donald Trump's recent call to relocate Palestinians from Gaza, Prince Turki Al Faisal writes him a letter in *The National*

Dear President Trump,

The Palestinian people are not illegal immigrants to be deported to other lands. The lands are their lands and the houses that Israel destroyed are their homes, and they will rebuild them as they have done after previous Israeli onslaughts on them.

Most of the people of Gaza are refugees, driven out of their homes in what is now Israel and the West Bank by the

previous Israeli genocidal assault on them in the 1948 and 1967 wars. If they are to be moved from Gaza, they should be allowed to return to their homes and to their orange and olive groves in Haifa, Jaffa and other towns and villages from which they fled or were forcibly driven out by the Israelis.

Mr. President, many of the tens-of-thousands of immigrants who came to Palestine from Europe and other places after the Second World War stole Palestinian homes and land, terrorized the inhabitants and engaged in a campaign of ethnic cleansing. Alas, America and the UK, the victors of the war, stood by and even facilitated the murderous evictions of the Palestinians from their homes and lands.

America and the UK did not want to receive the victims of Adolf Hitler's Holocaust, so they were content with sending them to Palestine. In the book *Eight Days at Yalta*, the author Diana Preston refers to a conversation between then U.S. president Franklin Roosevelt and his Russian counterpart Joseph Stalin. Preston writes: "Conversation turned to the subject of Jewish homelands. Roosevelt said he was a Zionist... When Stalin asked Roosevelt what present he planned to make [Saudi king] Ibn Saud, he replied, his only concession might be to give him six million Jews..."

Fortunately, when Mr. Roosevelt did meet Ibn Saud, the king disabused him of that offer and suggested that the Jews should be offered the best lands in Germany as compensation for the Holocaust. Alas, Harry Truman, Roosevelt's successor, wholeheartedly supported Jewish immigration to Palestine and eventually became instrumental in the creation of Israel.

One-hundred-and-forty-nine countries recognize the Palestinian state. Please make your country the 150th.

The violence and bloodshed we witness today are the result of that action and the previous British complicity with Zionist ambitions from 1917 until then.

Mr. President, your declared intent to bring peace to Palestine is much lauded in our part of the world. I respectfully suggest that the way to do that is to give the Palestinians their inalienable right to self-determination and a state with its capital in East Jerusalem, as envisaged in UN General Assembly Resolutions 181 and 194 and Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338, and the Arab Peace Initiative.

All the Arab and Islamic countries, as well as the Palestinian Authority, accept the terms of the Arab Peace Initiative to end hostilities and establish relations with Israel. One hundred and forty-nine countries recognize the Palestinian state. Please make your country the 150th. No peace in the Middle East will be realized without addressing this noble issue justly and fairly.

Be remembered as the peacemaker.

Turki Al Faisal

Ann Wright served 29 years in the U.S. Army/Army Reserves and retired as a Colonel. She resigned from the U.S. Department of State in March 2003 in opposition to the U.S. war on Iraq. She is the co-author of Dissent: Voices of Conscience.

—*PopularResistance.org*, February 6, 2025

<https://popularresistance.org/influential-saudi-arabia-leader-tells-trump-to-pound-sand-on-relocation-of-palestinians/>

We Can't Afford to Ignore This Threat to the People of Gaza

The very air that Gazans breathe could put their health in danger for many years to come.

BY ABDULLAH SHIHIPAR

Gaza is no longer recognizable. Since Israel's genocide began last year, more than 60 percent of its buildings have been destroyed or damaged leading to more than 42 million tons of rubble. Satellite images taken before and after October 2023 show the impressions of buildings and homes in one image and a landscape awash in brown dust in the other. The sheer amount of dust is the most defining feature of these pictures—they are notably more sepia tone in color. What was once part of a free-standing structure became pulverized, aerosolized, and inhaled before settling on the ground.

The genocide has caused countless threats to the health of people in Gaza. But this dust—the particles emanating from the rubble that now blankets every part of the region—is a threat we don't talk about that much. We should start talking about it more because it will imperil public health in Gaza for many years to come.

When we think of airstrikes, we imagine traumatic injuries—limbs torn to pieces; bones broken, the streets filled with blood. But the impacts of an airstrike go far beyond the initial damage it causes. Survivors are exposed to toxic building material, smoke and chemicals—all of which can be absorbed by the body in different ways. Considering that some people remain trapped under the rubble for hours or days, there is a prolonged period in which they remain directly exposed to these materials. Some people in Gaza continue to live in the collapsed shells of their homes, while others live in tents likely within meters of the destruction.

Impacts on civilians

What do these health impacts look like specifically on civilians? Last year, researchers at the University of

Maryland reviewed several studies to find an answer. They discovered that the vast majority of research on toxic chemical exposures in war was focused broadly on the impacts on military personnel (such as the impacts of burn pits) or on the impact on those who were either in or around the World Trade Center site during and after 9/11.

What was once part of a free-standing structure became pulverized, aerosolized, and inhaled before settling on the ground.

There is comparatively little research on the impacts of war-related chemical exposure on civilians—even though there is extensive documentation of, for instance, the effects of Agent Orange in Vietnam or the birth defects being experienced by babies in Fallujah.

The research that was produced after 9/11 can give us a clue as to what people in Gaza may be dealing with. When the towers collapsed, materials like polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons, asbestos, metals, and glass were released into the air. In the aftermath, many people developed respiratory symptoms—what was soon called “World Trade Center Cough Syndrome.” Research shows that there were increases in cancer amongst both rescue workers and civilians who were exposed to the 9/11 attacks. Cancers can take a long time to develop, which is why researchers call for continued surveillance as the relationship between exposure and cancer development may become more clear. But, enough of a link has been established that Congress has allocated funds for 9/11 responders through the James Zadroga 9/11 Health and Compensation Act.

If the collapse of the World Trade Center caused such wide-ranging and long-lasting harm, one can only imagine what a year of ongoing bombard-



Debris in Khan Yunis, Gaza on December 10, 2024.

ment in an area considerably more densely packed than Manhattan can do to people; specifically, people who also have limited (if any) access to basic healthcare and find themselves deprived of food and clean water. As an October report from *Reuters* highlighted, the presence of asbestos in building materials is of particular concern. Asbestos can be easily inhaled and cause mesothelioma and lung cancer.

The UN Environment Program has also raised concerns about heavy metals and lead leaking into the groundwater in Gaza; caused specifically by the destruction of solar panels. With Israel virtually obliterating Gaza's sanitation infrastructure, people are likely drinking water contaminated with these and other pollutants. As we know, lead exposure, even in small amounts is highly detrimental to childhood development. Lead has also been tied to lower birth weights when there is prenatal exposure.

It isn't difficult to conclude that there is a generational health crisis in the Gaza Strip. Even after the ongoing genocide comes to an end, sooner than later we hope, the people of Gaza will be left with lifelong impacts to their health. As U.S. and Israeli officials discuss plans for a "post-war Gaza," there is little attention devoted to the actual

health and welfare of the Palestinians who live there.

If the collapse of the World Trade Center caused such wide-ranging and long-lasting harm, one can only imagine what a year of ongoing bombardment in an area considerably more densely packed than Manhattan can do to people; specifically, people who also have limited (if any) access to basic healthcare and find themselves deprived of food and clean water.

Drs. Almashat and McDiarmid of the University of Maryland have called for more attention and study on the impacts of toxic chemical exposures on civilians in armed conflicts. Without such research, the victims of conflict are rendered more invisible and those who

partake in genocide denial are further empowered. Neglecting to document these impacts gives us a false impression of how many people have been killed and impacted—which denies them the right to be treated and just as importantly, the opportunity for justice.

These people need to be represented in the literature and public health advocates everywhere must step up to the plate to help document what has occurred. But this cannot be done as Palestinian health workers continue to be targeted and killed, and as researchers like Dr. Khaled Asler and doctors like Dr. Hussam Abu Safiya, director of the Kamal Adwan Hospital, are kidnapped by Israeli forces. Dr. Asler was later released after an international outcry, but Dr. Abu Safiya continues to be held by Israeli forces with his whereabouts unknown. Data cannot be collected in the midst of mass death; this must stop now.

Abdullah Shihpar is a writer who focuses on public health, race, class, and other social justice issues. He leads Narrative Projects & Policy Impact Initiatives at the People, Place & Health Collective at Brown University.

—*The Nation*, January 9, 2025

<https://www.thenation.com/article/world/gaza-rubble-exposure-health->

The Boomerang Comes Back

BY NOURA ERAKAT

In the fallout of the election, a stream of social media content—some from passionate Harris supporters, some from lesser-evil Democratic voters, and some, presumably, from people simply lashing out, horrified and distraught at Trump's win—took to blaming Palestinians for the outcome.

My initial fury at these statements eventually gave way to analysis. How could so many people be so callous and so wrong? The tendency to scapegoat in

moments of crisis, along with pervasive anti-Palestinian racism, are surely factors, but there are larger forces at work as well. Many had seen Palestinians protesting the Democratic Party, but thanks to widespread censorship and media bias, most of them also almost certainly had not seen the stream of atrocities in Gaza that had been taking place for over a year: five-year-old Hind Rajab begging for someone to save her; the body of Sidra Hassouna split in two

and hanging on a beam of a destroyed building; Sha'ban al-Dalou burned to death while attached to an IV drip in a hospital; a civilian crew in Gaza tearing through heavy stones with their bare hands to reach a young girl, wearing white tennis shoes and a green sweat-suit that her parents must have been proud to dress her in, trapped under the rubble of a bombed-out building for fifteen hours, only for her to die before they reach her.

But beyond a lack of awareness of the vast devastation, many Americans also haven't heard what it has to do with the United States, and with the Democratic Party in particular: the fact that, in the year following October 7, the Biden administration sent nearly \$23 billion to Israel with no red lines; that it vetoed four UN Security Council resolutions demanding a ceasefire; that Secretary of State Antony Blinken ignored the U.S. government's own determination that Israel was blocking humanitarian aid to Gaza when he delivered a statement under oath to Congress last May; that the United States has violated its own laws—including the Arms Export Control Act, Section 620i of the Foreign Assistance Act, and National Security Memorandum-20—conditioning U.S. military aid to state belligerents on their compliance with U.S. and international laws of war; that the United States has undermined the authority of both the International Court of Justice (ICJ) and the International Criminal Court (ICC); and that 107 members of Congress sent a letter to the United Nations two weeks before the election threatening to withdraw U.S. funding and support for the organization if it allowed its members to unseat Israel, as the General Assembly had done with the South African apartheid regime in 1974.

Simply put, most people have no idea to what extent this genocide is being perpetrated not only by Israel but also by the United States. For a solid majority of the center-left, what is happening in Gaza is tragic but ultimately less important than the most significant existential threat: the ascendance of Trump. During the run-up to the election, the argument goes, we Palestinian and Arab Americans should have understood that resisting fascism in the United States is the primary goal and gotten in line accordingly.

But resisting fascism is our collective goal. We just know that in order to resist it, we have to fight it on two fronts of U.S. state violence: at home and

abroad. Because if the United States, together with Israel, manages to disembowel the ICJ, the ICC, the UN, and a broader global order built after the Holocaust and World War II, no one is safe. The fact that Israel has committed genocide, turned humans into walking bombs in its pager attack in Lebanon, and decimated countries while the UN Security Council watches passively should concern all of us. As Colombian President Gustavo Petro warned back in December 2023, "What we are seeing in Gaza is a rehearsal of the future."

...resisting fascism is our collective goal. We just know that in order to resist it, we have to fight it on two fronts of U.S. state violence: at home and abroad...

If only more people in the United States had taken his words seriously. During the election, the work of several initiatives, such as the Uncommitted

movement and Not Another Bomb, emphasized the centrality of ending U.S. warmaking to a progressive agenda. Other efforts, like Abandon Biden/Harris, went further, highlighting the similarity between right-wing fascism and "authoritarian liberalism." All labored to make the entwinement of domestic and foreign policy visible—but that message was drowned out by the dehumanization of Palestinians, itself underwritten by the War on Terror's racialization of Arabs and Muslims as presumptively guilty terrorists.

U.S. imperial violence

It was thus unsurprising that throughout the election cycle, nearly all the mainstream liberal pundits sounding the alarm about white supremacy, jingoism, xenophobia, and political violence failed to connect these things to U.S. imperial violence. What if, rather than blaming Palestinians, Arab Americans, and American Muslims, these pundits had seen their treatment—under Biden and for decades before him—as central to the Trump-led repression looming before us?

In his searing 1950 polemic *Discourse on Colonialism*, Martinican writer Aimé



Police detain a protester at a May 3, 2024 protest at NYU.

Césaire wrote of the “boomerang effect,” whereby violence in the colonial periphery manifests itself in the colonial metropole. Hitler’s genocide of European Jews, he noted, was modeled after European rule over African and Asian colonies. (He may have had in mind the German extermination of the Nama and Herero people in Namibia during their period of colonial rule from 1884 and 1915—a period of brutality that scarcely registered in Europe while it was taking place.) Some seventy-five years later, Césaire’s point has been borne out many times over: there is no clear dividing line between a colonial power’s imperial geography and its metropole.

In the early twentieth century, when the U.S. army in the Philippines reoriented itself to address counterinsurgency and cement colonial rule over its newly conquered territories and peoples, law enforcement at home transformed itself in its image. Drawing on the new military model, police reformers revamped their departments to feature professional academies, mounted police units, surveillance, racial profiling, anticipatory policing, mapping, and weapons training. Counterinsurgency in Vietnam further militarized U.S. police, ushering SWAT teams, military-grade weapons, and a willingness to deploy disproportionate force into urban policing. At the turn of the century, the so-called War on Terror expanded presidential authority, severely curtailed civil rights, and made a mockery of the Constitution just as quickly as it did international law.

Today we are living out the latest chapter of this story, and this time the boomerang has come hurtling back with astonishing speed. Already, the genocide has expanded authoritarianism—its U.S. architects ignoring the 84 percent of Democrats who supported a ceasefire, censoring the media, and suppressing academic freedom—as well as increased police power, with snipers on university rooftops training their weapons at unarmed protesters a frequent occurrence.

This might have been a galvanizing moment. The entwinement between state and military violence could have made more vivid how Islamophobic and anti-Palestinian racism in the United States fuels endless war abroad, and how, in turn, this endless war continues to villainize Palestinians, Arabs, and Muslims. But for most, that moment of recognition has not come. Instead, abuse against Palestinians has been normalized, and harmful precedents have been established that make other vulnerable communities less safe as well.

At the turn of the century, the so-called War on Terror expanded presidential authority, severely curtailed civil rights, and made a mockery of the Constitution just as quickly as it did international law.

Consider the repression that Palestinians and their allies have endured in the United States over the last year. Palestine Legal reports that in the five months after October 7, the organization received over 1,500 reports of harassment, abuse, doxing, and loss of employment—a seven-fold increase over the whole of 2020. The Council on American-Islamic Relations likewise reports that in the final quarter of 2023, it received a 178 percent increase in reports compared to the same period in 2022. And all this is to say nothing of outright violence against Palestinians, including the shooting of three Palestinian American college students in Burlington, Vermont, who were targeted for wearing keffiyehs and speaking Arabic (and which left twenty-year-old Brown University student Hisham Awartani paralyzed,) and the killing of

six-year-old Wadea Al-Fayoume, who was stabbed twenty-six times in his home by his seventy-one-year-old landlord.

While these crimes were not state sponsored, they are the direct fallout of the U.S. government’s complicity in ongoing genocide and its decades-old anti-terrorism laws, which, as Darryl Li has highlighted, have been constructed specifically to target Palestinians. From the first mention of terrorism in a federal statute in 1969 to the introduction of a government terrorism blacklist and the first immigration law to include terrorism as grounds for exclusion and deportation, all of these efforts historically targeted Palestinians and the Palestinian struggle for liberation more generally.

In 2001, the Bush administration shut down the Holy Land Foundation (HLF), a humanitarian organization that built orphanages, distributed food, supported schools, and provided healthcare to Palestinians under Israeli rule, as well as in refugee camps. The administration charged its founders with working “on behalf of Hamas” under the Patriot Act, despite the fact that the recipients of the Foundation’s grants, such as municipal Zakat committees in Hebron, Tulkarm, and Nablus had also received U.S. government aid. During the spurious 2008 trial, an anonymous witness—who turned out to be an Israeli intelligence officer—used “secret evidence” on the stand for the first time in a U.S. criminal court, a clear violation of the Sixth Amendment. He knew the HLF had terror affiliations, he argued on the stand, because he could “smell Hamas” on them—which was enough to sentence the five cofounders of the Foundation to between fifteen and sixty-five years in prison.

Once established, however, these repressive measures have had impacts far beyond Palestinians. By March 2023, Georgia police had arrested and charged forty-two activists protesting

the expansion of Cop City, a \$90 million militarized police training facility that requires the clear-cutting of Atlanta's largest green space, charging them with domestic terrorism. Six months later, Georgia's attorney general charged five of the activists with terrorism and three of the bail fund organizers with money laundering—expanding the list of targets to include those providing the protesters legal and financial support. And in May 2024, the state legislature in Tennessee adopted HB 2348/SB 2610, which allowed the state to target other social movements with terrorism charges—primarily environmental ones, as well as those who, like Black Lives Matter, declare their solidarity with Palestinians.

In similar fashion, attacks on free speech that target Palestinians empower the right-wing agenda against discourses and programs on racial justice. In the fall of 2023, Elise Stefanik became the supposed champion against anti-semitism during congressional hearings that grilled university presidents for failing to do enough to end what she called the threat of genocide of Jews by students who were protesting an actual genocide of Palestinians. Ultimately, the hearings compelled two presidents to resign, their feverish attempts to repress and punish students ultimately falling short of Stefanik's mark.

Repression of student protests

When students took it upon themselves to pressure their institutions to divest from weapons manufacturers and other industries sustaining this violence—which includes scholasticide, the killing of teachers and students and the destruction of educational infrastructure—some university presidents called on police to brutalize their students while others, like the president of UCLA, allowed outside mobs to violently attack students while the police watched. A year later, universities have hired private security firms to repress their student protests and to limit speech so much on campus as to be tantamount to theater,

with free speech as the right to be heard, but not to challenge power. So far, three tenured faculty—all American citizens—have been fired or put on leave for criticizing Israel: Maura Finkelstein, Steven Thrasher, and Jodi Dean. These harsh punishments normalized the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign's precedent-setting revocation of a tenure offer to Palestinian professor Steven Salaita in 2014 for his tweets criticizing Israel during its fifty-one-day onslaught of Gaza.

The entwinement between state and military violence could have made more vivid how Islamophobic and anti-Palestinian racism in the United States fuels endless war abroad, and how, in turn, this endless war continues to villainize Palestinians, Arabs, and Muslims.

In January, Columbia Law Professor Katherine Franke resigned after twenty-five years of an illustrious academic career because of institutional harassment and scrutiny she endured for pointing out—correctly—that Israeli students who complete their military service and come to Columbia have “been known to harass Palestinians and other students” on campus. Most recently, NYU established that Zionism, a political ideology, is a protected class within the meaning of Title VI of the 1964 Civil Rights Act—further restricting political agency and speech. Nine universities have suspended their chapters of Students for Justice in Palestine; in Florida, Governor Ron DeSantis has tried to ban the group altogether.

All of this has cleared a neat path for the second Trump administration, which will be all too happy to intensify the securitization of Palestinians and the Palestinian liberation struggle for the sake of expanding police power and government repression. Even while taking credit for the ceasefire in Gaza, Trump's national security advisor, Michael Waltz, expressed alignment with the Biden administration's murderous Middle East policy, described the pager attack in Lebanon as movie-worthy, and framed the college protests—which Biden had condemned at every turn—as wind under Hamas's sails:

“Every time [Hamas] got the news of these antisemitic protests on our college campuses, and that Hezbollah could be coming in, and seeing calls for regime change against the democratically elected Israeli government, they thought they were winning and could continue to sacrifice their own people to turn world opinion against the Israelis.”

Congress already seems to be in lockstep with this new trajectory. Weeks after Trump's election win, a majority of the House—including fifteen Democrats—approved HR 9495, an amendment that would give Congress the authority to revoke the tax-exempt status of any nonprofit organization it accuses of having terrorist affinities, without access to the evidence or the right to due process. Robust support for the bill is predicated on its stated purpose of targeting Palestine-related activity, yet if it is adopted by the Senate, it will be used to quash broad swaths of civil society—particularly those in opposition to Trump. The bill's ally outside of government is Project Esther, a Heritage Foundation initiative that seeks to combat anti-semitism by targeting groups it identifies as part of a “Hamas Support Network,” including organizations like Jewish Voice for Peace and Students for Justice in Palestine. The initiative manifests the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance's definition of

antisemitism, which includes protest of Israel and Israeli policy, at its full and most dangerous potential.

A Trojan horse

By now, it should be clear that conservative agendas continue to use Palestine as a Trojan horse. Yet the liberal establishment has not raised the alarms. Worse, they have often served as the right's complicit partner, oblivious to the precedents that Trump is now inheriting—broader police power, unaccountable presidential power, generalized repression, and gross restrictions on speech. The vicious culture of anti-Palestinian racism they have helped normalize strengthens Trump's insidious narrative of migrants as terrorist threats, all as part of a massive push to facilitate deportations, ramp up surveillance, and further militarize the border. Among the flurry of executive orders he signed on Inauguration Day is one promising to deport foreign nationals who "provide aid, advocacy, or support for foreign terrorists." Just two days later, a pro-Israel group sub-

mitted a list of 100 students and 20 faculty with visas in the United States to the Trump administration urging their deportation. The administration then issued another executive order encouraging faculty, students, and administrators to surveil one another and report students who participate in pro-Palestinian protest, threatening to deport protesters who are in the United States on a visa. Meanwhile, a New York-based national defense and cyber intelligence company, Stellar Technologies, pledged to use its AI technology to help identify masked protesters—an effort it calls "Operation Wrath of Zion."

For all these reasons, Trump's second coming can't be understood without turning our gaze outward, toward a broader geography of U.S. state violence. In November 2023, in between rounds of U.S.-made bombs raining down on Al Shifa Hospital, Palestinian children in Gaza organized a press conference in front of the hospital, entreating us to do what we can to save them: "We come now to shout and invite you to protect us; we want to

live, we want peace. ...we want to live as the other children live." Under what conditions did children have to organize a press conference asking us not to let them be slaughtered? And should we be surprised that, after such gruesome crimes have been committed in our name, fascism has found fertile ground here at home? For fifteen months, Palestinians and their allies protested relentlessly and, at times, heroically, not only to stop a genocide but to salvage and preserve core humanitarian principles governing life within the United States, insisting that genocide is suicide. Surviving this next chapter demands that we see ourselves as the rest of the world sees us too.

Noura Erakat is a human rights attorney and Associate Professor at Rutgers University, New Brunswick. She is the author of Justice for Some: Law and the Question of Palestine.

