

# SocialistViewpoint

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

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## How Trump Got Rich

It had nothing to do with brains!



Donald John Trump was born on June 14, 1946, at Jamaica Hospital in the New York City borough of Queens, the fourth child of Fred Trump and Mary Anne MacLeod Trump. ...Fred Trump paid his children each about \$20,000 a year, equivalent to \$265,000 a year in 2024. Trump was a millionaire at age eight by contemporary standards.

...He was a difficult child and showed an early interest in his father's business. ...Trump considered a show business career but instead in 1964 enrolled at Fordham University. Two years later, he transferred to the Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania, graduating in May 1968 with a Bachelor of Science in economics.

He was exempted from the draft during the Vietnam War due to a claim of bone spurs in his heels.

...Starting in 1968, Trump was employed at his father's real estate company, Trump Management, which owned racially segregated middle-class rental housing in New York City's outer boroughs.

In 1971, his father made him president of the company and he began using the Trump Organization as an umbrella brand. Roy Cohn was Trump's fixer, lawyer, and mentor for 13 years in the 1970s and 1980s. In 1973, Cohn helped Trump countersue the U.S. government

for \$100 million (equivalent to \$708 million in 2024) over its charges that Trump's properties had racially discriminatory practices. Trump's counterclaims were dismissed, and the government's case was settled with the Trumps signing a consent decree agreeing to desegregate; four years later, Trumps again faced the courts when they were found in contempt of the decree.

...In 1992, Trump, his siblings Maryanne, Elizabeth, and Robert, and his cousin John W. Walter, each with a 20 percent share, formed All County Building Supply & Maintenance Corp. The company had no offices and is alleged to have been a shell company for paying the vendors providing services and supplies for Trump's rental units, then billing those services and supplies to Trump Management with markups of 20–50 percent and more. ...Trump has said he began his career with “a small loan of a million dollars” from his father and that he had to pay it back with interest.

He borrowed at least \$60 million from his father, largely did not repay the loans, and received another \$413 million (2018 equivalent, adjusted for inflation) from his father's company.

Posing as a Trump Organization official named “John Barron,” Trump called journalist Jonathan Greenberg in 1984, trying to get a higher ranking on the Forbes 400 list of wealthy Americans. Trump self-reported his net worth over a wide range: from a low of minus \$900 million in 1990, to a high of \$10 billion in 2015. In 2024, Forbes estimated his net worth at \$2.3 billion and ranked him the 1,438th wealthiest person in the world.

—Some excerpts from Wikipedia

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Donald\\_Trump](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Donald_Trump)

### OBITUARY

## Chris Kinder (1944-2025)



Chris Kinder

Dear readers,

We are very sad to announce the death of Chris Kinder on April 14, 2025. He was 81 years old. The cause of death was severe double pneumonia. Chris has been writing for *Socialist Viewpoint* over the past 17 years. He was the organizer of the Labor Action Committee to Free Mumia Abu-Jamal.

Chris had an amazing knowledge of history. More importantly, he could recall the facts and details and bring the lessons learned into today's world of capitalist upheaval and mayhem—and how best to fight it.

His life was a true contribution to the future of humanity. He will be sorely missed. —The Editors

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## Workers vs. Capitalism

Some ideas on how to change the balance of power

By BONNIE WEINSTEIN

*“There are decades where nothing happens; and then weeks where decades happen.” —Vladimir Ilyich Lenin*

On April 5, 2025, millions of people took to the streets in major cities and small towns across the country and in other countries around the world in opposition to the Trump/Musk assault on democracy. Many of the demonstrators also expressed opposition to the U.S./Israeli genocide in Gaza and the West Bank.

Everyday Trump and Musk bombard us with ever-more racist, bigoted, anti-worker, anti-free speech, pro-genocide edicts.

It is now against the law, according to Trump, to speak or organize actions critical of Israel. Any criticism of Israel, he says, is antisemitic, unlawful, terrorist and pro-Hamas—especially on college campuses.<sup>1</sup>

The truly horrifying thing is that many universities, newspapers, news

programs and employers are caving in to Trumps dismantling of civil and human rights including the democratic rights to free speech, assembly and protest.