—Boston Review, Winter 2025

<https://www.bostonreview.net/articles/the-boomerang-comes-back/>

On the Ceasefire in Gaza and the Road Ahead

STATEMENT BY ARAB RESOURCE & ORGANIZING CENTER

January 15, 2025—**After 465 days of Israel's genocidal campaign, a ceasefire in Gaza has been confirmed.** Israel's violence has claimed the lives of tens-of-thousands of Palestinians, including more than 17,500 children, and displaced 90 percent of Gaza's population. Gaza's infrastructure—schools, universities, mosques and churches, and hospitals—has been systematically devastated.

Yet Gaza still lives. Despite bombings, injuries, famine and disease, Palestinians remain unbroken. Palestinians in Gaza and worldwide are united, proving that no amount of violence, displacement or occupation can erase a people. While the ceasefire brings a temporary reprieve, the future

remains uncertain. Palestinians may now begin rebuilding their homes, and to returning to their lands, but the scars of the genocide will linger. Our resolve to achieve our collective liberation has only strengthened.

The genocide in Gaza has forever altered our region and the world. From Palestine, to Lebanon, Yemen, Syria, and beyond, Israeli aggression has inflicted unimaginable suffering. Israeli and U.S. standing on the world stage has been forever tarnished; their role cemented as architects of a new dystopian era of high-tech horrors and unaccountable violence.

This catastrophe was not inevitable. The ceasefire deal is nearly identi-

cal to the proposal presented by President Biden last May. A U.S. arms embargo on Israel would have stopped the carnage and saved countless lives, while producing a similar political outcome. Instead, the U.S. government actively supported Israel's fascist policies, whitewashing its crimes while providing the weapons that fueled its war. Now, amidst the wreckage, the world recognizes the unyielding steadfastness of Palestinians and the global movement for Palestinian freedom.

Through this struggle, we have built one of the most consequential movements in U.S. history. This movement has stood up to repression, amplified the voices of the oppressed, and

reshaped public discourse. It has inspired millions across the globe and offered a vision for how to fight fascism, imperialism, and systemic violence. The solidarity forged here provides the U.S. and the world with a vision for a path forward—a reminder that resistance, rooted in justice and collective action, can overcome even the most entrenched systems of oppression.

This is also a moment to intensify our organizing. As this movement grows, it continues to face relentless attacks from right-wing forces and state repression. These efforts aim to delegitimize and suppress calls for Palestinian liberation, and all voices for justice. We must remain vigilant and defend our movement from these threats, ensuring it remains a powerful force for change in the face of adversity.

We must continue to mobilize, speak out, and pressure decision-makers to follow the lead of the majority of people in the U.S. and across the world who support Palestinian freedom. As we mark this ceasefire, it is time to redouble our efforts with clear demands:

- Ensure the ceasefire remains permanent.
- Demand that Israel withdraw its military from Gaza, Lebanon, Syria, and all occupied lands.
- Guarantee unrestricted aid and reconstruction for Gaza.
- Hold Israel accountable for its crimes against humanity.

After 16 long months of organizing, protesting, and grieving, this ceasefire grants us all an opportunity to pause and reflect on how far we've come, and how much further we still have to go.

The fight continues for a world free of war, fascism, racism, colonialism, and exploitation. **No matter the horrors inflicted upon our people, we will continue to fight for it. And we will win.**

Our mailing address is:
Arab Resource & Organizing Center (AROC)
522 Valencia Street
San Francisco, CA 94110
<https://aroc.herokuapp.com>



Palestinians celebrate in Khan Younis, southern Gaza, after news of a cease-fire deal on Wednesday, January 15, 2025.

Continued from page 43

“Here the state is trying to control the actions of duly-elected officials through the police power,” he said. “That’s a dramatic escalation.”

One national government accountability expert said he knew of no other state law that threatened to prosecute public officials for how they cast a vote.

“It’s an unprecedented power grab and criminalization of political discourse,” said Dan Vicuña, director of redistricting and representation for Common Cause, a Washington, D.C. advocacy group.

“It puts at risk the basic right to local representative and democratic government,” he said.

And local legal experts, among them the legislature’s own attorney, said the provision may be “constitutionally suspect.”

“Generally speaking, Tennessee courts have found legislative bodies have legislative immunity for acts that serve part of their legislative function, and that legislative immunity extends to local leg-

islative bodies,” Elizabeth Insogna, a Legislative attorney, told the committee.

“It’s possible that a criminal provision that is enforced against a member of a legislative body may be constitutionally suspect,” she said. “It would be up for a court to determine.”

John Vile, professor of political science and Dean of the University Honors College at Middle Tennessee State University said “legislators should heed Article 1” of the Tennessee Constitution, which establishes a “Declaration of Rights” for citizens and their elected representatives.

“I don’t know of any other laws, state or federal, that penalize elected officials on the basis of how they vote,” he said. “This seems to defeat the whole purpose of democratic-republican (representative) government.

Republicans however noted the criminal penalties are aimed at elected officials attempting to pass legislation already outlawed in Tennessee.

“I think everybody would agree that’s something that elected officials should be prohibited from doing, or should not do,” said Senator Kerry Roberts, a Springfield Republican. “The fact there’s a consequence for it, I personally don’t have a problem with that, because they ought not to be doing it in the first place. It’s illegal.”

Only two current laws provide criminal penalties for lawmakers acting in their official capacities, according to Stephen Crump, executive director of the Tennessee District Attorneys General Conference. One longstanding law allows criminal charges to be brought against county commissioners who fail to adequately fund local jails. Other lawmakers may be charged if their vote violates official misconduct statutes.

—AlterNet, January 29, 2025

https://www.alternet.org/criminalizing-votes/?utm_source=Iterable&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=Jan.29.2025_3.25pm

Swiss Police Arrest, Deport Palestinian American Journalist Ali Abunimah

BY SHARON ZHANG



Journalist Ali Abunimah in a photo from a Change.org petition for his release.

Monday, January 27, 2025—Swiss authorities have arrested and deported prominent Palestinian American journalist Ali Abunimah, executive director of online publication *The Electronic Intifada*, ahead of a speech he was slated to give in Zurich over the weekend, the publication has reported.

The Electronic Intifada said that Abunimah was questioned by police for an hour at the Zurich airport on Friday before being allowed to enter the country. He was then arrested by three plainclothes officers, who forced him into an unmarked vehicle, the publication reported.

On Monday, *The Electronic Intifada* said that authorities deported Abunimah after he spent two nights in jail.

In a post on X after his release, Abunimah said that Swiss authorities had not allowed him to contact his lawyer while he was jailed, and transferred him from prison to the Zurich airport in a “small metal cage in a windowless prison van” while he was handcuffed on Monday night. They confiscated his phone while he was in jail, despite not having been charged with any offenses.

“My ‘crime’? Being a journalist who speaks up for Palestine and against Israel’s genocide and settler-colonial

savagery and those who aid and abet it. I came to Switzerland at the invitation of Swiss citizens to talk about justice for Palestine, to talk about accountability for a genocide in which Switzerland too is complicit,” said Abunimah.

“This ordeal lasted three days but that taste of prison was more than enough to leave me in even greater awe of the Palestinian heroes who endure months and years in the prisons of the genocidal oppressor,” Abunimah continued. “More than ever, I know that the debt we owe them is one we can never repay and all of them must be free, and they must remain our focus.”

“Abunimah’s arrest appears to be part of a growing backlash from Western governments against expressions of solidarity with the Palestinian people,” *The Electronic Intifada* wrote. “*The Electronic Intifada* team stands in solidarity with Ali Abunimah. Speaking out against injustice in Palestine is not a crime. Journalism is not a crime.”

On Monday, *The Electronic Intifada* said that authorities deported Abunimah after he spent two nights in jail.

The publication noted that Abunimah’s arrest is part of a general crackdown by Western governments on pro-Palestinian speech. It cited an incident last October when British police raided the home of *The Electronic Intifada*’s associate editor Ada Winstanley and confiscated his electronics.

Last year, Abunimah also reported being threatened with prison by German authorities for an online talk delivered to a German audience on Israel’s genocide in Gaza. “As I spoke from the United States, Germany can claim no jurisdiction over me, but I have been given to understand that German authorities may still open a criminal case against me for violating the order. So be it,” he wrote at the time.

A petition started by Swiss Action for Human Rights calling for Abunimah’s release from Swiss detention has racked up thousands of signatures as of Monday. According to the group, Abunimah was being held without charges.

“This follows a defamatory article published in a local newspaper, baselessly accusing him of radical Islamism and antisemitism, accompanied by a request by cantonal police to prohibit him from entering the territory, supposedly based on the media accusations,” Swiss Action for Human Rights said. “No valid legal basis exists given for his violent abduction, arbitrary detention and planned deportation.”

UN Special Rapporteur for Palestine, Francesca Albanese, called for a “prompt investigation” into Abunimah’s arrest and expressed “shock.”

“The climate surrounding freedom of speech in Europe is becoming increasingly toxic, and we should all be concerned,” Albanese said.

Euro-Med Human Rights Monitor also condemned Swiss authorities over the arrest.

“[Abunimah’s] arrest is a concerning and dangerous development that reflects a growing trend in Western governments to censor free speech and target journalists and activists who document the suffering of victims and stand up for Palestinian rights, all in blatant defiance of pressure and incitement,” the group said. “This arbitrary arrest gives the false impression that showing solidarity with the victims of the Israeli occupation peacefully is now illegal.”

Note: This story was updated with new comments by Abunimah following his release. <https://electronicintifada.net>

—Truthout, January 27, 2025

<https://truthout.org/articles/swiss-police-arrest-deport-palestinian-american-journalist-ali-abunimah/>

Inside the Hind Rajab Foundation, the Organization Hunting Israeli War Criminals

BY DAVID KATTENBURG

January 29, 2025—It was a dreadful way for a little girl to die—crouching in the back of a crushed, bullet-ridden car, stranded at a Gaza intersection, meters away from an Israeli Merkava tank; her aunt and uncle dead in the front seat; four cousins slumped over beside her, seeping blood; pleading to a Palestinian dispatcher on the other end of a cell phone line, begging for help, crying that she was scared.

Then, in a flash, ripped to shreds by a torrent of machine gun rounds—possibly American.

Hind Rajab was killed one year ago today. She was six years old.

Now, a foundation established in Hind's name is seeking justice, not just for Hind, but for the countless Palestinians killed by Israel in contravention of international law.

But the foundation isn't going after Israel as a state, it's taking a different approach—going after Israeli soldiers themselves.

In an October 8 filing to the International Criminal Court, in The Hague, the Brussels-based Hind Rajab Foundation has identified a thousand Israeli soldiers it thinks the court should prosecute, based on 8,000 pieces of evidence, including the soldiers' own social media posts from ravaged Gaza.

Among the acts Israeli recruits and officers have crowed about on Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, TikTok, Telegram and other social media networks: indiscriminate bombing; targeted killing of non-combatants, including medical personnel, journalists, and civilians waving white flags; wanton destruction of homes, hospitals, schools, markets, and mosques; forcible starvation, and looting.

The callousness with which Israeli soldiers have openly and publicly celebrated

their war crimes, probably thinking they would get away with it, is precisely what the Hind Rajab Foundation is banking on to hold these soldiers to account.

Mondoweiss spoke about the Hind Rajab Foundation's work with its lead attorney, Haroon Raza.

An outgrowth of the March 30 Movement, the Foundation has been monitoring Israeli war crimes in Gaza since December 2023, assisted by a network of activists and lawyers around the world.

"That's the strength of our organization," Raza told *Mondoweiss*.

"There are thousands of us. We have a very large network internally and externally of investigators. And because of that, we have enough manpower to keep tabs on nearly everybody."

"We have eyes and ears everywhere—literally."

Those eyes and ears are focused on the social media accounts of soldiers

who've served in Gaza since Israel's war began, fifteen months ago—a plausibly genocidal war, the International Court of Justice ruled a year ago this week, three days prior to Hind Rajab's brutal killing.

"They all have social media," Raza told *Mondoweiss*, "and many of them were just, you know, putting group selfies and group photos and showing exactly where they were and what they were doing," Raza says.

"So, you hear the guy, you see a selfie guy, men and women, and then they blow it up and then they cheer," says Raza, referring to one video provided to the International Criminal Court (ICC) by the foundation.

Alongside incriminating videos and still images, the Foundation is documenting dates, times, and precise locations in Gaza, cross-referencing these to other posts by the same soldiers.

"This isn't rocket science," Raza told *Mondoweiss*, referring to one soldier in particular.



Six-year-old Hind Rajab murdered by Israeli military January 29, 2024.

“We could track his movements, and we could verify that he had in fact been there on that day—let’s say Rafah on that day, let’s say in May 2024—and in northern Gaza on that day. And therefore, his account was amplified by the rest of the evidence he had provided.”

The Internet never forgets

Wise to the work of the Hind Rajab Foundation, Israeli military chiefs have ordered soldiers to stop boasting about their crimes over concerns that they may be detained or prosecuted while traveling abroad

“[The] Israel Defense Forces (IDF) or Israeli Occupying Forces (IOF) leadership asked them officially, not to stop committing war crimes ... They didn’t ask them to do that,” Haroon Raza told *Mondoweiss*.

“They asked them to stop publishing what they were doing. And that makes it easier for us. That proves intent. It proves that they know what their soldiers, men and women, have been doing. That they’re not ashamed of that, but they just don’t want them to get into trouble.”

Soldiers may be heeding that advice.

“It’s interesting to see them deleting everything,” says Raza, “knowing that they committed crimes. But they forget, the Internet has a long memory, and we’ve had enough time.”

“[We] have a massive database of information now which has been verified, which has been double-checked through the information we’ve already had,” Raza told *Mondoweiss*. “And all we have to do is drop a complaint on the basis of the evidence which we can see and hear in moving pictures as well as stills.”

Among the thousand named soldiers in the Hind Rajab Foundation’s ICC filing are a host of officers and commanders, including thirty-three dual Israeli-foreign nationals, a dozen each from France and the U.S., four

from Canada, three from the UK, and two from the Netherlands.

These are just the tip of the iceberg.

“[A] large percentage of the Israeli population does have dual nationality,” Raza told *Mondoweiss*. “Many of them are immigrants from the U.S., from Holland, from other countries. So, because of that, the actual number will be much more than thirty-three.”

The Foundation has forwarded its list of Israeli soldiers to ten different countries that Israeli soldiers call home, or tend to go to after their military service is complete, for rest and rehabilitation; countries that exercise universal jurisdiction over the most serious international crimes.

“These IOF soldiers go on holiday, sometimes using connecting flights ... especially if they want to go to Bali or wherever,” says Raza. “All we have to do is check out the region that he or she is in, check out what the most popular flight pattern is, and then lodge a complaint.”

Complaints have been filed in Austria, Germany, Spain, Italy, Sweden, Thailand, and Ecuador.

Several attempted arrests, in Brazil and Argentina, have failed to materialize, after soldiers were tipped off, and fled.

A successful nab is only a matter of time, says Raza.

“I expect it to be within a few months.”

The Foundation is also targeting accomplices and inciters of Israeli war crimes. Among these, fans of the Maccabi Tel Aviv football team who rioted in Amsterdam last Fall, and a rabbi/soldier in Israel’s Givati Brigade who boasted about destroying entire Gaza neighborhoods, and endorsed the killing of Palestinian civilians.

False sense of security

Like old Nazi war criminals hiding out in Paraguay, Canada or Europe, seemingly invulnerable, Israeli soldiers

have a false sense of security, says Haroon Raza.

“Let them try us out,” Raza told *Mondoweiss*. “We’re on their case. We’re tracking them. If they touch any country with universal jurisdiction or any country which is inclined to prosecute, we’ll legally pounce on them.”

Will the Israeli tank gunner responsible for the cruel murder of Hind Rajab, face justice?

Haroon Raza thinks so.

“I’ll tell you why,” he said.

“When there’s universal jurisdiction, especially connected to war crimes or crimes against humanity, normally there isn’t a statute of limitations in the national legislation. So that means, even if we find out after twenty years, just like Simon Wiesenthal did, we can still pursue them. And that is actually what we are ... We are the Gaza Simon Wiesenthal Center, if you will.”

“Which means, just like [Simon Wiesenthal] did ... regarding the Shoah and Holocaust, he had patience, and he had perseverance, and so do we. And we have pledged one thing to ourselves and to each other: We’re not going to rest until our dying day, until we’ve got everybody. Of course, including those people who are responsible for the murder of Hind Rajab. So, it’s our promise to her, to her family, and to the Palestinian people that justice will be served.”

The Hind Rajab Foundation welcomes volunteer organizers and social media experts—and especially lawyers.

David Kattenburg is a university science instructor and radio/web journalist based in Breda, North Brabant, the Netherlands.

—Mondoweiss, January 29, 2025

<https://mondoweiss.net/2025/01/inside-the-hind-rajab-foundation-the-organization-hunting-israeli-war-criminals-around-the-globe/>

Rebuilding Gaza Now

The only way to stop the Netanyahu-Trump plan

BY MUHANNAD AYYASH

February 8, 2025—During their joint press conference this week, U.S. President Donald Trump and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu announced that all Palestinians will be forcibly displaced from the Gaza Strip, the U.S. would take “ownership” of the Strip, and eventually rebuild it as the “Riviera of the Middle East” to be inhabited apparently by everyone from around the world (but clearly, they meant Israeli Jews,) but not by the Palestinians who will be forcibly expelled from Gaza. For Trump, those Palestinians must be moved to Egypt, Jordan, and elsewhere once and for all.

During his speech, Trump recognized that U.S. leaders in the past have not helped the people in the region achieve peace, stability, and tranquility, citing U.S. military intervention in the region as a major mistake and a source of violence and suffering for the people of the region. But evidently, this self-criticism of U.S. military intervention does not apply to his plan. He is illogically planning to fix the problem of U.S. intervention in the region by continuing the invasion of Gaza through the U.S. proxy, Israel, and possibly with U.S. soldiers, forcibly expelling over two million Palestinians, relocating them to live in one city or multiple newly built towns and cities across the region, and “taking ownership,” that is colonizing, Palestinian lands for good.

In his speech, Netanyahu made clear that Israel remains committed to its three goals—eliminating Hamas as a military and governing body, returning all the hostages, and ensuring that Gaza will never be a security threat to Israel again. His speech of course conceals the fact that Israel is indeed the real security threat for Palestinians and for the region. Israel’s settler colonial conquest

of Palestine is the root cause of all the violence and instability. The three goals are a cover that conceal the real driving force behind Israel’s genocidal and apartheid policies and actions—Israel’s desire to colonize all of Palestine and establish exclusive Israeli Jewish sovereignty from the river to the sea.

Most telling of this basic fact is a moment in the press conference when Netanyahu responded to Trump’s statement that his proposal is for the U.S. to “own that piece of land” over the long term. Netanyahu gleefully followed up on Trump’s statement by declaring that their third goal is being addressed by Trump on a “much higher level,” that Trump has a “different idea” that “could change history.”

What he means by that is that for him and indeed for the Israeli state, more or less across the political spectrum, the only real solution that would achieve “peace,” “stability,” and “tranquility,” is the creation of Greater

Israel. This involves the historic reshaping of the Middle East where Israel would become the only sovereign on the land, with Israeli Jews becoming the majority inhabiting all the lands between the river and sea, and for this to become a “natural” reality in the region, to be accepted by all the states and people of the Middle East.

When watching this 21st century version of the British empire’s Mandate in Palestine, which took “ownership” of Palestine to “develop” it and hand it over to Zionist settler colonialism, you cannot help but notice Netanyahu’s continuous smiles and constant surveying of the room. His expressions communicated a pleasant shock, as if he wanted to scream to his supportive audience, “Can you believe this is happening?” Like a little child who cannot but show his pleasure for getting away with mischief that others thought impossible to achieve, Netanyahu’s words attempted to paint Trump as if he had actually



Drone image of the devastation of Rafah, in the Southern Gaza Strip, January 19, 2025. (Photo by Omar Ashtawy APA Images)

come up with a “different idea” that could “change history.” In reality, there is nothing different, original, or new about this idea, nor does it change history, but rather it is the continuation of the one-hundred-year Zionist settler colonial conquest of Palestine with the active support and participation of a Western imperial power.

Simply put, far from taking it to a “much higher level,” Trump’s plan is precisely what Israel had in mind when it stated its third goal from the very beginning of their genocidal operation.

The world must act

Behind the incoherence, propaganda, and ramblings of the two leaders, there is a serious strategy at work, which requires naming and strong opposition from states and people around the world. Their joint strategy is to ensure that Gaza remains uninhabitable by preventing its reconstruction. Over fifteen months of genocide, Netanyahu’s government has utterly destroyed Gaza rendering it uninhabitable, and the Trump administration will now step in to help him make sure that Gaza will not be rebuilt. By stating that only by emptying the Strip will the U.S. take ownership of the land and rebuild it, the Trump administration is clearly stating that the forcible expulsion of the Palestinians is now the precondition for full reconstruction.

The world’s reaction has been to condemn Trump’s proposal. But words of condemnation are not enough. While the world condemns, Trump and Netanyahu plan to block the full reconstruction of Gaza, which they believe will eventually force the Palestinian people to desert their lands and move into Trump’s allegedly “beautiful towns and cities” that will have “great sunlight.”

There must be a concerted international effort to force the full reconstruction of Gaza and ensure that Palestinians can remain steadfast on their lands.

The only way to ensure that this plan is foiled is to commence as soon as possible the full reconstruction of the Gaza Strip, regardless of what Israel and the U.S. have to say about the matter. Only power plays can oppose the U.S./Israel power play. There must be a concerted international effort to force the full reconstruction of Gaza and ensure that Palestinians can remain steadfast on their lands.

Time is on the side of the imperial and settler colonial powers. Spectacles such as this press conference will continue to lay the groundwork for delaying and obstructing the reconstruction of Gaza. With each passing day, life on the land will continue to become more and more difficult, until it becomes the “humanitarian” thing to do to get Palestinians out of the Strip. This is the Trump-Netanyahu strategy, and the ultimate strategic goal is the elimination of Palestine, once and for all.

We know, from historical precedent and ongoing political and social dynamics, that the Palestinian people will not go quietly into the night. They will remain steadfast. I have no doubts about our fidelity to the struggle against settler colonialism and Western imperialism. The only real question is: will the rest of the world be as steadfast as we are? The current tenuous ceasefire is not the time to take a break from acting in support of Palestine. This is the time to increase action, and place pressure on both Israel and the U.S., to stop their plan, and stand on the side of truth, justice, liberation, and freedom.

—Mondoweiss, February 8, 2025

<https://mondoweiss.net/2025/02/the-only-way-to-stop-the-netanyahu-trump-plan-to-eliminate-palestine-is-to-begin-rebuilding-gaza>

Israel’s Brutal Torture of Palestinian Detainees

Dating from 50 years ago

BY AMER SULTAN

Documents from the UK’s Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) show that Britain was aware that Israeli authorities were systematically torturing Palestinian and Arab detainees in mid-1977 but declined to pressure Israel to halt these practices.

In June 1977, the *Sunday Times* published a shocking dossier exposing the brutal torture of Palestinian and

Arab detainees in Israeli prisons and detention centers. The report described the torture as “systematic” and “organized so methodically that it cannot be dismissed as a handful of ‘rogue cops’ exceeding orders.” It found that torture “appears to be sanctioned at some level as deliberate policy” and detailed 17 different methods of abuse, including beatings, genitalia squeezing, inser-

tion of foreign objects into body orifices, hanging upside down, cigarette burns, and torture of family members in front of prisoners.”

The *Sunday Times*’ dossier was based on interviews with former detainees who described other physical abuse and psychological pressure during their detention.

At the time, the FCO reports indicated there were 3,200 Palestinian and Arab detainees from the occupied territories, Egypt, Syria and Jordan held in Israeli prisons or detention centers in Israel and the territories occupied by the Israeli military in the 1967 war.

The documents show that before the report's publication, the *Sunday Times* shared its findings with then-UK Foreign Secretary David Owen. British diplomats in Tel Aviv and Jerusalem conducted confidential interviews with officials from the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and the Quaker Service (QS), a Northern Ireland charity, to explore their views on the torture allegations.

James Fine of QS confirmed to Mike Jenner, the British consul-general in East Jerusalem, that "all forms of torture used in Northern Ireland had been used [against the Palestinians] here [by Israel]." He gave examples such as "hooding, sleep deprivation, and bread-and-water diets." Fine added that "in all interrogations, some beating up was used," and in a minority of cases, "serious" beatings occurred. He further noted that more sophisticated torture such as "electric shocks, bottles up the anus and objects inserted into the penis" were used in "a few cases." While Fine acknowledged the evidence came from Palestinian and Arab detainees and prisoners, he emphasized that "exaggeration must be discounted."

Jenner informed his bosses in the FCO that Fine believed that body of evidence was "so consistent that, at the very least, there was a *prima facie* case for a full enquiry into allegation of torture."

The ICRC representative in Jerusalem, Alfredo Witschi, supported the *Sunday Times* findings, calling the report "a very fair presentation of the available evidence," despite it containing "some mistakes." Witschi stated that the ICRC possessed a "similar evidence though in much greater quantity," alerting the British diplomat that the weight

of the ICRC's evidence of beating up, which he said was very severe in some cases, was such that he "considered it amounted to proof" of torture.

He suggested that Israeli interrogators "were unlikely to be acting without instructions" and these instructions "were possibly to give them a free hand provided that they didn't go too far." Witschi also highlighted that the *Sunday Times* report "paid too little attention" to psychological techniques of torture used by the Israelis such as "threat of torture after exhausting the suspect by sleep deprivation and rigorous exercises." The ICRC official was keen to alert Jenner that their conversation should be confidential.

The FCO Research Department reviewed the *Sunday Times* report and concluded that the allegations were "consistent with the available evidence from other sources, including the ICRC." It acknowledged that psychological pressure was "probably condoned by higher authorities in Israel," and more serious cases of maltreatment were probably isolated but did

occur. The department drew the attention of FCO officials that the more serious allegations are "against Shin Bait [Israeli Internal Security Service] personnel in Moscobia, Hebron and Sarafand prisons."

The Near East and North Africa Department (NENA) within the FCO noted that the sources for the allegations were primarily Arab prisoners and their legal representatives, making the accounts potentially one-sided. However, it admitted the allegations of torture in the Israeli prisons "is not entirely inconsistent with that which emerges from the other material available to us and in particular with what the ICRC representative in Jerusalem told the Consulate-General there in confidence."

William R. Tomkys, head of NENA, recommended raising the issue discreetly with Avraham Kidron, the Israeli ambassador to London, rather than involving the UK ambassador in Tel Aviv, to avoid straining relations with the Israeli government. "We may get off on the wrong foot with Mr. Kidron as a result, but this is less dam-



Israeli soldiers lead a line of blindfolded Palestinian detainees across the Israel-Gaza border after they were detained by Israeli forces operating inside Gaza, August 1, 2007.

aging than the risk that HM ambassador at Tel Aviv might lose the confidence of Mr. Begin's government," Tomkys wrote.

He suggested advising Israel to conduct "a public inquiry," arguing it would be "consistent with Israel's close concern for human rights" and address widespread public concern in the UK about the allegations about the Israeli treatment of prisoners.

However, Foreign Secretary Owen instructed the FCO to wait till he addressed the issue with U.S. Secretary of State, Cyrus Vance.

Commenting on Tomkys' report and recommendation, Owen ordered "No action to be taken" instructing the issue "should be raised at a political level not Ambassadorial." But he stressed that raising the issue should be "certainly not immediately." Owen stressed to his staff that "we will also need to discuss with the Americans whom I know need time to consider" the issue.

He also disclosed that he had spoken to *Sunday Times* Editor Harry Evans about the report, but the documents did not show whether he had shared the details of their conversation with his staff.

When the British ambassador raised the issue with the U.S. State Department, officials confirmed they "had taken the report of the *Sunday Times* seriously." However, Walter Smith, head of Israeli and Arab-Israeli Affairs, told the ambassador he was preparing a paper for Vance and the Americans "would encourage one or two members of the American Bar Association to get in touch with their Israeli opposite numbers to see whether further investigation leading to remedial action would be possible."

The *Sunday Times* report sparked significant public and political concern in the UK. Thirty-three Members of Parliament signed a motion to discuss the issue in July 1977, while others wrote letters to Owen and his ministers.

David Watkins, an MP and member of the Labour Middle East Council, strongly criticized the government's "failure" to address the violations of Palestinians' rights and to raise the issue "more vigorously and more openly" with the Israeli government given the available evidence. He warned that the UK risked being accused of "applying double standards" if it did not act as it had in the case of South Africa.

The MP pressed the ministers to inform him whether the UK has done all it should to find out the truth about "the persistence of allegations of torture" in Israeli prisons. He slammed what he described as "covering up" the Israeli ill-treatment of the Arab prisoners and detainees "both officially and on the news media," giving an example of a U.S. State Department document, which he confirmed he has seen, reporting on Israel observance of human rights in both Israel and the occupied territories. The MP described the document, prepared for Jimmy Carter, the then-U.S. president, as "remarkably dishonest." Watkins believed that the paper "was designed to assure the President that in difficult circumstance, Israel is making commendable, even if not wholly successful, effort to provide for and observe the Palestinian human rights both in Israel and in the occupied territories."

In his response to Watkins, Frank Judd, minister of state for the Middle East, acknowledged that the allegations published by the *Sunday Times* were "disturbing" and stressed the need for Israel to address them.

Judd stressed that if true, these stories "would also reflect a situation which we, as a government committed to the promotion of human rights worldwide, would view most seriously."

He suggested an "independent inquiry," but he noted that its success would require Israel's full cooperation. He rejected any idea to press Israel, expressing fears that if the UK raised

the individual cases of human rights violation with the Israelis, such a move "would almost certainly be misinterpreted as an attempt to put political pressure on Israel over the wider issues of a Middle East settlement."

Watkins, however, insisted that pressure on Israel was necessary, arguing that Israel would never withdraw from occupied territories or recognize Palestinian rights "except under pressure."

—*Middle East Monitor*, January 20, 2025

<https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20250120-uk-knew-about-the-israels-brutal-torture-of-palestinian-detainees-50-years-ago-but-refused-to-act-british-documents-reveal/>

A “Ceasefire” That’s Designed to Fail

By CHRIS KINDER

February 7, 2025—We all knew things would ramp up for the worse in the second Trump administration in the U.S., but just how bad it would be, was left to be seen. The same could be said about Israel’s genocide in Gaza. For instance, how would Trump, who had a (dubious) antiwar reputation, deal with Israel? Was Trump responsible for Netanyahu’s acceptance of the ceasefire deal?

A false hope, unfortunately

The very fact that the ceasefire was even honored by both parties (for 11 days as of this date) gave people everywhere a sense of hope. Gazans came back to the north in the thousands, and some even found their homes. Most have found only rubble, and everything else needed for life has been destroyed: access to food, clean water, schools, hospitals, was also destroyed. Yet these amazing fine people were happy to be free in their country, and determined to stick it out—how I don’t know.

The problem here is that the ceasefire deal was designed to fail as soon as Biden’s administration came to an end. The text was similar to the Biden administration’s earlier three-phase draft, in which the first phase was supposed to consist of negotiations which would ensure that a ceasefire gave Israel a chance to declare negotiations a failure and restart its war as soon as Biden was out of office. The next two phases were tacked on to make it look good for the U.S. “peace effort.” All parties knew that Israel was not going to give up on its attempt to wipe Hamas off the face of the earth and drive all the Palestinians off their historic land.

Who is to govern?

Most importantly, the first phase of the ceasefire was to include a decision about who was to govern Gaza. Whoever would think that Israel and Hamas would

even sit down with each other (even on a screen) for more than two seconds deserves the all-time optimist doctorate. Negotiations up to now have been handled with couriers going back and forth so the parties do not even look at each other, and even these break down.

Furthermore, Hamas may agree with a coalition government that leaves it in charge, which Israel will never accept, and Israel would insist on a government that it can control, and which Hamas is nowhere to be found outside of a graveyard. At this point I want to remind the reader of something others never mention anymore, and that is Hamas is NOT a dictatorship. It was democratically elected in the Gaza Strip in 2016. After that, military interruptions got in the way.

Trump and Netanyahu ramp up genocide

The certainty that Israel will kill the ceasefire and continue the genocide is locked in by Israel’s leadership under Netanyahu and his fascist hangers-on. As the leftist Israeli publication *Haaretz* puts it, “Netanyahu is determined to blow up the deal.” The reason for this

is clear. His far-right supporters are blasting it on the air waves and promising to bring down the government if their wish isn’t met. And for the prime minister himself, he needs to have the war to keep him in office, since he will be heading to jail if he steps down due to his earlier corruption convictions.

As if that wasn’t enough, Netanyahu has the problem of the hostages that the Hamas militants captured in the October 7th attack on Israel in 2023. He wants to save his butt, not hostages, and of course he knows it will take a full stop of the war to free them all, which he also doesn’t want. (As it stands, the first phase of the ceasefire peace deal demands Hamas must release just 33 of them, which, at this writing they are doing.)

And Trumps press conference? “Piece of Cake...Just do it!” says he.

Then there is the new President in Washington, who treats the world as if he is a selfish child tossing toys around in a sandbox. It seemed to me that Trump may have stunned even Netanyahu at their joint press conference on February 4th with his through-the-looking glass plan to empty



A Palestinian man atop the ruins of his house in Rafah on the day the cease-fire took effect.

Palestine of its people and turn Gaza from a wasteland into a “Riviera” paradise! He would do this after the war was over, and by having the U.S. take over the country and “own” it—and do all this without using any U.S. troops.

It was kind of surprising to hear him repeat over and over that Gaza was a totally destroyed and an unlivable wasteland, after he had mentioned at the beginning that he had lifted Biden’s ban on sending 2000-pound bunker-buster bombs, which Israel has been using for months to create that very non-livability! You could almost see Netanyahu smirking as Trump went on about the destruction that Israel was responsible for.

Mideast in a rage

A week or so earlier, Trump mentioned that the Palestinians being forced out should be shipped off to Egypt and Jordan, both of whom immediately slammed the door on that idea. So, he had to mention that fact in the press conference. And in a brief

mumble he said they would likely change their minds, which any idiot would know was not going to happen. Trump’s office is looking for other countries, some in other continents, to which to ship “these animals.” (Trump’s words, caught off guard in a different circumstance.)

What did Netanyahu have to say at this press conference? Not much. He was too busy praising Trump, sort of like a comrade crawling up on hands and knees to praise “comrade” Stalin. But he did strongly remind all those listening that before any of this could happen Israel would have to win the war. It seemed Trump had kinda-sorta forgotten about that.

A day-after blow-out

The day after this miserable performance was very interesting. Trump made a brief statement that the use of U.S. troops might be needed in certain circumstances. And Netanyahu, when asked by a reporter whether U.S. troops would be used, said emphatically they would not.

The reaction to this “conference” around the world was explosive. In the Mideast, Saudi Arabia immediately tightened up its refusal to recognize Israel without recognition of Palestine as a nation. Getting the Saudis onboard for that had been another of Trump’s aims. Iran, Turkey, China, France, Russia and the United Kingdom all made negative statements. Germany’s reaction was typical: German Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock stressed that the Gaza Strip “belongs to the Palestinians.”

Arabs in the U.S., many who had voted for Trump, were disappointed and angry. The Arab Americans for Trump changed its name the next day to Arab Americans for Peace. The group had voted for Trump in 2024, but now they are joining many other voters on both sides who voted third party or for Trump because of their disgust with Biden over the genocide in Gaza. The masses of people in the Mideast, and the U.S. peace movement, will certainly be organizing protests as well.

Bowdoin College Students Launch First Gaza Solidarity Encampment of Trump Era

BY BRETT WILKINS

Friday, February 7, 2025—Activists at Bowdoin College in Brunswick, Maine have launched what is believed to be the first Palestine solidarity encampment since President Donald Trump took office, occupying the first floor of the liberal arts school’s student union to protest the U.S. leader’s proposal to take over the Gaza Strip and expel its native Palestinian population.

Bowdoin Students for Justice in Palestine (SJP) occupied the first floor of Smith Union on Thursday night and erected tents there, *The Bowdoin Orient* reported. They named the encampment after Sha’ban al-Dalou, a 19-year-old computer engineering student at al-Azhar University in Gaza who burned alive in a refugee tent encampment bombed by Israel last October.

The protesters—who reportedly number around 50—acted in response to Trump’s Tuesday press conference with fugitive Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, during which the president floated U.S. ownership of Gaza, the ethnic cleansing of its Palestinian population, and the construction of the “Riviera of the Middle East” there following 15 months of Israel’s genocidal war on the coastal enclave.

Demonstrators also condemned Israel’s ongoing assault on the illegally occupied West Bank, where the killing and injury of thousands of Palestinians since October 2023 has been overshadowed by the annihilation of Gaza.

“As Israeli aggression obliterates Palestinian homes and guns down chil-

dren in Jenin, as unspeakable suffering continues in Gaza, and as America descends further into fascism, we ask—what type of institution does Bowdoin want to be?” Bowdoin SJP said in a statement Thursday. “One that cowers to authoritarianism, that chooses cowardice in the face of injustice? The choice is Bowdoin’s.”

The *Orient* reported that a Bowdoin College security official began asking student protesters to identify themselves around 1:00 A.M. on Friday morning while Dean of Students Michael Pulju informed students about the disciplinary repercussions of their action, including the possibility of expulsion.

On Friday morning, more Bowdoin students showed up outside the stu-

dent union to protest and try to enter the building, chanting, “Open Smith!”

According to the *Orient*:

“The encampment... comes nearly a year after Bowdoin students voted in favor of the SJP-organized Bowdoin Solidarity Referendum, a resolution demanding that the college take an institutional stand against the scholasticide and stop future investments in defense-focused funds. At the beginning of the fall semester, the college established its Ad Hoc Committee on Investments and Responsibility in response to the referendum but has yet to alter its investment practices or offer an institutional statement.”

Lead SJP organizer Olivia Kenney told the *Orient* that the protesters plan to occupy Smith Union “until the demands of the Bowdoin Solidarity Referendum are met” by the school’s Board of Trustees.

Staff and students at Birzeit University in the occupied West Bank recorded a message of solidarity with the “beautiful and wonderful” Bowdoin encampment.

“We woke up this morning to... the news of your encampment, and we’ve been following the news of the solidarity encampment at Bowdoin and Students for Justice in Palestine,” they said in the message, which was posted on Instagram. “We see you, we love you.”

“Thank you, from occupied Palestine in the West Bank, where students and faculty and employees alike can barely if at all get to campus because of the checkpoints and roadblocks,” the message continued. “From all of Palestine, from the river to the sea, all of the universities that were actively destroyed in 471 days of genocide. Universities throughout the occupied West Bank, which are being surrounded and isolated.”

“We are in this together,” the message added. “We see you and thank you for raising your voices and screaming loudly that the space of a university is our space. It is a space where knowledge is exchanged. It is the space where we imagine and work to achieve the world that we want to live in, not the world that has been thrust upon us.”

—*Common Dreams*, February 7, 2025

<https://www.commondreams.org/news/bowdoin-sjp>

“We see you and thank you for raising your voices and screaming loudly that the space of a university is our space. It is a space where knowledge is exchanged. It is the space where we imagine and work to achieve the world that we want to live in, not the world that has been thrust upon us.”



Bowdoin College students try to enter Smith Union, where Students for Justice in Palestine activists set up an encampment, in Brunswick, Maine on February 7, 2025. (Photo: @thestustustudio/X/screenshot)

Catch US Now We're Falling

BY JEFFREY ST. CLAIR

The accumulation of all powers, legislative, executive, and judiciary, in the same hands, whether of one, a few, or many, and whether hereditary, self-appointed, or elective, may justly be pronounced the very definition of tyranny.

—James Madison, *Federalist Paper #47*

Friday, February 14, 2025— Let's try to reprise this week in the dismantling of the Republic: Trump proclaimed Super Bowl Sunday, Gulf of America Day, and announced his plans to “buy Gaza.” From whom it isn't clear.

On Monday, Trump said he was ordering a 25 percent tariff/tax on all imports of steel and aluminum and warned Hamas that if all hostages in Gaza weren't released by noon this Saturday, “all hell” would break loose. Then he banned paper straws.

On Tuesday, JD Vance and Elon Musk fumed that federal judges had no business intruding on their unconstitutional raids on the federal government and that Trump should ignore

any injunctions imposed on them. Meanwhile, Trump signed an executive order rolling back enforcement of a law that makes it illegal for U.S. companies to bribe foreign officials, arguing that the restriction puts American firms at a disadvantage, and told the Justice Department to drop corruption charges against NYC Mayor Eric Adams. To be fair, Trump also abolished the FBI's Foreign Influence Task Force, making it easier for overseas corporations and governments to bribe U.S. officials. (He also shut down the Justice Department's task force responsible for tracking down Russian oligarchs evading U.S. sanctions.)

On Wednesday, Trump demanded that the Education Department be closed “immediately!” The problem: the Department was opened by an act of Congress, which isn't as insurmountable a problem as it once might have been given that Congress barely asserts its existence anymore. Later that day in the Oval Office, Trump was allegedly

told by X Æ A-Xii¹, one of Elon Musk's 12, make that 13 (known) kids, to “Shut up” and “You're not the president!” Perhaps as compensation for being dissed by a four-year-old (who also wiped streams of snot on the Resolute Desk,) Trump proclaimed himself the head of the Kennedy Center, whose annual awards he'd boycotted during his prior term, and called Putin to let him know he could take as much of Ukraine as he could carry back to Moscow, as long as he left the rare earth minerals behind for Trump.

A Data for Progress poll conducted on February 2 asked, “Billionaires have:

Too much influence over government: 73 percent

The right amount of influence over government: 13 percent

Too little influence over government: five percent”

Of course, the whole point of having billionaires, and their slash-and-burn hackers, run the government is that they don't give a damn what the people think and, in fact, will almost always serve their own interests first by doing the exact opposite.

The only thing these three did to increase their already unimaginable wealth by unimaginable amounts was to help get Trump elected. And Trump returned the favor by giving them free reign to gut the federal government's regulatory system from the inside out, eliminating programs that curbed the growth of their wealth and protecting those features that fuel it.

Oxfam: The wealthiest one percent of people now own almost 45 percent of all wealth, while 44 percent of humanity live below the World Bank's poverty line of \$6.85 per day.

It's a strange kind of economic populism, which bolts out of the gate



The Fall of the Rebel Angels by Pieter Bruegel the Elder, 1592, Royal Museum of the Arts, Brussels.

with mass layoffs. But what would you expect from a guy whose only successful business venture (aside from two elections) was a TV gig where he hammed it up firing people?

As we bear first-hand witness to the evisceration of “democracy” in our own country by the billionaire class, it’s perhaps helpful to consult what the Greeks now think about the failure of what’s considered—rightly or wrongly—the first democracy, the one that briefly bloomed in fifth century BC Athens before being crushed and supplanted by a dictatorship of oligarchs and eventual imperial occupation, first by the Macedonians, then the Romans. Here’s the view of contemporary Greek political philosopher Takis Fotopoulos:

“The final failure of Athenian democracy was not due, as it is usually asserted by its critics, to the innate contradictions of democracy itself but, on the contrary, to the fact that the Athenian democracy never matured to become an inclusive democracy. This cannot be adequately explained by simply referring to the immature ‘objective’ conditions, the low development of productive forces and so on—important as may be—because the same objective conditions prevailed at that time in many other places all over the Mediterranean, let alone the rest of Greece, but democracy flourished only in Athens.”

The word that leaps out at me from Takis Fotopoulos’s post-mortem is “inclusion,” now being elided anywhere it’s found in the federal government here, with consequences that would surely be familiar to Demosthenes.

Keeanga-Yahmatta Taylor: “It is easy to dismiss Diversity Equality Inclusion (D.E.I.) programs as ineffectual, because in many ways they have been. But that raises the question of why the right is so determined to undermine and dismiss them.”

As the Musk crew takes a widely swinging wrecking ball to the federal

government, they have targeted the federal defender’s offices, which provide legal representation to low-income and indigent clients. This week, several federal defenders’ offices received notices that their leases are about to be terminated. However, federal public defense lawyers don’t work for the Justice Department; they are employees of the judiciary branch, which is one more demolition of the walls separating the branches of government as Trump seeks to expand his autocratic control over the Republic. But the potential wreckage goes deeper since undermining the Federal Public Defenders Office also cuts into not only the Constitution’s separation of powers provisions but also the Sixth Amendment’s guarantee that all residents of the U.S. have the right to effective legal representation.

“Here’s the best way of explaining it: they want to take food and medicine away from poor people and give that money to billionaires instead.”

According to a report in *Drop Site News*, Marco Rubio’s State Department lists Tesla as the recipient of its largest expected contracts, the department planning to purchase \$400,000,000 worth of “Armored Tesla.”

The New Republic reported that one of the inspector generals Trump fired was examining Elon Musk’s failures to comply with reporting protocols designed to safeguard national security as a major recipient of Pentagon contracts.

Despite court orders, 98 percent of National Institute of Health (NIH) grants that should have gone out this month didn’t, meaning that biomedical research will skid to a stop and clinical

trials will end. Why? NIH’s spending on research is a fraction of a fraction of a fraction of the federal budget.

Between February 3, 2024, and February 10, 2024, the NIH issued 513 grant awards totaling \$218,273,053. Between February 3 and February 10 this year, the NIH issued just 11 grant awards totaling \$4,981,089. In other words, since the courts ordered a full resumption in grant funding, the agency approved a handful of grants accounting for 2.2 percent of its typical volume. An NIH official says a small number of grants are being approved by NIH leadership, but nearly all grants remain frozen.

This was followed by the abrupt resignation of Lawrence Tabak, long-time principal deputy director of the NIH, as a move that came as a shock to his own lab staff.

Who will audit the auditors?

February was born with too few days. Will Trump add a few more by Imperial Edict before the month runs out?

30—the percentage of Americans who think all or most of Trump’s executive orders have been Constitutional.

As Trump slaps 25 percent tariffs on steel and aluminum imports, here’s a look at who the U.S. buys steel and aluminum from:

Steel

Canada—6 million tons

Brazil—4.1 million tons

Mexico—3.2 million tons

Vietnam—1.2 million tons

Aluminum

Canada—3.2 million tons

UAE—0.3 million tons

China—0.2 million tons

South Korea—0.2 million tons

Bahrain—0.2 million tons

Argentina—0.2 million tons

India—0.2 million tons

The U.S. isn’t producing less steel than Canada or Brazil because it can’t produce its own steel or because other steel-producing nations are preying on

the poor, weak little U.S. It is making less steel because the billionaire financial class Trump surrounded himself with concluded that it was too expensive to fund steel production in the U.S. and cheaper to finance steel plants elsewhere and import it. He should target his tariffs on them.

In February 2024, Canadians' net favorability toward the U.S. was 12 percent. Now it's minus 20 percent and still falling.

The *Financial Times* reports that "tariff anxiety" has prompted the stockpiling of \$82 billion worth of gold in New York, causing shortages elsewhere.

Trump, when asked if his drive to annex Canada was a real thing: "Yeah, it is. I think Canada would be much better off being a 51st state because we lose \$250 billion a year with Canada, and I'm not gonna let that happen. It's too much. Why are we paying \$200 billion a year, essentially, in subsidies to Canada? Now if they're a 51st state, I don't mind doing it."

The U.S. is not "paying Canada \$200 billion a year." In 2024, the U.S. ran a trade deficit with Canada of around \$63 billion. But the U.S. ran a \$22 billion surplus in services. So, the overall trade deficit was only \$41 billion. And it's not a subsidy; it's the price Americans are willing to pay for Canadian goods.

I'm not a cognitive psychologist, but this doesn't sound like a mind firing on all cylinders:

"I spoke to Governor [sic] Trudeau on numerous occasions and we'll see what happens [Canada becoming the 51st U.S. state], but it just sets up so good for them. Look the people would pay much less tax than they're paying right now. They'd have perfect military protection. They don't have any military protection, because they, essentially, because, um, and you take a look at what's going on out there, you have Russian ships, you have China ships, you have Chinese ships, you have, uh, you have a lot of ships out there. You

know people are in danger. It's a different world today. It's a different world that they need our protection."

Stephane Dion, Canada's Ambassador to France and Monaco, and the Prime Minister's Special Envoy to the European Union (EU) and Europe, say that Trump's threats to invade and confiscate land in other countries violate international law. This is good to hear, especially since Canada has abetted and even sent troops to join many previous such invasions by the U.S.

..undermining the Federal Public Defenders Office also cuts into not only the Constitution's separation of powers provisions but also the Sixth Amendment's guarantee that all residents of the U.S. have the right to effective legal representation.

In a talk at the King's Head Pub, Mark Carney, the Federal Liberal candidate to replace Justin Trudeau, called Trump's insistence on making Canada the 51st state "ridiculous" and "insulting" the "Voldemort² of comments." Carney said Trump's aggressive posture toward Canada is a result of rising inequality in the U.S.:

"I think that Americans built their social safety net with enormous holes in it, that tens-of-millions of people fell through. The Americans worshipped at the altar of the market, and the gains were not spread across that society. Now, there's a backlash. There's a back-

lash, and that backlash is leading to them pushing out against us."

Make Canada Healthy Again! It took Trump's tariffs for Canada finally to figure out that American cheese sucks.

Representative Earl L. "Buddy" Carter (R-GA) introduced a bill this week authorizing Trump to "acquire" Greenland and rename it "Red, White, and Blueland." The best and the brightest!

Forty-six percent of Danish people considered the U.S. to be either "a very big threat" or "a fairly big threat" to Denmark, a higher percentage than North Korea and Iran. Sounds reasonable to me.

Trump on *Fox News*: "We want to raise defense spending. I think we have to have it." Cut off school lunches, cancer research, and toxic waste clean-ups, but keep building weapons to kill poor people halfway around the world who aren't a threat to the U.S.

Trump wants to resurrect Reagan's discredited old Star Wars plan to use "space lasers" to destroy nuclear weapons. They'll do anything to avoid eliminating nuclear weapons.

Space lasers don't stay in space.

Maybe the empire will end with a bang and not a whimper after all: As part of the massive firings of federal workers, the Trump administration has terminated nearly 300 employees at the National Nuclear Security Administration, the agency responsible for maintaining America's nuclear weapons arsenal and combating nuclear terrorism.

Yun Sun writing in *Foreign Affairs*:

"Beijing assumes that Washington's own policies will dismantle the foundations of U.S. global hegemony, even if it creates a lot of turbulence... in the process. China's top priority, then, is to weather the storm."

Trump is trying to shake down Ukraine for access to \$500 billion in rare earth minerals as compensation for past support, even if the U.S. greenlights a Russian takeover of the country:

“They [Ukraine] may make a deal, they may not make a deal. They may be Russian someday, or they may not be Russian someday. They have tremendously valuable land in terms of rare earth, oil, gas, and other things. I want our money secured. I told them I want the equivalent of \$500 billion worth of rare earth, and they’ve essentially agreed. At least we don’t feel stupid—otherwise, we’re stupid. I said we have to get something; we can’t just keep giving money.”

(Most of Ukraine’s rare earth minerals are now under lands occupied by Russia.)

Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth has evicted mainstream news outlets at the Pentagon to make room for more than a half dozen rightwing outlets. Out: *The New York Times*, *Washington Post*, *NBC*, *CNN*, *Politico*, *The Hill*, *The War Zone*, and *NPR*. In: *The New York Post*, *Washington Examiner*, *One America News*, *Newsmax*, *HuffPo*, *The Free Press*, *The Daily Caller*, and *Breitbart* audio services. No invite yet for *CounterPunch*.

Marco Rubio tapped Darren Beattie to serve as acting Undersecretary for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs, even though Beattie has repeatedly called for the sterilization of people he calls “low IQ trash.” Beattie previously served as a speechwriter for Trump but was fired in 2018 after he spoke at a conference attended by white nationalists. According to Rubio, Beattie’s primary focus at the State Department will be to “fight censorship.” You can understand why he might be concerned about having his own opinions muted.

The percentage of Americans who approve of the expansion of the United States by force is four percent. Looks like Big Daddy’s going to have to take out the paddle and beat MAGA into line.

This week, the Trump White House banned an *AP* correspondent from a press event because the *Associated Press* has refused to refer to the Gulf of Mexico as the “Gulf of America,” citing the fact that the Gulf is not fully

within the territory of the U.S. Indeed, Mexico enjoys more territorial rights to the Gulf than the U.S. (Are all tyrants this petty or just our own?)

Surface Area of the Exclusive Economic Zones of the Gulf of Mexico/America

Mexico: 285,899 Square Miles / 47.67 percent

U.S.A: 268,388 Square miles / 44.75 percent

Cuba: 31,364 Square miles / 5.23 percent

International waters: 14,047 Square miles / 2.34 percent

The 6.7 thousand square mile Dead Zone should be renamed the Gulf of BP.

The Munich Security Conference report for 2025 says that because of Trump’s proposed land grabs, the U.S. should no longer be perceived as “an anchor of stability, but rather a risk to be hedged against.”

The Inspector General at USAID warned that the U.S. currently can’t determine whether aid is reaching “terrorist” organizations because the Trump/Musk freeze has furloughed the entire terror vetting team. In addition, despite Rubio’s alleged waiver, no humanitarian assistance is flowing because 90 percent of staff in charge of managing and overseeing this aid have been sent home and denied access to their email.

Frederich Mertz, who seems likely to become the next chancellor of Germany: “the EU must not come to Washington as a dwarf—because then it will be treated as one.”

Here’s a reminder of why you shouldn’t weep too many tears for the demise of USAID: John Bolton, who served as director of policy and budget for USAID, showing Piers Morgan his farewell present from the Agency, a hand-grenade with the inscription: John R. Bolton, Truest Reaganaut.

Of course, USAID will almost certainly be replaced by something worse.

The House released its budget bill, which contains massive tax cuts for the rich and devastating budget cuts for the poor. The bill targets an \$880 billion cut in Medicaid, reducing SNAP’s (food stamps and other nutritional aid to low-income families) funding by at least 20 percent. They aim to pass the bill through the Reconciliation process to avoid a senate filibuster David Dayen, author of *Monopolized*: “Here’s the best way of explaining it: they want to take food and medicine away from poor people and give that money to billionaires instead.”

If the policies are this stupid three weeks in, how moronic will they become four years from now?

Some things never change no matter who’s in office, like Larry Summers’ Cassandra-like warnings on inflation: “We are now in the riskiest period for inflation policy since the early Biden administration...Even without tariffs, immigration restrictions, deficit bloat and attacks on the fed there would be serious grounds for inflation worry.”

Trump’s acting director of the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau, Russell Vought, told all staff at the Bureau not to perform “any work task.” The CFPB is one of the few federal agencies that generate a profit for the U.S., having returned more than \$21 billion. So, it’s not really about “efficiency,” is it?

According to a Hult School of International Business survey, employers would rather hire AI robots than bring a Gen Z graduate into the company.

Auto insurance rates in the U.S. have increased by 93 percent over the last decade, far above the 34 percent increase in overall consumer prices.

—*CounterPunch*, February 14, 2025

<https://www.counterpunch.org/2025/02/14/roaming-charges-catch-us-now-were-falling/>

1 “X Æ A-12” (pronounced “X Ash A Twelve”) is Elon Musk’s son.

2 Lord Voldemort is the main antagonist in the *Harry Potter* novels by J.K. Rowling.

“Truly Dystopian:” Trump Administration Threatens Public Schools with Funding Cuts

By JAKE JOHNSON

Sunday, February 16, 2025—Lawmakers and free expression groups voiced alarm Saturday after the Trump administration threatened to investigate and strip federal funding from public schools, including colleges and universities that don’t comply with its broad interpretation of a recent U.S. Supreme Court decision striking down affirmative action programs in admissions.

In a letter to state education officials on Friday, Craig Trainor, the acting assistant secretary for civil rights at the U.S. Department of Education, wrote that the agency “intends to take appropriate measures to assess compliance with the applicable statutes and regulations based on the understanding embodied in this letter beginning no later than 14 days from today’s date, including antidiscrimination requirements that are a condition of receiving federal funding.”

“Institutions that fail to comply with federal civil rights law may, consistent with applicable law, face potential loss of federal funding,” the letter states.

The letter takes aim at “Diversity Equity and Inclusion (DEI) programs”—a right-wing boogeyman that the Trump administration has used as a pretext to rip apart federal agencies—and declares that the Education Department “will no longer tolerate the overt and covert racial discrimination that has become widespread in this nation’s educational

institutions,” even as it halts thousands of civil rights investigations.

PEN America warned that Trainor’s sweeping directive “seeks to declare it a civil rights violation for educational institutions to engage in any diversity-related programming or to promote any diversity-related ideas—potentially including everything from a panel on the Civil Rights Movement to a Lunar New Year celebration.”

“This declaration has no basis in law and is an affront to the freedom of speech and ideas in educational settings. It represents yet another twisting of civil rights law in an effort to demand ideological conformity by schools and universities,” the group said in a statement Saturday. “To enact government interference in the intellectual life of such institutions is to end the United States’ centuries-long history of intellectual freedom in educational settings, and to reduce our colleges and universities to the status of echo chambers, similar to those controlled by authoritarian states.”

Brian Rosenberg, visiting professor of education at the Harvard Graduate School of Education, told *Inside Higher Ed* that the letter was “truly dystopian.”

“It goes well beyond the Supreme Court ruling on admissions and declares illegal a wide range of common practices,” Rosenberg said. “In my career I’ve never seen language of this kind from any government agency in the United States.”

“Republicans tell you they want to empower local communities, and that states, schools, and parents know best, and again and again use top-down threats to

achieve their culture war agenda.”

The letter comes amid the Trump administration’s broader assault on public education, including a push to abolish the Education Department altogether. That assault is expected to intensify if billionaire Linda McMahon, a proponent of school privatization, is confirmed as education secretary.

The Elon Musk-led Department of Government Efficiency—which is currently rampaging through the Education Department and terminating contracts—posted Trainor’s letter to X, the social media platform owned by Musk.

Senator Patty Murray (D-Wash.), a senior member of the Senate Education Committee, said Saturday that “this threat to rip away the federal funding our public K-12 schools and colleges receive flies in the face of the law.”

“I hope no parent, student, or teacher is intimidated by these threats—this former preschool teacher certainly is not,” said Murray. “While it’s anyone’s guess what falls under the Trump administration’s definition of ‘DEI,’ there is simply no authority or basis for Trump to impose such a mandate. In fact, federal laws prohibit ANY president from telling schools and colleges what to teach, including the Every Student Succeeds Act, that I negotiated with Republicans.”

“Rather than trying to make college more affordable or helping to improve our kids’ outcomes, Trump is letting far-right extremists inject politics into the classroom at every turn,” Murray added. “Republicans tell you they want to empower local communities, and that states, schools, and parents know best, and again and again use top-down threats to achieve their culture war agenda.”

—Common Dreams, February 16, 2025

<https://www.commondreams.org/news/trump-threatens-public-schools>



National Education Association (NEA) and allies held a rally outside of the U.S. Capitol in Washington, D.C. on February 12, 2025.

Quoting Napoleon, Trump Openly Declares He's Above the Law

By Common Dreams Staff

Sunday, February 16, 2025—Fears that the United States is in the midst of a constitutional crisis—or something significantly worse—intensified Saturday after President Donald Trump wrote in a social media post that “he who saves his country does not violate any law,” a variation of a quote attributed to Napoleon Bonaparte.

Trump’s post on X—the platform owned by billionaire shadow government leader Elon Musk—came as his administration continued its sweeping and destructive assault on the federal government and workforce, running roughshod over the law in the process.

Trump’s post Saturday was the latest brazen signal that the president doesn’t recognize limits on his authority to impose his far-right agenda.

New York Times columnist Jamelle Bouie called Trump’s message “the single most un-American and anti-constitutional statement ever uttered by an American president.”

Since taking office less than a month ago, Trump and Musk have moved aggressively to dismantle federal agencies and remove any officials who could shine light on or obstruct their efforts.

Trump, his handpicked Cabinet officials, and Musk have also disregarded or openly attacked the other two co-equal branches of government, accusing judges who have moved to halt or limit the new administration’s actions of being Democratic partisans.



In some cases, the Trump administration has actively defied rulings from federal courts, an alarming indication of what’s to come.

Yasmin Abusaif and Douglas Keith of the Brennan Center for Justice noted Friday that “the last time the United States saw widespread open defiance of court orders by elected officials was when governors in Southern states refused to integrate their schools after the Supreme Court ruled against segre-

gation in public education in *Brown v. Board of Education*.”

“President Dwight Eisenhower—though he was no fan of the court’s decision—ultimately dispatched troops to the South to help enforce the ruling, saying, “The Supreme Court has spoken, and I am sworn to uphold the constitutional process in this country, and I will obey,” Abusaif and Keith continued. “The governors’ efforts to defy court orders are widely acknowledged as one of the most shameful periods in U.S. history.”

Frank Bowman, a law professor and former federal and state prosecutor, wrote for *Slate* last week that “with each passing day, the practical ability of the courts to stop, or even materially hinder, the catastrophe diminishes.”

“If Trump successfully defies the courts,” Bowman added, “the only remaining obstacle to dictatorship will be public revulsion, national popular protest, and the hope that such a reaction would cause Trump to retreat and, at long last, recall some fraction of the Republican Party to its constitutional duty.”

—Common Dreams, February 16, 2025

<https://www.commondreams.org/news/trump-quotes-napoleon>



Hundreds protest U.S. President Donald Trump and Elon Musk outside the Michigan Capitol in Lansing, Michigan on February 5, 2025.

The Truth About Immigration

Combating myths in an era of intensified attacks

BY SARAH SMITH

Since Trump's return to office in January, his administration has unleashed an aggressive wave of anti-immigrant attacks—from mass deportations and militarized borders to shuttered asylum programs, anti-immigrant rhetoric, and policies that are intensifying across the political spectrum. While Trump's rhetoric is more overtly hostile, already promising consequences for sanctuary cities, targeting immigrants has been a bipartisan effort; the Biden administration deported over four million people and maintained many policies from Trump's first term. In this climate of escalating attacks on immigrant communities, it's crucial to examine and debunk the persistent myths used to justify these policies and manufacture consent. From false claims about immigrants stealing jobs and draining public resources to inflammatory rhetoric about crime and border "invasions," these myths divide workers and obscure how both parties' advance policies that create and worsen migration crises. By understanding the truths that these myths conceal, we can better unite in the fight against exploitation.

Common myths vs. reality

Myth 1: Immigrants are "stealing" jobs from U.S.-born workers

Reality: Research shows that immigrants typically fill positions that employers struggle to fill with U.S.-born workers. This includes both high-skill jobs in technology and science, as well as labor-intensive work like agriculture and eldercare. Two major trends—higher levels of education and an aging population—have resulted in fewer U.S.-born workers willing or available to take low-paying jobs. Across all industries and occupations, immigrants who are naturalized citi-

zens and noncitizens are outnumbered by workers born in the United States.

Undocumented immigrants make up only about five percent of the U.S. workforce, primarily in service, farming, and construction jobs. Employers hyper-exploit undocumented workers by paying lower wages, denying benefits, and ignoring worker-safety laws, even though all workers deserve equal protections, benefits, and fair wages, regardless of their immigration status. There's deep hypocrisy in how the state aggressively criminalizes and deports undocumented workers while turning a blind eye to the employers who knowingly hire and exploit them. The solution is not to blame immigrant workers but to ensure that all workers have full labor rights and protections under the law.

The myth that immigrants "steal jobs" serves the interests of the rich and powerful by dividing workers against each other, preventing workers from uniting against their common exploitation. When employers can threaten undocumented workers with deportation and deny them basic rights, it drives down wages and working conditions for all workers. So, while U.S. citizens can benefit from relatively low prices on food and other goods produced by immigrant labor, this comes at the cost of worker exploitation. The capitalist state maintains this system by criminalizing immigrant workers while protecting the employers who profit from their labor. This creates a permanent underclass of vulnerable workers who can be more easily exploited while pitting native-born and immigrant workers against each other—all to maximize profits for the capitalist class. The real solution lies in workers of all backgrounds uniting to fight exploitation and demand equal

rights and protections for all.

Myth 2: Undocumented immigrants don't pay taxes and burden public resources, including housing

Reality: Undocumented immigrants contribute significantly to public coffers through multiple channels. They pay taxes whenever they buy taxable goods like gas, clothes, or appliances. They contribute to property taxes—a main source of school funding—when buying or renting housing. The Institute on Taxation and Economic Policy found that undocumented immigrants pay an estimated \$37.3 billion in state and local taxes annually. More than a third of the tax dollars paid by undocumented immigrants go toward payroll taxes for benefits that they'll never receive, like Social Security and Medicare.

Meanwhile, most public benefits are unavailable to undocumented immigrants. They cannot receive welfare, food stamps, Section 8 housing aid, or most other federal assistance. Under the 1996 welfare law, most government programs require proof of documentation. Even immigrants with legal documents must wait more than five years in the United States before becoming eligible.

Politicians often claim that there isn't enough housing for residents, let alone immigrants. This "housing crisis," however, is manufactured by capitalism itself. There are currently 28 vacant homes for every one person experiencing homelessness in the U.S. In cities like New York, countless luxury apartments sit empty while people sleep on the streets. The problem isn't lack of housing—it's that under capitalism, housing is treated as a commodity for profit rather than a human right. This affects all workers, but immigrants often face the worst conditions due to discrimination and lack of documentation.

Far from being a burden, undocumented immigrants are vital to the U.S. economy. Mass deportation would reduce Gross Domestic Product (GDP) by 4.2 percent to 6.8 percent, trillions of dollars lost in a reduction comparable to the Great Recession. Key industries would face severe disruption: construction would lose one in eight workers, agriculture would lose nearly 28 percent of workers in crucial roles, and hospitality would lose one in 14 workers. These losses would trigger widespread unemployment and moreover be catastrophic (an actual burden) to both the U.S. economy and workforce.

Myth 3: There is an “invasion” at the U.S.-Mexico border

Reality: The rhetoric of “invasion” is deliberately inflammatory and false, designed to justify increased militarization and repression at the border. This language portrays migrants—who are primarily families and workers seeking safety or better lives—as an aggressive force, when in reality they are often fleeing violence and poverty. While border encounters did spike in late 2023, reaching over 300,000 in December, this was driven largely by global economic strains during the pandemic. By January 2024, encounters plummeted to about 176,000, eventually falling to a three-year low.

Trump has weaponized this “invasion” narrative by declaring a national emergency at the southern border on his first day back in office. This declaration enables unprecedented militarization, including deployment of U.S. troops and a recent agreement with Mexico to send 10,000 Mexican troops to police the border. Trump’s designation of cartels as “terrorist organizations” further expands military powers and could justify new interventions south of the border. The massive migration from Central America results from decades of neoliberal policies imposed by U.S. imperialism, keeping the region trapped in cycles of poverty and vio-

lence. From military coups to structural adjustment plans through the International Monetary Fund, U.S. policies have transformed Latin America while exacerbating climate degradation and social instability. Both parties have supported these interventionist policies that create the conditions forcing people to flee their homes.

Myth 4: Rising crime rates justify increased policing and deportation of immigrant communities

Reality: The narrative of rising crime and the need for increased policing and deportation is a deliberate fearmongering tactic used to justify state violence against working-class people. While politicians and media outlets stoke panic about violent crime, FBI data shows that from 1990 to 2013, violent crime rates declined 48 percent, and property crime fell 41 percent, even as the immigrant population more than tripled. Additionally, high-immigration areas tend to have lower crime rates. “Sanctuary counties” average 35.5 fewer crimes per 10,000 people compared to non-sanctuary counties. The truth is that not only are immigrants less likely to commit crimes, but there is little evidence to even prove a rise in crime rates.

The targeting of immigrant communities through deportation and police violence is not about public safety—it’s about control and exploitation of immigrants. The same capitalist system that profits from immigrant labor simultaneously uses law enforcement to terrorize these communities.

Immigrants come to this country primarily to work, reunite with family members, or escape dangerous situations—often caused by U.S. imperialism itself. They make up five percent of the workforce and have deep roots in their communities—cooking in restaurants, providing healthcare, fixing infrastructure, building houses, and farming the land. Many haven’t seen their families in their countries of origin for years

or decades as they’ve built lives here.

Claims about targeting “violent offenders” are an attempt to divide working people and justify mass deportation. These campaigns themselves create violence by tearing apart families and communities—parents, children, siblings, friends, classmates, and coworkers who have built lives in the United States. About 5.1 million U.S. citizen children live with an undocumented family member. Separating family members would lead to tremendous emotional stress and could also cause economic hardship for many of these mixed-status families who might lose their breadwinners.

The violence comes not from immigrant communities but from the system that tears families apart while protecting the corporate executives who profit from immigrant labor. Rather than accepting narratives that criminalize any section of the working class, we must unite against the capitalist system, which uses police and deportation to control working people.

Myth 5: It’s easy to enter the U.S. legally today, just as it was for previous generations

Reality: Today’s immigration system is far more complex and restrictive than in the past. For about the first 100 years, the United States maintained an “open immigration system” that allowed any able-bodied immigrant to enter. The biggest obstacle then was simply getting here. And, in fact, it was only in 2003 when the shift occurred where immigration control was placed under the newly created Department of Homeland Security, fundamentally recasting immigration as a “national security” threat rather than a normal part of human movement and social development.

Current immigration policy is highly selective and increasingly hostile to asylum seekers. The Trump administration’s shutdown of the CBP One app—the only way people could apply for U.S. asylum—left hundreds-of-

thousands of immigrants stranded at the border with no way to enter legally. Nearly 280,000 people logged into the app daily, and last year nearly one million people had scheduled appointments. With a single executive order, previously scheduled asylum interviews were canceled without recourse, leaving families separated and people stranded thousands of miles from home with nowhere to go.

The legal immigration process is arduous, complicated, and backlogged. Generally, permission to enter and stay requires one of the following: highly specialized skills with a job offer in an understaffed field, proven political persecution, joining close family already here, or winning the green card lottery. For refugees, screening can take 18 to 24 months and involves multiple background checks, fingerprinting, interviews, and health screenings. Many immigrants who arrived in previous generations would not qualify under current rules.

Myth 6: Trump will be “tough” on immigration while Democrats are too “weak” to secure the border

Reality: The attack on immigration is a thoroughly bipartisan project. Under the Biden administration, deportations increased exponentially, with Biden deporting over four million people, five times more than Trump in his first term, using the same Title 42 policy. Both parties have supported militarizing the border, expanding ICE and Border Patrol budgets, and maintaining aggressive deportation policies.

The Democratic Party and Biden administration increasingly tried/are currently trying to prove they are “tougher” on immigration, proposing increased budgets for ICE and Border Patrol, sending troops to the border, and turning away refugees at the border. This escalation of attacks on immigrants by both major parties reveals how immigration enforcement has become increasingly militarized regardless of which party holds power.

The persistence of anti-immigrant furor is deeply tied to the crisis of neoliberalism and the failure of both parties to provide structural solutions to economic problems. Rather than address the root causes—including U.S. imperialism’s role in creating conditions that force people to flee their homes—both parties scapegoat immigrants for social and economic problems. While Trump’s rhetoric may be more openly hostile, the Democrats have increasingly shifted right on immigration, proving they are just as willing to criminalize immigrants and militarize the border. For the working class to improve its standards of living, increase the share of income, and exact from the capitalist class better benefits and working conditions, the best strategy is to reject both parties’ anti-immigrant policies and build solidarity between immigrants and U.S.-born workers within and across borders.

The path forward

These myths and attacks on immigrants mark the beginning of a broader assault on the working class as a whole and the intensification of capitalist exploitation. The resistance emerging against this offensive—from immigrant communities in the streets to teachers and healthcare workers refusing to comply with anti-immigrant orders—provides a blueprint for future struggles against both Trump and the advance of the Far Right.

Capital flows freely across borders while workers face walls and militarized zones. As socialists, we recognize that open borders for all people is not just an ethical imperative but a necessary step toward genuine international worker solidarity. While corporations operate globally without restriction, workers are denied the right to move and work freely, more often than not, out of necessity due to imperial exploitation and violence forcing them to flee their homes. Our struggle for immigrant rights is therefore inseparable

from our opposition to the imperialism that drives displacement in the first place. We fight not only for the free movement of people today, but also for a world without borders, a world where borders no longer divide the international working class.

And so, dispelling these persistent myths about immigration is crucial, especially as Trump and the Far Right escalate their xenophobic attacks. These myths serve to divide workers, obscure the real causes of economic hardship, and justify increasingly violent state repression against immigrant communities. By exposing these lies, we can better unite workers across borders to fight for immigrant rights and against the capitalist system that creates and perpetuates these crises.

Rather than allowing xenophobic rhetoric to divide us, workers must unite across borders to protect immigrants’ rights and fight against capitalist exploitation. Only through solidarity between immigrant and U.S.-born workers can we effectively fight back against the politicians and corporations that profit from exploitation while trying to pit workers against each other. The path forward requires rejecting both parties’ anti-immigrant policies and building a movement that fights for full rights and dignity for all workers, regardless of immigration status.

This extends from the protests of immigrant communities in the streets to the teachers and healthcare workers who have stated clearly that they will not comply with orders to criminalize immigrants. As we face increased attacks on democratic rights and growing state repression, these workers must join together to fight for immigrants’ rights, fight for a world without borders, and build working-class power against capitalism.

—*Left Voice*, February 15, 2025

<https://www.leftvoice.org/the-truth-about-immigration-combating-myths-in-an-era-of-intensified-attacks/>

Tennessee Immigration Plan Criminalizes Support for Sanctuary

BY ANITA WASHWANI

Wednesday, January 29, 2025—As Governor Bill Lee’s immigration enforcement plan moves swiftly through the Tennessee Legislature, one component of the bill—aimed at arresting local officials who support sanctuary policies for immigrants—drew scrutiny Tuesday.

Included in the governor’s wide-ranging proposal to coordinate with the Trump Administration on mass immigrant detentions and deportations is a provision that creates a Class E felony for public officials who vote to adopt or enact sanctuary policies. Sanctuary policies can shield undocumented immigrants and limit cooperation with enforcement action

The felony charge, punishable by up to six years in prison and a \$3,000 fine, would apply to any public official who votes in favor of a sanctuary law, policy or on non-binding resolutions.

Senator Todd Gardenhire, the Republican chair of the Senate Judiciary Committee, blasted the provision Tuesday as a “dangerous precedent.”

“We are a Republic, and a Republic is one that we elect people to vote the way they feel like is best for the district, the city, county or the state,” he said.

“If we set the precedent of penalizing any elected official for voting their conscience, whether it’s good or bad, then we set a dangerous precedent for the future,” he said.

Democrats characterized the provision as a “slippery slope” that could be invoked in future legislation to criminalize votes on any controversial issue.

“It is alarming we are sitting here talking about felonizing elected officials taking votes on behalf of their constituency,” Senator Heidi Campbell, a Nashville Democrat, said. “Boy, this is a slippery slope and be careful what you wish for if you vote for this.”

Gardenhire was in the minority among Republicans who dominate the Senate Judiciary Committee. They quickly shot down Gardenhire’s efforts to amend the bill to remove criminal penalties before voting to advance it in the legislature.

Sanctuary policies are already prohibited by a 2019 Tennessee law that sought to prevent local governments from adopting sanctuary city status—as some other Democrat-led cities across the country have done.

The 2019 Tennessee law gives citizens the right to file civil suits challenging any jurisdiction’s adoption of sanctuary policies and the state the power to withhold funding over violations.

“When the state banned sanctuary cities, its remedies were to deny cities grants and to seek a court order,” said Ken Paulson, director of the Free Speech Center at Middle Tennessee State University.

Continued on page 23

KNOW YOUR RIGHTS

WHAT TO DO IF IMMIGRATION (ICE) STOPS YOU ON THE STREET OR IN A PUBLIC PLACE

- Do not speak to ICE. Say, “I am exercising my right to remain silent.” Do not answer questions or provide any information about your immigration status or national origin. ICE can use anything you say against you.
- Stay calm. Do not run! ICE will use that as a reason to arrest you. If possible and safe to do so, take photos, video, and/or notes of the encounter.
- Ask if you are being arrested or detained. If ICE agents stop you on the street and do not have a warrant, they cannot arrest you unless they have evidence that you are a non-citizen.
- If they say you are not being arrested, ask if you are free to leave. When they say you may leave, walk away calmly.

IF ICE STOPS YOU WHILE YOU ARE DRIVING:

- If asked, provide your driver’s license, car registration, and proof of insurance.
- Do not answer questions about anything else, including immigration status or national origin. Only state that you are exercising your right to remain silent.
- Refuse consent to a search of yourself or your car.

IF ICE ARRESTS OR DETAINS YOU:

- Do not speak to ICE. Exercise your right to remain silent.
- State that you want to speak to your attorney. **DO NOT ANSWER ANY QUESTIONS OR SIGN ANYTHING WITHOUT YOUR ATTORNEY!**
- Contact your attorney or family member immediately. You have the right to make a telephone call after you are arrested.
- Ask for bond and a hearing before a judge even if ICE says you are not eligible.
- Ask for copies of all your immigration documents.

Trump Plan for Migrant Prison Camp at Guantánamo Bay

BY ELOISE GOLDSMITH

Friday, January 31, 2025—U.S. President Donald Trump’s announcement Wednesday that he is ordering officials to prepare the Guantánamo Bay Naval Base in Cuba to house tens-of-thousands of migrants was met with swift condemnation from rights groups this week.¹

“Guantánamo has long been a stain on America’s human rights record. Using it to detain migrants would be a dangerous escalation of anti-immigrant policies,” wrote Guerline Jozef, executive director at Haitian Bridge Alliance, an immigrant advocacy group, in a statement on Friday.

Trump announced the plan during a signing ceremony for the Laken Riley Act, legislation that strips due process rights from millions of undocumented immigrants, saying, “we have 30,000 beds in Guantánamo to detain the worst criminal illegal aliens threatening the American people.”

A presidential action published by the White House that same day called on the Secretary of Defense and the

Secretary of Homeland Security “to take all appropriate actions to expand the Migrant Operations Center at Naval Station Guantánamo Bay to full capacity to provide additional detention space for high-priority criminal aliens.” The memorandum did not state how many migrants are expected to be detained there.

Vincent Warren, executive director of the Center for Constitutional Rights, called the move a decision that “should horrify us all.”

“The order... sends a clear message: migrants and asylum seekers are being cast as the new terrorist threat, deserving to be discarded in an island prison, removed from legal and social services and supports,” Warren continued.

Congressional Hispanic Caucus Chair Adriano Espaillat (D-N.Y.) said in a Thursday statement that he is “deeply troubled” by the plan, arguing that it raises “serious human rights concerns, risks significant abuses, and would impose unnecessary costs on

taxpayers.” Amnesty International has also decried the announcement.

Guantánamo Bay’s military prison has become associated with the repression and violence carried out by the United States during the “War on Terror” that launched after the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks. It has been used to hold hundreds of foreign terrorism suspects, many without charge, since it opened in 2002.

Guantánamo Bay facilities have also been used to detain asylum seekers, migrants, and refugees for decades, but not in the manner that Trump is now suggesting.

Both Presidents George H.W. Bush and Bill Clinton processed Haitian refugees at Guantánamo Bay, but those were people taken into custody at sea, not brought from the U.S. mainland. And while the Biden administration last year considered processing Haitian migrants there as well, it never followed through with the policy.

Looking ahead, Warren, of the Center for Constitutional Rights, also vowed to fight back, saying his group “has challenged the U.S. government’s use of Guantánamo in all its incarnations, and we, along with our partners, will do so again.”

—Common Dreams, January 31, 2025

<https://www.commondreams.org/news/trump-migrants-guantanamo-critics>



The new camp site where the Trump administration plans to house thousands of undocumented migrants at the U.S. naval base at Guantánamo Bay, Cuba.

¹ The Trump administration has moved more than 175 men from an immigration holding site in Texas to the U.S. military base at Guantánamo Bay. All have been described as Venezuelans who have been issued final deportation orders. “What We Know About the Secretive Migrant Mission at Guantánamo Bay,” February 19, 2025

<https://www.nytimes.com/2025/02/19/us/politics/migrant-mission-guantanamo-bay.html>

Unionization and the Fight Against Trump Starts with a Break from the Democrats

BY ADRIAN ORTEGA

Trump's presidency has quickly made things straightforward for everyone. No more room for liberal and progressive rhetoric and tokenism. No more pretending who he's ruling for. With the cream of the crop of the billionaire class supporting him and a Republican majority in every government branch, Democrats are quietly falling in line. Meanwhile, as Trump's barrage of executive orders target the working class, trade unions like the Teamsters and the UAW have expressed support for Trump's protectionist agenda. Their leaders have pledged to work with him and have come out against foreign work visas and in support of tariffs. This turnaround from last year, when they spoke about international labor solidarity and called Trump a "scab," is evidence of two intertwined factors: the contradictions of America's imperialist economy and a political strategy dependent on the Democratic Party. Understanding this is paramount to the efforts to organize new sectors of labor and revitalize the labor movement.

In a recent article in *Dollars & Sense*, "Workers Are Self-Organizing," Eric Blanc writes that since the pandemic, workers have been unionizing by the hundreds-of-thousands, even though union leaders are barely supporting any new organizing. "Labor's coffers are higher than ever, soaring in 2021 to a record-high \$13.4 billion in liquid assets," he writes. Blanc argues for a multibillion-dollar investment in unionization efforts "to test the potential for reversing decades of decline" in union membership. He doesn't mention, however, that last year alone, major unions in the U.S. spent a historic total of over \$250 million in contributions to individual campaigns, PACs, soft money, and outside groups, which overwhelmingly went to the Democrats.

These priorities by the unions aren't shared by the left-wing spectrum of the working class. Biden and Harris's efforts to facilitate and justify war and genocide in the Middle East opened divisions between left-wing workers on one side and union leaders and the Biden administration on the other. The ongoing momentum in unionization that Blanc refers to cannot be unpegged from a political shift to the left among critical organizers and unionists within the labor movement. The fact that such views might also have found a wider audience is partially reflected in a lower turnout for Harris in the last elections.

It would be ideal if rescuing the unions were as simple as reallocating financial resources. But this perspective fails to recognize that there is a fundamental problem with the political strategies employed by those who have led the unionization efforts: outside the trade unions, these include groups around Democratic Socialists of America (DSA) and *Labor Notes* who are influenced by politicians such as Bernie Sanders and the progressive caucus within the Democratic Party.

It's been at least seven years since the uptick in workers' militancy began in the U.S.—counting the teachers' strikes in 2018 as the starting point. One metric to measure the outcome of those years is that the rate of unionization to the total workforce has dropped overall despite unionization efforts.

Mainstream unionization has largely been driven by a strategy of reforming the Democratic Party. In a recent interview with *Jacobin Radio*, *Catalyst* editor Vivek Chibber made the case for this perhaps most clearly:

"You cannot hang your hat on changing the Democratic Party. What you can do is fight within it to gain traction for yourself. But you have to use that party to build real organizations of the poor that are independent of that party. If you can do that, then maybe the next electoral cycle we can actually gain some traction. ... The Left can reconstitute itself and fight within the party to drag it, kicking and screaming, towards a more populist agenda."

To be clear, what Chibber describes is not a socialist perspective—the socialization of wealth through the



Left, UAW President Shawn Fain and President Joe Biden, right.

abolition of the wage system—but a populist one, as he explicitly states. From that angle, unionization becomes a lever to pressure the Dems into a redistributive populism, which in turn helps build organizations that pressure the Dems more, and so on. Left-wing populism is not particularly new or exclusive to the U.S.—it’s been central, for instance, to the political process in Latin America for decades—but the salient point is that it ties the unions’ success to the fate of the Democratic Party. When people like Sanders and UAW president Shawn Fain claim that the problem is “corporate greed,” they conceal the fact that corporations and government work together. The billionaire class that supports Trump wouldn’t have become so without government funding and contracts, tax credits, institutional research, anti-union legislation, the police, the Bretton Woods institutions that allow them to exploit cheap labor abroad, and the military as the bailiff of their investments overseas—all facilitated during both Democratic and Republican administrations.

There is a structural logic to this. American capitalism suffers from a chronic debilitating condition. Marx explained that as capitalism matures, there’s an innate tendency in the system to lose profitability (even though total profits might keep growing;) as the technological weight of the economy grows, total capital invested tends to grow compared to capital spent on wages, which means that less surplus value is produced; therefore the average rate of profit tends to decline over time. In the end, what drives capital is how much profit workers produce compared to how much is paid in wages. This tendency of the average rate of profit to fall is what in principle prompts capital to be exported to other nations in search of higher rates of profit—the basis of Lenin’s classic idea of imperialism. As an economic system, though, imperialism also tries to

lift the rate of profit at home, primarily by increasing the rate of labor exploitation, which requires deeper ideological divisions among the workforce and higher levels of concentration of capital and wealth that in turn lead to gaping socioeconomic inequalities. The end of neoliberalism came about as rates of profit in foreign countries fell following massive imperialist investment, which has increased capital’s attention on the extraction of surplus or extra profits domestically.

**Mainstream
unionization has largely
been driven by a strategy
of reforming the
Democratic Party.**

At the same time, the “conscious and explicit foundation” of every trade union, wrote Marx, is to uphold “the value of labor power” as a commodity for sale. To counteract the fall in the rate of profit, the general tendency of capitalism is “to sink the average standard of wages, or to push the value of labor more or less to its minimum limit.” This limit is not determined by any human considerations, but by what capital needs. Today’s union leaders accept this premise because they see their fate as pegged to that of the corporations through their political ties to the government. Hence their multimillion-dollar support for the Democratic Party and their willingness to “work” with the new administration. This is not that different from when union tops push sellout contracts on their membership to remain business-responsible and dependable, or when they oppose political demands that jeopardize their relationship with the government. Or when people like Eric Blanc urge you to vote and endorse Democratic imperialism in exchange for a “friendly” NLRB. This is why

unions have been under relentless attack for decades. So even if you spend a billion dollars on union organizing efforts, if the premise is to build the governing bastions of an imperialist economic system, the logic of the system itself will ultimately render your efforts counterproductive. It is this conundrum that has led unions to where they are now: “Mostly, they’ve been managing their own decline” for the last 40 years, as the late union organizer Jane McAlevey wrote.

McAlevey also disagreed with the principle of class independence. Instead, her popularity reflected the early stages of the current labor movement; her brand of unionism extended a bridge between labor organizing and pro-Democratic politics. This is in the populist playbook, and it is part of the broader strategy Chibber articulates, to tie social and economic struggle to a political goal that is alien to workers *via* illusions in the state. Thus, McAlevey’s emphasis on electing Democrats to ensure the favors of governments and state agencies also meant playing by the rules to avoid alienating the Democrats; this leads to confusion when the rules suddenly change. The Right is changing the rules as we speak. Trump’s threat of mass layoffs and his illegal offer to buy out federal workers, for instance, is in part an attempt to undermine public unions. As the rules of the game change, progressive business unionism will prove itself to be ever more toothless in the face of mounting attacks by an emboldened capitalist Right. So, what’s the alternative?

Every organizer knows how to spot the most heartfelt causes among their coworkers, how to identify “organic leaders,” how to size up the bosses’ strength, and how to effectively mobilize the workforce in favor of workers’ collective interests. So, it’s time to put these skills into practice as part of an independent workers’ strategy. New editions of *Capital* and workers’ study circles have sprung up in the last few years trying to find alternative answers.

As Marx argued, “In its merely economic action capital is the stronger side,” therefore, the “necessity of general political action” by labor.

Lenin explored this in a relevant way in *What Is to Be Done?* When the labor movement is in a stage of “primitiveness”—independent isolated organizing efforts and study circles—economic struggle, political agitation, and long-term strategic political formation cannot be decoupled. Workers’ spontaneous self-organization and successful strikes is what has stoked the fire within labor. To capitalize on this, workers should give their struggle a new political meaning. Socialist workers understand that by withholding their labor, they are encumbering capital itself as a social relation. When workers raise political demands, socialist demands more specifically, they broaden their field of action and struggle. This is the first step in creating political power structures, networks of political work across society.

When socialist workers protest against racist police brutality or ICE deportations, we’re questioning not just the blunt use of state force but also the inherent racism that lets capital extract surplus profits from our class siblings. When we defend abortion rights, we’re indicting a system that wants to put on the shoulders of female workers the costs of social reproduction by excluding them from economic life and politics. It is in this process of self-enriching outreach that labor finds a growing sense of defiance and the organic need to associate in political parties independent of the establishment.

Trump’s presidency will continue to pose this question more often than not. With a real-estate mogul leading the largest reactionary charge since Reagan, it’s no coincidence his protectionist mandate is focused on bringing back investment, *i.e.*, ramping up the price of land through more investment on fixed capital, cutting corporate

taxes, and supercharging capitalism’s international tendency toward economic wars and, ultimately, militarism. This will place workers in America at a crossroads. With a contracted global market and restricted access to immigrant and cheap foreign labor, any plans for domestic growth, regardless of how successful they are, will be contingent on higher rates of exploitation. Hence, labor has a choice to make. It can find the silver lining in Trump’s national-chauvinistic protectionism, as *Labor Notes* suggests; it can peddle the same protectionism that Sanders used to denounce H1B foreign working visas to try to seek a common ground with MAGA; and it can join the union leadership’s protectionist bipartisan effort, as it tries to “rebuild” the Democratic Party while unions continue to dwindle into oblivion. Or the alternative: workers can take the political process into their own hands.

Left-wing populism is not particularly new or exclusive to the U.S.—it’s been central, for instance, to the political process in Latin America for decades—but the salient point is that it ties the unions’ success to the fate of the Democratic Party.

The socioeconomic basis of the bipartisan establishment in the U.S. is no longer the same as it was a decade ago. Protectionism today means brutal fiscal austerity and the costs for workers of potential tariff hikes and regressive tax cuts. It means gutting public education, whatever public health still exists, Medicare and Medicaid, massive layoffs in the state sector, the effective branding of fired workers

employed under Diversity Equity Inclusion (DEI) programs, and so on. This is a blunt assault on the Great Society and post-civil rights movement reforms that remain. And it will not go unnoticed across whole layers of society. Nor will attacks on abortion clinics, trans people, and immigrants. Nor will potential recessionary pressures as trade gets disrupted and the dollar gets overvalued. Nor will class struggle internationally, whether it’s in response to direct imperialist hostilities by the U.S. or to governments who acquiesce and try to pass Trump’s bill to their working populations.

The decomposition of the political class in the U.S. is further ahead than the consolidation of the working class as a viable political alternative. But the conditions of the next several years can speed up the latter as long as organizers, workers, and activists don’t get caught up in ruses like the “dirty break.” Socialist study circles, political debate, and theoretical work go hand in glove with union organizing, collective bargaining, grassroots organization, mutual aid, and political agitation. The emerging and young labor movement, as well as the Marxist Left, have much work to do ahead.

The unions’ continued reliance on Democratic pressure politics is tied to a political strategy that embodies interests that are antagonistic to workers’ efforts to unionize and break free from decades of painful deceit. If this doesn’t change, the labor movement will suffer both every setback and victory that the Democrats have. It is by doing away with the mirage that this is just another electoral cycle, and that pressure politics is the only possible alternative, that workers, organizers, and students can begin coalescing organizationally, politically, and even theoretically, thus advancing a genuine socialist alternative.

—*Left Voice*, February 15, 2025

<https://www.leftvoice.org/unionization-and-the-fight-against-trump-starts-with-a-break-from-the-democrats>

Is the U.S. Labor Movement Ready for Trump 2.0?

BY JAMES DENNIS HOFF AND JASON KOSLOWSKI

January 20, 2025—When Trump was announced as the winner of the 2024 election, the stock market went wild, scoring the fifth biggest one-day advance in its history. In the words of the *Wall Street Journal* itself, capitalists were salivating at the thought of another Trump presidency.

This investor enthusiasm for Trump has several sources, not least the likelihood of further tax cuts on corporate profits and capital gains earnings; but perhaps the biggest reason for this “irrational exuberance” is the expectation that Trump will once again attack labor. The working class has been on the rise for years now, striking and often winning major gains, much to the consternation of Wall Street and tech billionaires like Marc Andreessen, Jeff Bezos, and Elon Musk. From the massive UAW strike in 2023 to the more recent strikes at Boeing, Amazon, and Starbucks, workers are rising up and organizing in numbers and levels of militancy not seen in decades. The ruling class knows that Trump will attack this movement, and this is why they are much more enthusiastically throwing their weight behind him this time. This is almost certainly a major reason why Musk helped Trump to win in November, and why Trump’s

support from the ruling class, particularly in the tech sector where resistance to unions is fierce, is much wider and deeper than it was in 2016.

For far too long we’ve accepted that the rules of fighting capitalists can be set by the capitalists themselves.

Building a labor movement that can fight these attacks and grow stronger in the process will require not only a radical break with the business unionism of the past, but the active organization and mobilization of the entire working class. It’s up to rank-and-file workers to protect ourselves, not just against the hammer blows on unions that are coming our way, but against the devastating attacks on the working class meant to divide our power, like mass deportations and bigoted anti-trans legislation. That’ll require organizing ourselves from the bottom up, and pushing back on our union leaders, to be ready to strike against Trump and his administration, breaking

restrictive labor laws to coordinate across the working class in self-defense. It’s up to us, in other words, to reclaim the power we hold, to use the weapons we wield as workers to defend ourselves and build our power.

The coming storm

The almost certain attacks on the still burgeoning new labor movement by the Trump administration will come in a few different forms.

To begin with, Trump will likely make big changes to the direction of the Department of Labor, making it harder for many workers to qualify for overtime—in other words, increasing the profits employers can extract from their workforce. Following the counsel of his court jesters and deregulation advocates like Elon Musk and Vivek Ramaswamy, Trump will also likely push to ease child worker restrictions and attack workplace safety rules imposed by OSHA. These same advisors also want him to eliminate unions for government employees completely. Ramaswamy, for instance, who until recently had been tapped, along with Elon Musk, to lead the absurdly conceived new “Department of Government Efficiency,” has already been calling for ending collective bargaining agreements for public teachers’ unions entirely.

Another way Trump will likely attack labor is by restructuring the National Labor Relations Board, or the NLRB. That’s the “high court” in the government for resolving conflicts between new or established unions and employers. But the NLRB also sets precedent that can have dramatic effects on the ability of unions and workers to win legal recognition and the bosses’ ability to wage anti-union campaigns. With regard to the NLRB, Trump has already played his hand toward what kind of labor policy he



Partners in crime.

plans to implement as President. While his nomination of Lori Chavez-DeRemer for Secretary of Labor was seen by some as a sign that he may be amenable to a more pro-worker approach and possibly open to the influence of conservative labor leaders like the Teamsters' Sean O'Brien, it's more likely that her appointment was little more than a transactional *quid pro quo* for O'Brien's support and a cynical attempt to hide his true intentions toward labor.

But, while Trump's labor secretary may be more pro-worker than expected (though that certainly remains to be seen), the NLRB is where the real power to attack labor lies. And Trump and his congressional allies, including Senators Kyrsten Sinema and Democrat Joe Manchin, have already started laying the foundations for a Trump-controlled labor board. On December 11, Biden's largely routine re-nomination of NLRB Chairperson Lauren McFerran, which would have theoretically allowed her to serve until after the midterms, was narrowly rejected by the Senate. This means that Trump will be able to appoint two new board members as soon as he takes office, giving him and his allies a 3-2 advantage on the NLRB, which could potentially allow them to overturn any number of labor protections and to make new decisions that could set the board's policy for years or even decades to come. Among the most important of these perhaps is the Cemex decision¹, which the Teamsters have recently used to organize at Amazon. If Cemex is overturned by the NLRB, and there seems to be a good chance that could happen, that would be a slap in the face to Teamsters leader O'Brien, who helped elect Trump.

However, Trump's cozy relationship with the rabidly anti-union Musk suggests that even bigger challenges to the federal government's oversight of labor could be in the works. Musk and his company SpaceX, for instance, have already filed a lawsuit challenging the

constitutionality of the National Labor Relations Act (NLRA). The very existence of the NLRA—a set of rules that codifies the right to strike, among other things—was a concession from the ruling class in the roiling labor battles of the 1930s. A sympathetic circuit-court judiciary and Supreme Court (possibly filled with a majority of Trump appointees) could conceivably take moves to gut or to overturn the NLRA completely. This is something that union leader Sara Nelson has described as a very serious threat. Musk's lawsuit also seeks to give more power to the Executive to remove members of the NLRB based on the idea of the separation of powers, a move that, if successful, could mean that Trump would be able to fire the entirety of the NLRB staff and start again with all of his own appointees or just get rid of the board all together. Whether or not Trump would prefer an NLRB he controls entirely or no NLRB at all is still a live question, but it seems likely that Trump and his allies would prefer, if possible, to remake the board into a stick with which to punish labor, and that is the likely outcome we should prepare for.

**Stopping Trump here
calls for a willingness
of workers to strike
in solidarity with
immigrants and against
the state and ICE—
technically against
the law.**

Meanwhile, with Republican majorities in both houses of Congress, there will be little chance for labor's few supporters to respond if worker protections are gutted through the courts. Trump, for his part, has promised to veto any pro-worker legislation that might make it through Congress, specifically mentioning the PRO Act, which, though a

mixed bag in terms of workers' power, would theoretically make union organizing easier. This means that the PRO Act will not even be on the table for the next four years, which will in turn mean that it will have been more than a decade that it has failed to be passed despite labor's incredible investments in trying to get it through. In other words, labor fought and lobbied and distracted itself from real organizing and work actions and class struggle for six years to get absolutely nothing. This shows why the working class cannot trust the state to fight its battles for it and cannot continue to rely upon laws and so-called rights that can be taken away at the drop of a hat.

But the threats to the labor movement from Trump go far beyond the Department of Labor and the NLRB. It's no secret that Trump is organizing the machinery of the state for mass deportations. That's a move aimed not only at immigrants, but also at dividing and weakening the labor movement itself and is nothing short of a headlong attack in the class war.

There are about 11 million undocumented workers in this country. About eight million of them are in the workforce—often hyper-exploited, because of their legal precarity, but they still have the legal right to union protections. Many are already organized in unions, like in those for precarious, low-paid hotel and food workers. When Trump mobilizes the state to go for these workers and their families—and, as he says, place them in camps to prepare for mass deportation—he'll be attacking a key force of the working class itself. It's a move not just to satisfy his far-right base and deflect fury from the ruling class; it's meant to divide the working class from itself, and to split its power through appeals to nationalism. It's a move to weaken the working class—which even some unions and workers are falling for. Sean O'Brien's chauvinist response to the H1B visa debate and his flirtation with the

Republican Party (he attended Trump's inauguration) is a prime example.

And make no mistake, the attack on workers is far from limited to this country. One of the first people to call Trump to congratulate him was Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. There's little doubt, despite the recent ceasefire, that Trump will continue Biden and Harris's policy of arming and funding Israel's genocide in Palestine. Again, the hope is that the working class will turn a blind eye, and instead of building international power and solidarity, accept its own weakness and divisions in the name of "American interests" abroad.

Take the fight to the bosses and politicians

If unions are going to survive, and maybe even thrive under Trump, they will have to radically rethink their relationship to labor law, the working class, and the state.

Trump's victory shows that it is folly for labor to think that it can grow or build strength by throwing its weight behind the Democrats or that it can negotiate a better terrain for labor struggle by handing its power to organize over to institutions of the ruling class's state, like the NLRB. The NLRB wasn't just invented in the 1930s to channel, control, and tame labor, a role it has played since then; it's also a political football that each new administration shapes to its will. Our labor unions poured countless millions of dollars and endless amounts of people power into Harris's campaign, and all we got was a lousy "Trump is a Scab" T-shirt. Obviously, business as usual is not working, and unions will have to do more than just organize; we are going to have to learn to be disruptive again.

For too long, the labor movement, and many of its biggest supporters on the Left, including *Labor Notes*, the Democratic Socialists of America, and *Jacobin*, have operated under the assumption that the path to labor's victory is mainly through steady and

patient organizing of greater and greater numbers of new workers in new industries into new or existing labor unions—that is, unions as an end in themselves. This strategy—though it has, for instance, led to a rapid increase in graduate student worker organizing at colleges and universities across the country—has nonetheless failed to even maintain, much less increase, the total level of union density in the United States. This is in large part because even relatively robust increases in new labor organizing simply cannot keep pace with the number of new workers entering into the labor market. In fact, despite all of the new organizing and labor victories in 2023, total labor density in the United States actually fell from 10.1 percent in 2022 to 10.0 percent of the workforce by the end of 2023—a record low. Whether or not this trend will continue remains to be seen, but there is no reason to believe, without some major increase in class struggle, that it won't.

Building a labor movement that can fight these attacks and grow stronger in the process will require not only a radical break with the business unionism of the past, but the active organization and mobilization of the entire working class.

Furthermore, the success or failure of this strategy of unionization as an end in itself has been highly dependent upon the legal, political, and economic environment in which organizing drives have taken place. The uptick in labor organizing, and successful petition filings, since 2020 is so far proving

to be relatively durable (that's a good thing!) However, this organizing momentum was based on a whole set of contingencies. Perhaps the most important of these were the pandemic and the Black Lives Matter movement, which led to both an uptick in class struggle and an awareness of the centrality of labor, as well as the life and death importance of labor unions to protect worker safety. But the tight labor market and a hot economy after the pandemic were also significant factors contributing to the increase in new labor union organizing. So was more worker-friendly labor legislation, particularly coming out of the NLRB—but that was a reaction to the rise of class struggle and Biden's attempts to curry favor with the working class for another election campaign. There is no reason to assume that these trends will continue.

Already the economy is showing signs of cooling, and unemployment is slowly beginning to creep back up as a result of Fed rate hikes that have attempted to control inflation. This is particularly true for workers in the tech industry, which accounted for half of the job losses in the U.S. in August and about a quarter of total job losses in 2024. Likewise, as Trump takes office, it is highly likely that he will undo many of the recent "labor-friendly" policies decided by the NLRB and impose rules that will make it considerably more difficult to gain official recognition of new labor unions. All of this suggests that the old plan of playing along to get along is going to be even less feasible under Trump.

Without a radical shift in strategy, labor may wind up squandering the relative advantages it still has.

These include record-high levels of popular support for unions, an increasingly pro-labor workforce made up of young workers ready to organize, and the likelihood of increased class struggle as Trump attempts to carry out the worst of his proposed agenda against workers,

immigrants, women, and trans people. A plank of Trump's platform is the mass deportation of immigrants—which is not just an attack on immigrants, but also a frontal assault on the working class itself, to divide and weaken it. None of our union leaders have spoken yet of this threat. But stopping it requires a labor movement willing to strike for more than its immediate needs at its own workplaces. Stopping Trump here calls for a willingness of workers to strike in solidarity with immigrants and against the state and ICE—technically against the law. Here, again, relying on the state to support unions will weaken us, not strengthen us.

And not just for immigrants—we'll need to strike for Gaza too. Ceasefire or not, Trump has made no secret of the fact that he'll continue and intensify the Biden administration's policy of sending billions in bullets, bombs, and blank checks to Israel for apartheid, ethnic cleansing, and genocide. Union leaders like UAW president Shawn Fain have already spoken fine words about the need to stop the mass killings by the state of Israel—but those words have not been followed up with action. And that stance of inaction effectively chains the U.S. working class to the imperialist policy of the ruling rich and their politicians. It also accepts the prerogatives of the state and the law, accepting the legitimacy of law to forbid solidarity and political strikes and to dictate where, when, and how the working class can use its own weapons to fight back.

Even a single such high-profile victory could inspire millions of other workers and set off a landslide of new union organizing. But even more importantly, it would lay the ground for larger cross-union political strikes. Shawn Fain raised the specter of a general strike last year when he urged labor unions across the country to collectively agree to negotiate contracts that end on May 1, 2028, allowing them to legally strike together. But Fain has also unfortunately said that he plans to work with Trump, once again

normalizing labor's relationship with the state and undermining the possibility and power of any such general strike. But we cannot wait until 2028. We have to organize such mass strikes ourselves now as part of a united front of the entire working class.

Seizing the power that labor has means, first and foremost, rejecting, and challenging at every turn, all of the limits on solidarity strikes, political strikes, and recognition strikes imposed on labor unions by the state.

In other words, now isn't just the time to expand our unions. It's also—and it's centrally—the time to relearn how we fight. For far too long we've accepted that the rules of fighting capitalists can be set by the capitalists themselves.

We're like a boxer who lets his opponent set all the ground rules of a match for him, letting him tie one of our arms behind our back, and cover one eye, before every fight. No fighter in their right mind would agree to this. We shouldn't either.

Breaking the law

To make the most of its advantages, labor needs to learn how to break the law again. That's no small task.

Trump is preparing his mass deportations already, and his NLRB moves will almost certainly make it more difficult to win union elections. Labor cannot afford to waste its resources in drawn out legal battles trying to combat those laws with lawyers or to win official recognition for new unions through NLRB-run elections. Trump is going to stack the cards against new unionization.

But laws are only as powerful as we allow them to be.

Seizing the power that labor has means, first and foremost, rejecting, and challenging at every turn, all of the limits on solidarity strikes, political strikes, and recognition strikes imposed on labor unions by the state. These things are illegal because the ruling class and its politicians fear them and recognize their power to disrupt the flow of profit. Since employers will most certainly attempt to draw out and defeat official union recognition elections, workers looking to form new unions will have to strike and strike hard in order to force employers to recognize and bargain for first contracts. And if the rest of labor is really serious about increasing labor density and building real labor power, they will have to be prepared to mobilize in defense of those workers and their struggles to form new unions. This means joining picket lines, providing strike funds to organizing workers, and in many cases, organizing walkouts and strikes in solidarity with them.

The main set of rules for labor about when and how to strike were laid down as law in key legislation in the 1930s (the 1933 National Industrial Recovery Act and 1935 NLRA) and then again in the 1940s, with Taft Hartley. And these were born of politicians facing down mass worker struggle throwing the economy into chaos: workers demanding control over their own labor and over the terms of that work. The explicit goal of those laws was, in the words of the framers of these bills themselves, to tame labor, to ensure the flow of profits for the capitalists with as little disruption as possible. This was the logic behind the creation of the NLRB itself. In other words, labor law and bodies like the NLRB were created not just as concessions but as state organs to monitor, control, and tame the working class. Neither labor law nor the NLRB are our friends.

Reclaiming the power of the working class, then, means embracing a certain disillusionment—seeing that the labor law we’ve trusted in for so long won’t save us. Building up both the size of our unions as well as the power of those unions will mean building up our fighting muscles once more, regardless of the master’s rules.

Here are a few examples of what we mean.

Right now, it’s illegal to strike in solidarity with other industries’ workers; to strike for political reasons like war; and to block scabs trying to get into our workplaces to keep the profits flowing. And why would Democrats and Republicans alike work together, like in the 1947 Taft Hartley bill, to stop workers from doing these things? It’s because they work and build far more power among workers over the flow of profits, than campaigning for Democrats or “lawyering up.” In fact, in the 1930s, during one of the high points of class struggle in this country, blocking scabs was a key tactic to protect a strike and help it win. All these striking tactics could become sparks needed to show the power of unions, drive new union expansions, and increase the fighting power of the whole working class.

And labor is already starting to remember this power, and this ability to break the law that our masters hand down to us from on high. 2018 saw a wave of strikes, of teachers, bus drivers, and other kinds of workers, sweep the country, starting in West Virginia. And when they started, they were illegal—public sector workers are forbidden to strike in that state.

But all too often, our union leaders themselves are standing in our way. We’ve already talked about how the dominant strategy of union leaders for decades has been to side with Democrats—or, like O’Brien, with Republicans—in the hopes that the politicians will give us better laws to help us organize more easily. This has

been a dismal failure; the plummeting rate of unionization alone is proof. But now, even our more militant leaders like Fain and Sarah Nelson are trying to run that playbook again: Fain speaking at the Democratic National Convention to support Harris; Nelson supporting Biden and Harris, and so on.

It’s time to stop reheating the leftovers and try something else. And “something else” means not waiting for better laws, but breaking them, organizing ourselves, disobeying our union leaders when we need to do so.

It’s time to stop reheating the leftovers and try something else. And “something else” means not waiting for better laws, but breaking them, organizing ourselves, disobeying our union leaders when we need to do so. In other words, to put up the fight we’ll need to put up against Trump, we can’t wait for our leaders to lead us. But we can build our power from the bottom up, organizing ourselves in our workplaces, in committees of the rank and file, in assemblies to coordinate ourselves, to fight Trump now, and not wait for Harris 2.0 and the next “most important election of our lifetime.”

It’s true, and important, that Fain is calling for a general strike in 2028. He’s the first union leader to do that in a very long time. But here’s the problem: we can’t wait, sitting on our hands, and then suddenly flip the switch of “general strike” in three years. That’s like a marathon runner who trains to run 26 miles by resting on the couch to save her energy.

You get ready to run by running. You get ready to fight by fighting. Existential threats face the working class of this country and the world: mass deportation, genocide in the Middle East, climate catastrophe, all in the name of more profits. And all those profits are extracted from us. We can fight back, we can use our real power, and that’s going to mean breaking the laws that separate us from our power.

Just yesterday, Shawn Fain wrote in *The Washington Post* that he’s ready to work with Trump. After all the tough talk about solidarity with immigrants, he’s saying cooperation is the order of the day, just so long as Trump helps protect American jobs, first and foremost. In other words, for the tasks that lie ahead, our leaders probably won’t help. We’ll have to do it ourselves and drag them into the fight.

—*Left Voice*, January 20, 2025

<https://www.leftvoice.org/is-the-us-labor-movement-ready-for-trump-2-0/>

1 National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) decision on Cemex Construction Materials Pacific, LLC: When a union requests recognition on the basis that a majority of employees in an appropriate bargaining unit have designated the union as their representative, an employer must either recognize and bargain with the union or promptly file an RM petition seeking an election. However, if an employer who seeks an election commits any unfair labor practice that would require setting aside the election, the petition will be dismissed, and—rather than re-running the election—the Board will order the employer to recognize and bargain with the union.

<https://www.nlr.gov/news-outreach/news-story/board-issues-decision-announcing-new-framework-for-union-representation>

South Africa Starved Dozens of Trapped Miners

BY SHOLA LAWAL

Thursday, January 16, 2025—A months-long standoff between South African authorities and illegal miners trapped in an abandoned mine in the town of Stilfontein ended this week with at least 78 people killed—likely from starvation, rights groups say.

On Thursday, South African police confirmed it ended a rescue operation launched on Monday following a court order. Authorities said there were no more survivors or bodies in the deep, multilevel mine, according to cameras sent down to sweep the area.

In total, 246 survivors, many of them appearing gaunt and emaciated, were rescued.

Rights groups have criticized the government for failing to prevent what they are calling a “massacre” after security officials cut off food and other essential supplies to the miners for several weeks and delayed a rescue operation.

Here’s what to know about the months-long standoff and the complicated rescue operation:

What happened?

Since September, hundreds—possibly thousands—of suspected illegal miners were believed to be holed up in the vast tunnel network of the Stilfontein mine without adequate food or water, after police surrounded the mine without warning and stopped supplies from getting in.

The Stilfontein mine in Northwest Province comprises multiple shafts or entryways several kilometers apart underground. Police officers sealed off some of the exits and claimed the miners could emerge from others, but activists said the entryways were too far apart, and that the police had, in effect, trapped the men.

Although miners’ families and community members pleaded for an official rescue mission, authorities

declined. Minister in the Presidency Khumbudzo Ntshavheni said the goal was to “smoke them out.” That statement prompted criticism from human rights groups who warned of possible mass deaths as several days passed without the miners receiving food.

A court order in October finally forced the police to allow community members to send some food down and pull some miners up the shafts using ropes. Authorities at the time put the number of miners at between 350 and 400.

Several people were rescued in sporadic and slow attempts by community members using ropes. In November, authorities said they would begin assessing the possibilities of an assisted evacuation using cages after a body was sent up on the ropes.

Civil rights groups sued the government in January after videos surfaced showing piles of dead bodies in the mine. In the court petitions, recently rescued miners revealed that the conditions underground forced people to eat cockroaches and human flesh and

that some people trying to escape had fallen to their death.

Last week, a judge ordered the police to rescue all the miners. On Monday, a specialist mining rescue company began dropping a small cage down the shaft. Two community members volunteered to go down the shaft, as police officials had claimed it would be unsafe.

In total, 324 people including survivors and dead bodies were retrieved. Some families say they are still looking for their loved ones.

Thandeka Zinzi, whose brother was in the mine but has not been seen. “It’s a very difficult moment for us,” she told *Al Jazeera*, as she attempted to get to the site.

What’s the problem with illegal mining in South Africa?

Informal miners, known locally as “zama zamas,” or hustlers, comb some 6,000 formerly functional gold mines looking for gold deposits or other precious metal deposits. The sites are either officially closed or have had



A miner was rescued from an abandoned gold mine in Stilfontein, South Africa.

mining halted because they were deemed unsafe or non-viable. Other times, informal miners have targeted functional mines.

Operations like these have existed for decades and cost South Africa \$1 billion yearly in lost revenue. They are carried out almost entirely by poor, undocumented people from neighboring countries. So far, in the Stilfontein case, officials said most are from Mozambique, Zimbabwe and Lesotho, with a few from South Africa.

Zama zamas have a bad reputation in the country and are often viewed as criminals. Officials say the illegal trade is controlled by criminal syndicates that fight one another in gang wars or attack the police. Often, these crime bosses also exploit miners or traffic people into forced mine work.

To get some gold, miners travel thousands of kilometers into old, unstable shafts and use basic materials like picks and buckets to scoop gold ore. Often, they remain underground for months and rely on help from contractors outside who pull them up with ropes for a fee and send them supplies like food, water, and cigarettes.

Why did South Africa's government not act sooner?

South African police spokesperson Athlende Mathe said on Wednesday that the deaths recorded were not the police's fault.

"The kingpins, those that are behind these operations, are the ones that should be held accountable," she said.

Officials have also blamed the Buffelsfontein Gold Mine (BGM), which owns the rights to the mine in Stilfontein, saying it should have secured the mines and ensured it removed trespassers.

In September, at the start of the operation, authorities said they were going to wait until all the miners exited the mine and would then arrest them. Their crack-down was part of the police and mili-

tary's joint operation called "Close the Hole" or "*Vala Umgodi*" in Zulu, which was launched in December 2023.

The operation involves closing off shafts or entrances to mines, cutting off provisions from the outside, and forcing miners out of the ground. Officials said more than 1,000 miners had exited mines across multiple cities during the operation, and that explosives, firearms, and more than \$2 million in cash had been seized.

A group of 14 miners, including a teenager, escaped from an unsealed shaft in the Stilfontein mine in November. The men said they trekked for hours to get there. One man told *Al Jazeera* at the time that people he left behind were dying, and that "some are already dead." Another added that "a boss" in the shaft had tried to prevent them from leaving with a gun.

However, police officials doubled down on their refusal to launch a rescue operation, insisting that the escape proved the miners were not in distress and were able to get out on their own. Activists pointed out that it would take some people days to get to open shafts, and that too many were already weak without food and water.

What have rights groups said?

Rights groups and community members have condemned the government's slowness to act, blaming the deaths of the 78 miners on the police and government ministers.

"We are not really excited," Mzukusi Jam, a community activist told *Al Jazeera*. "They did not act willingly—pressure was exerted on them."

A miners' rights group, MACUA (Mining Affected Communities United in Action) said the crisis was a "massacre, if not a genocide," because the government's "intention" to use starvation as a tool to force out the miners encroached on their right to life.

"The fact of the matter is their calculated actions, how they responded to the humanitarian crisis, resulted in the

mass deaths," spokesperson Magnificent Mndebele told *Al Jazeera*.

Officials did not consider the conditions underground before launching *Vala Umgodi*, he added, and when facts were presented, the police disregarded the human rights implications, while state agencies deployed delay tactics for two months.

The group, one of many that petitioned the authorities several times during the months-long standoff, was instrumental in securing the court order that led to this week's rescue operation.

In its petition to the courts, MACUA presented testimonies from recently rescued miners who said the conditions underground by October were so dire that some were eating toothpaste. The men added that an intense fight broke out when authorities allowed community members to send food down, as there wasn't enough to go around.

"We cannot become a society where we allow police officers to facilitate the death or the starvation and dehydration of people, regardless of whatever activities they are doing underground," Jessica Lawrence, with the organization Lawyers for Human Rights, said on Wednesday.

Separately, MACUA's Mndebele also accused government officials of exploiting anti-migrant sentiments already rife in South Africa.

"Because they are illegal miners and are foreigners, they are not worthy of any human rights—that was the approach of the state," he said. "To be blunt, the state was xenophobic and racist."

What's next?

Officials said the rescued miners would be treated in hospitals and would stand trial.

Members of the Democratic Alliance (DA), the country's second-largest political party that is part of the governing coalition government, are calling for an investigation into the crisis. The party was the major opposi-

Continued on page 63

Socialism or Barbarism: A Statement of Fact

BY MATT WILLGRES

Engels once said that capitalist society “stands at the crossroads, either transition to socialism or regression into barbarism.”

Commenting on these remarks during World War I, the great socialist Rosa Luxemburg said:

“What does ‘regression into barbarism’ mean to our lofty European civilization? Until now, we have all probably read and repeated these words thoughtlessly, without suspecting their fearsome seriousness. A look around us at this moment shows what the regression of bourgeois society into barbarism means. This world war is a regression into barbarism. The triumph of imperialism leads to the annihilation of civilization.”

Today, as we see the climate catastrophe, the wars in Gaza and elsewhere, the insane new nuclear arms race, which is set to escalate, and the dire economic situation globally, it is clearly the case that the choice is socialism or barbarism.

Furthermore, the return of Donald Trump represents a new, heightening phase in the barbarism that is the U.S. empire’s ongoing war on the majority of humanity.

In terms of the world economy, global poverty and inequality levels show how barbarism is already a reality across much of the globe.

An Oxfam report last year confirmed the world’s five richest men have more than doubled their fortunes since 2020, while the wealth of the poorest 60 percent has fallen.

If these trends continue, the world will have its first trillionaire within a decade, but poverty won’t be eradicated for another 229 years.

Unfortunately, there won’t be a habitable planet if capitalism continues anywhere near that long!

Oxfam may not be a socialist movement, but it does eloquently point out how sharply increasing billionaire wealth and rising corporate power are interconnected.

These are of course the conclusions Rosa Luxemburg herself made as she analyzed the emergence of imperialism as a phase of capitalism, also linked intrinsically with the drive to war, saying:

“The high stage of world-industrial development in capitalistic production finds expression in the extraordinary technical development and destructiveness of the instruments of war.”

Today it is weapons made in the U.S. and Britain—and still sold by the government of Keir Starmer and David Lammy—that use technology to commit genocide in Gaza.

But there is hope that the flame of resistance can burn brighter too in the period ahead.

The mass movements on Palestine show how millions have not only had enough of war and misery but are making the link between the wars and the profit-driven, crisis-ridden economic system that drives them.

The same is true in the climate justice movement, where placards often carry the slogan “system change not climate change.”

On both counts, Trump’s return—flanked by Elon Musk and a motley crew of profiteers and polluters—will for millions in the U.S., here and around the world starkly confirm the need for a different economic order.

And as I’ve pointed to in the *Morning Star* before, polling shows remarkable things in terms of how people perceive an economic system that puts corporate greed before public need.

To give one illuminating example. In Britain, a 2023 YouGov survey showed that while among those born between 1946-64, only four percent of people have a positive view of Lenin, he was popular among 40 percent of millennials (those born between 1981-96). And another poll published shortly afterwards by the Fraser Institute found that nearly a third of young people (18 to 34-year-olds) believe that “communism is the ideal economic system.”

And we know that socialist solutions to the crises that we put forward, such as water and energy public own-



An anti-Trump protest at the White House, Washington, DC

ership, or wealth taxes to fund public services, have massive popular support that goes way beyond this layer of radical younger people.

It is therefore more than possible that a mass anti-capitalist mood, and movements organized by the left based around it, can emerge here in the next period.

But—and this is a massive but—the left needs to be explicitly talking the language of anti-capitalism, anti-imperialism and socialism if it is to harness these moods and forge the movements we need, based on militant and collective action.

As well as this, a key lesson of the years of Jeremy Corbyn as Labour leader and since must be that steeping ourselves in a real understanding of socialist ideas is not a nice “add-on” to the equally essential work of organizing in streets, workplaces and communities. It must be central to what we do.

How can we be beat back against the ideological warfare of the enemy, if we don’t collectively grasp the nature of class rule today ourselves?

And of course, the struggle is international which can also give us hope. In Latin America, for example, mass

movements are not only rising against U.S. domination and neoliberalism but also making real changes for the better. And uprisings in Africa against French neocolonialism continue.

To again quote Rosa Luxemburg to conclude: “Enthusiasm combined with critical thought, what more could we want of ourselves!” That is exactly the attitude we need to build movements for real change and a socialist future.

—*Morning Star*, February 8, 2025

<https://morningstaronline.co.uk/article/socialism-or-barbarism-statement-fact>

ENVIRONMENT

Momentous Victory for Climate Justice

Rosebank, Jackdaw oilfields ruled unlawful

By JULIA CONLEY

Thursday, January 30, 2025—After winning a landmark lawsuit to stop oil and gas production at two North Sea fossil fuel projects in the United Kingdom Thursday, the global climate action group Greenpeace called for applause for the campaigners who have spent years demanding no new pollution-causing developments.

“This is game-changing,” said Greenpeace U.K. “And it’s ONLY been possible thanks to YEARS of fighting

by THOUSANDS of climate campaigners! Power to the people.”

The comments came after Judge Andrew Stewart of Scotland’s Court of Session ruled that Equinor and Shell, the fossil fuel giants behind the Rosebank oil and gas field and the Jackdaw gas project, respectively, cannot move ahead with extraction because the government did not take into account the emissions that would result from the projects.

The companies have poured hundreds-of-millions of dollars into Rosebank and Jackdaw, with Equinor saying it had lined up \$2.7 billion in contracts for the former field, with an estimated 300 million barrels of oil and gas expected to be extracted beginning in 2026 or 2027.

The Stop Rosebank coalition, made up of grassroots campaigners and organizations, said the climate pollution from Rosebank “would be more than



Climate activists demonstrate against Rosebank and Jackdaw fossil fuel projects outside of the court of session on November 12, 2024, in Edinburgh, Scotland.

the combined annual CO₂ emissions of all 28 low-income countries in the world, including Uganda, Ethiopia, and Mozambique.”

“In other words, emissions from this one U.K. field would be more than those created by the 700 million people in the world’s poorest countries in a year,” said the coalition. “These are among the same countries that have contributed the least to the climate crisis but are already experiencing the worst impacts of a warming planet.”

Stewart said in his ruling that “the public interest in authorities acting lawfully and the private interest of members of the public in climate change outweigh the private interest of the developers.”

The campaign group Fossil Free London promptly organized a rally outside the Norwegian embassy in the U.K. capital to celebrate the verdict and call on Norway-based Equinor not to appeal the ruling.

“There can be victories in the world of climate protest,” said one organizer. “This is a big one.”

The ruling was in line with a decision handed down by the U.K. Supreme Court last year, which said local authorities must consider the full environmental impact of all new fossil fuel projects before they are approved.

Thursday’s ruling is the latest evidence, said Freya Aitchison, oil and gas campaigner at Friends of the Earth Scotland, that “new oil is over.”

“This signals the beginning of the end for fossil fuel production in the U.K.,” said Aitchison. “Political attention must immediately turn to developing an urgent and fair transition plan for workers.”

“This is a momentous victory for climate justice. It shows the power of the hundreds-of-thousands of people who have fought against the climate-wrecking Rosebank and Jackdaw oil fields for years. The U.K. Government must now end this disastrous project, rule out all new oil fields and fossil fuel developments and focus on delivering a planned, funded transition for oil workers,” added Aitchison. “This ruling is a turning point, we can and must choose a better future.”

Carla Denyer, a Member of Parliament for the Green Party, called on the U.K. government, now led by the Labour Party, to “refuse consent for the 13 other oil and gas drilling projects licensed by the previous government.”

Global Justice Now said the government should also turn its attention to the entire planet and support calls for a Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty.

“This is a huge milestone towards a livable planet and away from polluting fossil fuels,” said Liz Murray, head of the group’s Scottish campaigns. “Now we need global coordination to end new oil and gas not just here but around the world. The U.K. government should back calls from some of the most climate vulnerable countries for a fossil fuel treaty to plan a clean energy future that leaves no worker, community or country behind.”

—*Common Dreams*, January 30, 2025

<https://www.commondreams.org/news/north-sea-oil-rig>

Fire Weather

BY CHRIS HEDGES

The apocalyptic wildfires that have erupted in the boreal forest in Siberia, the Russian Far East and Canada, climate scientists repeatedly warned, would inevitably move southwards as rising global temperatures created hotter, more fire-prone landscapes. Now they have. The failures in California, where Los Angeles has had no significant rainfall in eight months, are not only failures of preparedness—the mayor of Los Angeles, Karen Bass, decreased funds for the fire department by \$17 million—but a failure globally to halt the extraction of fossil fuel. The only surprise is that we are surprised. Welcome to the age of the “Pyrocene”

where cities burn, and water does not come out of the hydrants.

The boreal forest is the largest forest system on earth. It circumnavigates the Northern Hemisphere. It stretches across Canada and Alaska. It travels through Russia where it is known as “the taiga.” It reaches into Scandinavia, picks up again in Iceland and Newfoundland, and moves westward across Canada, completing the circle. The boreal forest has more sources of freshwater than any other biome, including the Amazon Rainforest. It is the lungs of the earth, able to store 208 billion tons of carbon, or 11 percent of the world’s total. Yet it has been steady-

ly degraded, assaulted by deforestation and the extraction of the tar sands in Alberta, Canada—which produces 58 percent of Canada’s oil and is the U.S.’s largest source of imported oil—man-made drought and rising temperatures from carbon emissions.

Almost two million acres of boreal forest have been destroyed by extraction industries and timber companies. They have scraped away the topsoil and left behind poisoned wastelands. The production and consumption of one barrel of tar sands crude oil releases between 17 and 21 percent more carbon dioxide than the production and consumption of a standard barrel

of oil. The oil is transported thousands of miles to refineries as far away as Houston, through pipelines and in tractor-trailer trucks or railroad cars.

This vast assault, perhaps the largest such project in the world, has accelerated the release of carbon emissions that, unchecked, will render the planet uninhabitable for humans and most other species. There is a direct line from the destruction of the boreal forest and the raging wildfires in California.

The boreal forest system has, for over a decade, seen some of the planet's worst wildfires, including the 2016 Wood Buffalo (*aka* Fort McMurray) wildfire, which consumed nearly 1.5 million acres, and which was not fully extinguished for 15 months. The monster wildfire, which was, according to journalist John Vaillant, about 950 degrees Fahrenheit—hotter than Venus—destroyed thousands of homes and forced the evacuation of 88,000 people. The fire ripped into Fort McMurray with such ferocity and speed that residents barely escaped in their cars as buildings and houses were instantly vaporized. Flames shot 300 feet into the

air. Fireballs rolled up into the smoke column for another 1,000 feet. It was a harbinger of the new normal.

More than 100 climate scientists have called for a moratorium on the extraction of tar sands oil. Former NASA scientist James Hansen warned over a decade ago that if the tar sands oil is fully exploited, it will be “game over” for the planet. He has also called for the CEOs of fossil fuel companies to be tried for “high crimes against humanity and nature.”

It is hard to get a sense of the scale of the destruction unless you visit, as I did in 2019, the Alberta tar sands. I spent time with the 500 inhabitants of Beaver Lake, the Cree reserve, most of whom are impoverished and live in small, boxy prefabricated houses. They are victims of the latest iteration of colonial exploitation, one centered on the extraction of oil that is poisoning the water, soil and air around them.

Beaver Lake, as I wrote at the time, is surrounded by over 35,000 oil and natural gas wells and thousands of miles of pipelines, access roads and

seismic lines. The area also contains the Cold Lake Air Weapons Range, which has appropriated huge tracts of traditional territory from the native inhabitants to test weapons. Giant processing plants, along with gargantuan extraction machines, including bucket wheelers that are over half a mile long and draglines that are several stories high, ravage hundreds-of-thousands of acres.

“These stygian centers of death belch sulfurous fumes, nonstop, and send fiery flares into the murky sky,” I wrote. “The air has a metallic taste. Outside the processing centers, there are vast toxic lakes known as tailings ponds, filled with billions of gallons of water and chemicals related to the oil extraction, including mercury and other heavy metals, carcinogenic hydrocarbons, arsenic and strychnine. The sludge from the tailings ponds is leaching into the Athabasca River, which flows into the Mackenzie, the largest river system in Canada.”

Nothing in this moonscape, by the end, will support life. “The migrating birds that alight at the tailings ponds die in huge numbers,” I noted. “So many birds have been killed that the Canadian government has ordered extraction companies to use noise cannons at some of the sites to scare away arriving flocks. Around these hellish lakes, there is a steady boom-boom-boom from the explosive devices.”

The water in much of northern Alberta is no longer safe for human consumption. Drinking water has to be trucked in for the Beaver Lake reserve. Cancer and respiratory diseases are rampant.

John Vaillant, author of *Fire Weather: On the Front Lines of a Burning World* describes the tar sands landscape:

“...mile upon mile of black and ransacked earth pocked with stadium-swallowing pits and dead, discolored lakes guarded by scarecrows in cast-off rain gear and overseen by flaming stacks and fuming refineries, the whole laced together by cir-



A Final Toast—by Mr. Fish.

cuit board mazes of dirt roads and piping, patrolled by building-sized machines that, enormous as they are, appear dwarfed by the wastelands they have made. The tailings ponds alone cover well over a hundred square miles and contain more than a quarter of a trillion gallons of contaminated water and effluent from the bitumen upgrading process. There is no place for this toxic sludge to go except into the soil, or the air, or, if one of the massive earthen dams should fail, into the Athabasca River. For decades, cancer rates have been abnormally high in the downstream community.”

The out-of-control fire storms and blizzard of swirling embers, he chronicles, are what we are witnessing in California, a state which normally experiences wildfires during June, July, and August. Neighborhoods burn “to their foundations beneath a towering pyrocumulus cloud typically found over erupting volcanoes” and fires generate “hurricane-force winds and lightning that ignites fires miles away.”

These cyclone-like fires resemble the firebombing of Hamburg or Dresden during World War Two, rather than forest fires of the past. They are almost impossible to control.

“Fire wants to climb,” Vaillan told me. “[W]e all know heat rises. It’s rising up into the treetops and it’s sucking in wind from underneath because it needs oxygen all the time. So, the fire, it’s helpful to think of it as a breathing entity. It’s pulling oxygen in from all around and rising into the architecture of the trees and so there’s this rushing chimney-like effect. Where the fire is in a way happiest, most energetic, most charismatic, and dynamic is up in the treetops, and then it’s pulling in wind from down below. As that heat builds, as the whole tree is engaged, you have this increasing heat and increasing wind which then builds on itself, so it becomes almost a self-perpetuation machine. If you have hot enough, dry enough, [and] windy enough condi-

tions, those flames will then begin to leap from treetop to treetop.”

The heat releases vapor, hydrocarbons from the fuels around it, which is why we see “explosive fireballs and massive surges of flame coming out of big boreal fires because that’s the superheated vapor rising up and then ignited. Imagine an empty gas can—even though there might not be a lot of liquid in it, it will still explode in a spectacular fashion. Well, that’s really what the fire is enabling in the forest, for all those hydrocarbons to release in this gaseous cloud that then ignites. That’s when you see, especially a boreal fire, in full run. It’s called a Rank 6. It’s comparable to a Category 5 hurricane.”

The tailings ponds alone cover well over a hundred square miles and contain more than a quarter of a trillion gallons of contaminated water and effluent from the bitumen upgrading process.

When houses and buildings become very hot, they, like trees, release hydrocarbons. Vaillant calls modern buildings “incendiary devices.” They are packed with petrochemicals and often sheathed with petroleum products like vinyl siding and tar shingles. When fires push temperatures to over 1,400 degrees the vinyl siding, tar shingles, glues and laminates in the plywood vaporize.

“The modern home is in fact more flammable than a log cabin or a 19th-century home that’s made mostly out of wood, mostly furnished with cotton-stuffed furniture or horsehair stuffed furniture, things that we think of as antiques now,” Vaillant said. “But the modern home is really in a way a

giant gas can, and we don’t think of that when it’s 75 degrees. But when it’s 300 degrees because of the radiant heat coming off a fire, or 1,000 degrees because of the radiant heat coming off a boreal wildfire, it turns into something completely different.”

“All of us alive today have grown up in the petroleum age,” Vaillant said. “It feels normal to us the way I think people smoking on airplanes and in doctors’ waiting rooms felt normal to people in the 1950s. We’re completely habituated to it, to the point that it’s invisible to us. But if you really stop and think about how petroleum is rendered and what it in fact is, it’s literally toxic at every stage of its life. From the moment it’s drawn from the ground through the incredibly polluting refining process, into our cars and where it’s burned...Petroleum will kill you in every form, whether as a liquid, as a toxic spill, as a gas, as an emission. It’s strange to think that we have surrounded ourselves and persuaded ourselves that this profoundly toxic substance is an ally to us and an enabler of this wonderful lifestyle that we live that is now being compromised in measurable and visible ways by that very energy source.”

We have harnessed the concentrated energy of 300 million years and set it alight. We are addicted to fossil fuels. But it is a suicide pact. We ignore the freakish weather patterns and disintegration of the planet, retreating into our electronic hallucinations, pretending the inevitable is not inevitable. This vast cognitive dissonance, fed to us by mass culture, makes us the most self-deluded population in human history. The cost of this self-delusion will be mass death. The devastation in California is the harbinger of the apocalypse.

—*The Chris Hedges Report*, January 12, 2025

https://chrishedges.substack.com/p/fire-weather?utm_source=post-email-title&publication_id=778851&post_id=154695993&utm

Geoengineering Fails Again

Coalition cheers end of arctic ice project

By JESSICA CORBETT

Thursday, January 30, 2025—Environmental and Indigenous activists declared Thursday that “geoengineering fails again,” welcoming the shutdown of a project that aimed to use “a reflective material to protect and restore Arctic sea ice,” which is rapidly disappearing as humanity’s reliance on fossil fuels heats the planet.

Noting that “we committed to moving forward only if we could conclusively demonstrate both the safety and effectiveness of our approach,” the Arctic Ice Project team confirmed in an online statement that it “will be concluding its research and winding down the organization.”

“While our climate impact simulations have shown promising results (with a new scientific paper forthcoming,) recent ecotoxicological tests have revealed potential risks to the Arctic food chain,” the team said. “Our initial approach was to continue research aimed at addressing these concerns. Upon further reflection, however, the board decided that the combination of these new test results with broad skepticism toward geoengineering, resistance to introducing new materials

into the Arctic Ocean, and the increasingly challenging funding environment (and paucity of federal research dollars,) the most realistic path was to conclude our research.”

“Geoengineering approaches do nothing to address the root causes of the climate crisis and instead delay real solutions, offering a free pass to polluters”...

Responding in a Thursday statement, Hands Off Mother Earth Alliance global coordinator Coraina de la Plaza said that “the cancellation of the Arctic Ice Project marks another monumental victory for our planet and future generations, a victory where Indigenous peoples’ resistance has been central. This outcome reflects the power of community advocacy, and while the fight against geoengineering is far from over, this is a significant step to con-

tinue protecting the Arctic against industry greed and vested interests.”

Panganga Pungowiyi, climate geoengineering organizer at Indigenous Environmental Network, called the decision “long overdue.”

“We are concerned for the community members in Utqia vik who were made to spread football fields of this material onto their frozen lake. For years, we stood in defense of Indigenous lands and the sacred ice that has sustained our communities for generations,” Pungowiyi explained. “Our concerns about the reckless use of harmful materials were dismissed, yet we knew that the health of our ecosystems and the wisdom of our people must not be overlooked. We continually showed up in defense of free prior and informed consent, and made our presence known.”

“We continue to state firmly that nature is not a laboratory; it is a living entity we are in relationship with,” the organizer added. “While we find relief in this victory, we remain vigilant against other forms of geoengineering that threaten our sacred spaces. Together, we will continue to educate and empower our communities, stand-



The Bresvelbreen iceberg in Svalbard and Jan Mayen is shown on July 6, 2024.

ing with our lands, waters, and air for the generations to come.”

Silvia Ribeiro, Latin America director at Erosion, Technology, and Concentration (ETC) Group, said that “today we celebrate the wisdom, experience, and work of Indigenous peoples and organizations in Alaska that stopped this project and stand in solidarity with their vigilance against similar experiments that are planned in Arctic regions.”

Mary Church, geoengineering campaign manager at the Center for International Environmental Law, also framed the development as “a huge victory for the Indigenous communities at the forefront of resistance to the industries and vested interests that are polluting the planet and gambling with our collective future.”

“Geoengineering approaches do nothing to address the root causes of the climate crisis and instead delay real solutions, offering a free pass to polluters,” she stressed. “Following the recent reaffirmation of the global moratorium on geoengineering at the U.N. biodiversity summit in Colombia, governments need to act to prevent harmful outdoor experiments and the slip-

pery slope to legitimizing deployment. Instead of betting on highly speculative techno-fixes, governments must prioritize an urgent and just transition away from fossil fuels to protect vital Arctic ecosystems.”

Benjamin Day, a senior campaigner for climate and energy justice at Friends of the Earth U.S., also looked to the fight ahead.

“The decision to shut down the Arctic Ice Project completes the Geoengineering Hype Cycle that we now see so often: Entrepreneurs swoop into local communities claiming they have a solution to global warming, assuring everyone it’s completely safe and ignoring the red flags raised by those with deep knowledge of local ecosystems,” Day said. “After countless wasted dollars and press attention, it’s revealed the community was right and geoengineering is not a safe or responsible way to address climate change.”

“Collectively,” he argued, “we must stop enabling this cycle and work towards rapidly and equitably transitioning our communities to sustainable energy and land-use practices.”

The winding down of the Arctic Ice Project comes amid global fears about what the recent return of Republican U.S. President Donald Trump—who cozied up to Big Oil executives on the campaign trail and promised to “drill, baby, drill,” despite the devastating impacts of fossil fuels—will mean for the future of a planet that last year saw record-shattering temperatures.

Already, Trump has ditched the Paris climate agreement (again), lifted a freeze on new liquefied natural gas exports, declared a “national energy emergency,” and named various fossil fuel allies to key positions. Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Lee Zeldin and Transportation Secretary Sean Duffy took their posts earlier this week, Interior Secretary Doug Burgum was confirmed by the Republican-controlled Senate Thursday evening, and Chris Wright, Trump’s pick for energy secretary, awaits confirmation.

—*Common Dreams*, January 30, 2025

<https://www.commondreams.org/news/geoengineering>

Ravaging the Soils of Gaza

Genocide meets ecocide

BY STAN COX

When Israeli troops launched their ground invasion of northern Gaza in 2023, one of the first places they rolled into was the Abu Suffiyeh family farm in the Jabalya area.¹ The attackers had targeted the farm, with its thriving olive, pomegranate, and citrus orchards, for total destruction, because it lay in the path of a “raid route” they planned to use for incursions into Gaza in the months that followed.

Using bulldozers, the invaders plowed serpentine paths throughout the entire farm, scouring away all trees, other vegetation, and topsoil. With the soil they removed, the invaders con-

structed high earthen berms along the raid route and around the encampments they were establishing.

In before-and-after satellite images of the area, the London-based research group Forensic Architecture saw clear signs of bulldozing so comprehensive that “the farm’s shape and boundaries are no longer discernible. Orchards are uprooted. Infrastructure necessary for cultivation, such as the water tank, are destroyed.” An Abu Suffiyeh family member told researchers, “There is no land at all no...I mean, it is now the same as it was before: desert. It’s again a desert. There is no single tree there.

No traces of prior life...There is almost nothing to recognize there. No traces of the land we knew. They totally erased it. It used to be a lively area, but now there is no life at all there.”²

A war on the land itself

We’ve seen countless horrific images in the past 16 months showing wholesale destruction of Gaza’s urban areas, but the deliberate devastation wasn’t limited to cities. Israel’s U.S.-provisioned assault extended throughout the countryside. One result: a staggering 83 percent of Gaza’s plant life, encompassing both natural green spaces and crops, was destroyed.³

Gaza's food-producing capacity, too, has been all but wiped out. Of its 54 square miles of agricultural land, 37 have been seriously damaged. And 45 percent of greenhouses have been rendered nonfunctional. An *Al Jazeera* investigation published last July found "significant damage" to 626 water wells, 307 home barns, 235 chicken farms, and 203 sheep farms. In late 2024, FAO assessed that in Gaza, only 43 percent of sheep, 37 percent of goats, five percent of cattle, and one percent of poultry had survived the onslaught.

Fish almost completely vanished from diets in Gaza. In the early months of the war, Israeli bombing rendered the territory's small fishing port nonfunctional. More than 200 fishers have been shot and killed by the Israeli navy, and thousands have lost their livelihoods. Even now, with a ceasefire in place since January 19, Israeli gunboats continue to fire upon and kill any fishers who dare to venture even a short distance into the Mediterranean Sea.

The most expansive destruction has been accomplished through attacks on field crops and orchards. Gaza's most fertile farmland, a long strip a few miles wide running the length of the territory's

eastern edge, has long been crucial to producing most of the vegetables consumed within the territory. Accordingly, Israel has heavily targeted that eastern area during the current genocide. Invading troops have used U.S.-made Caterpillar D9 bulldozers to destroy crops, trees, irrigation systems, and, most critically, precious topsoil. By repeatedly driving heavy military equipment—including tanks and bulldozers—across the landscape, they have severely compacted the soil and further degraded its productive capacity. As on the Abu Suffiyeh farm, they've also employed bulldozers to build berms, mounds, or other fortifications, thereby rendering entire fields useless for cropping.

Gaza's soils have suffered in other ways. Constant aerial bombardment has formed countless craters and caused other physical damage to the soil structure. Bombing and demolition in rural areas has permeated the soil with residues from explosives, unexploded ordnance, toxic chemicals, heavy metals, and other pollutants. Leakage of fuel and other fluids from military vehicles and other machinery, the burial of debris and even human or livestock remains, and the intentional spraying

of Palestinians' crops with herbicides has further contaminated the soil.⁴

As they ravaged the landscape, Israeli troops at times displayed a high degree of sadistic creativity. This January, for example, *Al Jazeera* reported that new satellite images of the Beit Hanoun area in northern Gaza showed that Israeli tanks had carved a 200-foot-wide Star of David into the middle of a field. The star was accompanied by the numerals "7979," 150 feet tall. Read right to left, as in Hebrew, this was a possible reference to the Israeli occupation forces' notorious 97th Netzah Yehuda Battalion, an ultra-Orthodox unit that has been accused of killing unarmed Palestinians and torturing and sexually abusing prisoners.

A defense analyst told *Al Jazeera* that the attackers engraved the star into Gaza's soil "for Google Maps," as a boast to the world "that they were here."

A history of enforcing hunger

Sadly, the sick Beit Hanoun prank was not a new concept; such vandalism has been going on for at least 15 years. During Israel's brutal air and ground assault on Gaza in 2009 (dubbed "Operation Cast Lead" by the Zionists,) a set of tank tracks forming a similarly sized Star of David appeared in satellite images of farmland near Rafah, at the opposite end of Gaza from Beit Hanoun.

Indeed, violence of all kinds against Gaza's farmland has been a fact of life throughout the two decades since Israeli troops and settlers retreated from the strip in 2005. Soon after leaving, Israel embarked on a different version of occupation: a siege that completely enclosed the strip with prison-style fencing, a naval blockade, deadly firepower, and severely restricted access to food and other supplies. Under this siege, Gaza's farmland, orchards, greenhouses, and urban gardens became more crucial than ever for keeping its population fed. So, naturally, Israeli forces routinely attacked that homegrown food supply.



Satellite image of orchards, greenhouses and farmland in northern Gaza razed by Israel's ground invasion of northern Gaza. Image: Human Rights Watch and PlanetLabs.

They labeled a 20-mile-long strip of fertile vegetable-growing land just inside the eastern prison fence as a “buffer zone” from which Palestinians were wholly excluded. The precise size of this no-go zone wasn’t specified; in practice, though, its width tended to vary between 300 and 1,000 yards as measured from the fence.⁵ Over the years, occupation troops enforced the ban on farming within the zone by bulldozing crops, firing at farmers, or aerially spraying herbicides. Since October 2023, such attacks have expanded and intensified, to the point that food production has become almost impossible in that agricultural heartland of Gaza.

Displacement of people plus destruction of agriculture—that was the plan

In 2023, during the early months of the war, the Israeli strategy focused on driving the civilian population out of urban and rural areas of northern Gaza, to the southeast toward the region around Khan Yunis and, subsequently, southwest from there toward Rafah on the border with Egypt. Then, in spring 2024, they forcibly displaced the Palestinians again, westward toward the arid sand-dune landscape of the al-Mawasi region along the coast. Forensic Architecture’s analysts concluded that the genocidal military strategists planned for these successive expulsions to drive the civilian population away from productive farmlands of the north and east toward drier, sandier, much less productive lands in the southwest of Gaza. That undercut the Palestinians’ ability to produce their own food even as Israel was choking off the flow of external food aid into the strip. The analysts’ maps⁶ clearly showed that starvation was a goal, not just a side effect, of the population displacements. They wrote:

“When we layered the evacuation orders received by Palestinian civilians with the destruction of agri-

culture, we observed another correlation: the agricultural parts in the east parts of Gaza received evacuation orders and the fields there were subsequently and thoroughly destroyed... Displacement and the destruction of agriculture were an organized result... The destruction of agriculture – fields, orchards, greenhouses—restricted the possibility for Palestinians in Gaza to grow and obtain food independently, and the targeting of aid restricted and controlled food coming from the outside.”⁷

For Palestinians, suspended in the midst of a fragile ceasefire (and now with a cartoon-villain U.S. president plotting to seize their entire territory and expel them,) the future is utterly unpredictable. Even if Israel does not reignite the genocide—and that’s a huge “if”—the rebuilding of homes, hospitals, schools, greenhouses, water systems, and other structures will be a long, arduous process. But restoring Gaza’s food-production capacity will take even longer, because the soils won’t be restored to their full state of health for decades. Israeli troops used heavy industrial means to destroy the productivity of Gaza’s soils, but there are no industrial processes capable of quickly restoring them to full fertility and health. The natural processes for doing that will play out deep into this century.

But the land isn’t gone. It’s still there, and the soil fertility can be partially restored—at least to a state in which it can be farmed. And rest assured that it will be Palestinians who do the farming. They continue to proclaim as forcefully as ever that no one will ever uproot them from their land.

Stan Cox is the author of seven books, including The Green New Deal and Beyond: Ending the Climate Emergency While We Still Can and Losing Our Cool: Uncomfortable Truths About Our Air-Conditioned World.

—CounterPunch Plus, February 9, 2025

<https://www.counterpunch.org/2025/02/09/ravaging-the-soils-of-gaza/>

1 https://content.forensic-architecture.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/10/FA_A-Spatial-Analysis-of-the-Israeli-militarys-conduct-in-Gaza-since-October-2023.pdf (Page 301)

2 <https://forensic-architecture.org/investigation/a-cartography-of-genocide> (Page 308)

3 https://content.forensic-architecture.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/10/FA_A-Spatial-Analysis-of-the-Israeli-militarys-conduct-in-Gaza-since-October-2023.pdf (Page 40)

4 <https://forensic-architecture.org/investigation/a-cartography-of-genocide> (Page 65)

5 Ibid (Page 57)

6 Ibid (Pages 804-816)

7 Ibid (Page 787)

Continued from page 54

tion party before last year’s elections saw the ruling African National Congress (ANC) slip in the polls.

On Thursday, party spokesperson James Lorimer said the DA sent a letter to President Cyril Ramaphosa calling for a “full and transparent” investigation into the “disaster.” The DA also said the role of government agencies, as well as the mine owners and operators, should be investigated.

“The DA urges President Ramaphosa to act swiftly, while witnesses are still available, to ensure that this inquiry takes place. A transparent investigation will help uncover the full scope of the crisis and prevent future tragedies of this nature,” Lorimer added.

—Al Jazeera, January 16, 2025

<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2025/1/16/did-south-africa-starve-dozens-of-trapped-miners-to-death>

Joe Biden Grants Clemency to Leonard Peltier

By JENNIFER BENDERY

With literally minutes left in his presidency, Joe Biden on Monday, January 20, 2025, granted clemency to Leonard Peltier, the ailing Native American rights activist whom the U.S. government put in prison nearly 50

years ago after a trial riddled with misconduct and lies.

In a statement as President-elect Donald Trump's inauguration was underway, Biden announced he is "commuting the life sentence imposed on Leonard

Peltier so that he serves the remainder of his sentence in home confinement."

Peltier has been in prison ever since the federal government accused him of murdering two FBI agents in a 1975 shoot-out on Pine Ridge Reservation in South Dakota.

There was never evidence that Peltier committed a crime, and the U.S. government never did figure out who shot those agents. But federal officials needed someone to take the fall. The FBI had just lost two agents, and Peltier's co-defendants were all acquitted based on self-defense. So, Peltier became their guy.

His trial was rife with misconduct. The FBI threatened and coerced witnesses into lying. Federal prosecutors hid evidence that exonerated Peltier. A juror acknowledged on the second day of the trial that she had "prejudice against Indians," but she was kept on anyway.

The government's case fell apart after these revelations, so it simply revised its charges against Peltier to "aiding and abetting" whoever did kill the agents—based entirely on the fact that he was one of dozens of people present when the shoot-out took place. Peltier was convicted and sentenced to two consecutive life terms.

Peltier, now 80, has maintained his innocence the entire time he's been in prison, which has almost certainly led to him being denied parole. He's mostly blind and uses a walker to get around. Due to frequent lockdowns at his maximum-security prison in Florida, he's spent most of his later years confined to inches of space in a cell. His serious health problems include diabetes, which sent him to the hospital in July with "open wounds and tissue death on



From left to right, Dorothy Ninham, AIM's third chapter Co-founder, Leonard Peltier, director Chris Eyre, and Dorothy's daughter, Gina, February 18, 2025.

his toes and feet,” per the *Lakota Times*. He was hospitalized again in October.

Biden had been under increasing pressure from tribal leaders, U.S. senators, members of Congress and others within his own party to release Peltier.

“The power to exercise mercy in this case lies solely within your discretion, and we urge you to grant Mr. Peltier clemency, allowing him to return home and live out his remaining days among his own people,” dozens of Democratic lawmakers wrote to the president in December.

Virtually every international human rights leader in modern history, including Pope Francis and Nelson Mandela, has called for Peltier’s release over the years—as have some of the same people who put Peltier in prison in the first place. Former U.S. Attorney James Reynolds, who prosecuted Peltier decades ago, has since said it was a mistake, that there was never evidence to convict Peltier and has been personally urging Biden to grant him clemency.

“I write today from a position rare for a former prosecutor: to beseech you to commute the sentence of a man who I helped put behind bars,” Reynolds wrote to Biden in 2021.

“With time, and the benefit of hindsight, I have realized that the prosecution and continued incarceration of Mr. Peltier was and is unjust,” he said. “We were not able to prove that Mr. Peltier personally committed any offense on the Pine Ridge Reservation.”

The million-dollar question has always been: Why is Peltier still in prison?

The answer is because of unwavering resistance from the FBI, which decided decades ago that it would oppose Peltier ever being released.

As Peltier’s former attorney put it in 2021, it boils down to “politics.”

“In order to get clemency, you have to get the FBI on board. They have an inherent conflict. You have to get the U.S. Attorney’s Office on board. They lied to get him in prison. They have an inherent conflict,” Kevin Sharp told *HuffPost* at the time. “They’re not going to say, ‘Oops, sorry.’”

“It’s this holdover with the FBI,” he added.

Look no further than the bureau’s arguments against Peltier’s release, which are outdated, full of holes and remarkably easy to disprove.

There was never evidence that Peltier committed a crime, and the U.S. government never did figure out who shot those agents. But federal officials needed someone to take the fall.

The FBI still hasn’t publicly addressed the wider context of that 1975 shoot-out, either. The bureau itself was intentionally fueling tensions on that reservation as part of a covert campaign to suppress the activities of the American Indian Movement, a grassroots movement for Indigenous rights. Peltier was an active AIM member and an FBI target.

In its Monday statement, the White House gave several reasons why Biden decided to grant clemency to Peltier. Notably, it specifies the president did not pardon Peltier, which suggests forgiveness for a crime, but instead commuted his sentence, which carries no forgiveness. It also references Peltier’s “underlying crimes,” which were never proven. This can certainly be read as the White House throwing a bone to the FBI.

“He is now 80 years old, suffers from severe health ailments, and has spent the majority of his life (nearly half-a-century) in prison,” reads the statement. “This commutation will enable Mr. Peltier to spend his remaining days in home confinement but will not pardon him for his underlying crimes.”

Biden has taken significant actions to strengthen Native American communities and tribes during his presidency. His decision to release Peltier—which prominent Indigenous rights groups and people, including Biden’s own interior secretary, Deb Haaland, have strongly advocated for—caps off a legacy he’s quite proud of related to righting past wrongs against Native Americans.

In a rare interview with *HuffPost* in 2022, Peltier said he knew what he would say to Biden if he had a few minutes alone with him.

“I’m not guilty of this shooting. I’m not guilty,” Peltier said he’d tell the president. “I would like to go home to spend what years I have left with my great-grandkids and my people.”

The Native American elder is likely to return home to South Dakota, where his supporters on Pine Ridge Reservation have purchased and prepared a house for him to move into in the event of his release from prison.

“We are ready to welcome him home with open arms, to show him the care and support he deserved for his whole life,” Nick Tilsen, CEO of NDN Collective and a citizen of the Oglala Lakota Nation, said in a recent op-ed. “He deserves to live out his last days with dignity and surrounded by loved ones.

—*Huffpost*, January 20, 2025

https://www.huffpost.com/entry/joe-biden-leonard-peltier-clemency_n_67608b04e4b0d06419ec6367

SOCIALIST VIEWPOINT

Where to find us:

www.socialistviewpoint.org
info@socialistviewpoint.org

EDITORS

Carole Seligman, Bonnie Weinstein

GRAPHIC & WEB DESIGN

Mykael

BUSINESS MANAGER

Carole Seligman

The Socialist Viewpoint Publishing Association publishes *Socialist Viewpoint* in the interests of the working class.

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

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

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

Signed articles do not necessarily represent the views of *Socialist Viewpoint*. These views are expressed in editorials.

Socialist Viewpoint is printed by members of Local 61, Allied Printing Trades Council, San Francisco, California.

Special Introductory Subscription Offer!

One year of *Socialist Viewpoint* for \$20.00,

Bargain rate: \$35.00 for two years;

(Regular rate: \$30.00/International Rate: \$50.00)

Make your check payable to: *Socialist Viewpoint*, & mail to:

SOCIALIST VIEWPOINT

60 29th Street, #429

San Francisco, CA 94110

Please include your name, address, city and zip code.

To help us know who our subscribers are,
please tell us your occupation, union, school,
or organization.

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.

Howard Keylor: A Life of Labor and Liberation

By MUMIA ABU-JAMAL



For Howard Keylor, a long life in service to the working class began in his younger years in Ohio, where he saw miners going to work. In rural Ohio, not far from the Appalachians and near the mines, he grew up with a strong sense of solidarity among workers. He became registered as a longshoreman in 1959, when he found his political footing as a radical trade unionist and a revolutionary activist for his class, and especially for dock workers. He constantly used the docks as a basis for organizing workers while opposing the rulers.

When South Africa was gripped in the knot of apartheid, Keylor raised a motion to refuse to remove cargo from South African vessels. To his surprise the motion was passed unanimously by the members of the ILWU (International Longshoreman & Warehouse Union) Local 10. This

action earned the praise of South Africa's Nelson Mandela, who commended Local 10 during his 1990 world tour. Mandela said Local 10 (Howard's union) was on the front line of the global struggle against the racist system of apartheid. That was the workers' united vision of Howard Keylor.

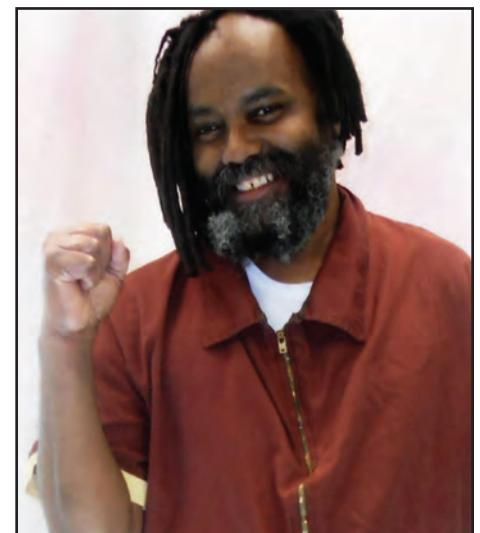
Keylor was, in essence, a lifelong revolutionary, who greeted all struggles as a challenge to be met and beaten. He fought for social justice and a better world. He fought against my death sentence and for my freedom.

He is remembered as a man who made every one of his 98 years count. Howard Keylor's extraordinary life for labor and liberation.

—Prison Radio, January 24, 2025

<https://www.prisonradio.org/commentary/howard-keylor-a-life-of-labor-and-liberation/>

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



Mumia Abu-Jamal



An anti-Trump protest at the White House, Washington, DC. Read "*Socialism or Barbarism: A Statement of Fact*" on page 55.

On the Front Cover: Thousands of people marched in downtown L.A. in "A Day Without Immigrants" protest of Trump's immigration policies on Monday, February 3, 2025. Read *Only A Workers' United Front Against Capitalism Can Stop Fascism* on page 4.



The Fall of the Rebel Angels by Pieter Bruegel the Elder, 1592, Royal Museum of the Arts, Brussels. Read *Catch US Now We're Falling* on page 34.



Debris in Khan Yunis, Gaza on December 10, 2024. Read *We Can't Afford to Ignore This Threat* on page 17.



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."