Even worse, on April 3, 2023, the Trump administration, in an amazing, jaw-dropping edict—threatened to withhold funds from public schools that have not eliminated diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) programs.<sup>2</sup>

At the same time, the Trump administration has granted refugee status to pro-apartheid Afrikaners in South Africa even though, according to the New York Times, “...white people make up seven percent of the country’s population, [but] they own at least half of South Africa’s land.”<sup>3</sup>

### Cold is hot and hot is cold

The American people are opposed to these attacks against people of color, immigrants, women, the LGBTQ com-

munity, unions, all working people and the poor, and the environment.

They are also opposed to the ever-increasing prices on all basic necessities—food, housing, healthcare, utilities, and education. And now, Trump’s punishing tariffs will drive even higher price-increases for the foreseeable future.

It’s clear to everyone that every time Trump or Musk speaks, they turn everything on its head in astonishing ways, like speaking fiercely about the need to fight racism against white people. And declaring that any student—or person—who criticizes Israel is a terrorist and will be deported or jailed. It’s like claiming that the whistling tea kettle is cold as ice.

Meanwhile, the members of the American ruling class are vying for his favors. He is not being challenged. He is being obeyed. Columbia University has caved in to Trump’s demands.<sup>4</sup>

### Fighting the Trump/Musk new world order

Trump, the primary representative of the American capitalist class, is conducting a grand experiment devised by billionaires to see how far he can go carrying his fascist banner.

Trump sent J.D. Vance to Germany in February to encourage the German government to embrace the far-right, pro-Nazi party, Alternative for Germany.<sup>5</sup>

All over the world the right wing of the capitalist class is advancing into power while the so-called more liberal governments are moving further and further to the right in competition with them.



Protest against Elon Musk and the Trump administration’s cuts to healthcare in Manhattan, March 2025.

## **Working class youth are leading the way against capitalism's right-turn toward fascism**

While there have been massive protests against the Trump/Musk agenda of genocide in Gaza and the West Bank and the all-out assault on human rights and free speech and assembly at home, the youth have begun to discuss forming their own, independent organizations to fight against the U.S./Israeli war on Gaza, the ICE raids and the assault on free speech and assembly.

The TV news here in the Bay Area have been reporting about local student walkouts protesting ICE from coming into their schools and to their parents' places of work.

Many of these kids are immigrants or children of immigrants.

Their fear is real—they fear they will come home to an empty house because their parents have been taken by ICE, or that ICE will come and take them from their school.

But they are very bravely fighting back and not backing down. They have been extremely articulate critics of the Trump/Musk ultra-right agenda.

One day in mid-February in the Bay Area, as reported on TV news, children from multiple schools walked out spontaneously in protest of ICE raids. In the midst of the walkout, the students from the different schools found out about each other over social media and began texting each other. They arranged to meet up and join together for an impromptu rally.

These students were protesting against much more than ICE raids. To them, the whole system is against them!

Some of the kids who met up from the different schools spoke to reporters on the scene. They spoke about trying to encourage everyone to join together to build a united movement for immigrant rights and free speech at all their schools.

One cluster of kids interviewed said they wanted to organize their own

political organizations independent of both major parties in time for the next presidential elections.

Even those far too young to vote had strong opinions in opposition to both the Democratic and Republican parties.

In fact, one young woman said she would not make the same mistake as her mom and would not support either party in the next presidential election. She said she's hoping that a new, independent party will be formed that represents her and her friends.

The kids have the right idea!

### **An attack against one is an attack against all**

Millions have been protesting the Trump/Musk swift move toward fascist rule because it is impacting and causing hardships, in every way, for the overwhelming majority of workers and the poor—not just here in the U.S.—but everywhere. Leaders of nations across the world are modeling themselves after Trump and Musk—moving further and further to the right and against the working class.

### **Organizing workers' power**

The intent of the Trump/Musk bold assaults against the working class—deportations, arrests, firings, raising prices on everything, imposing tariffs on imported goods, cutting aid to the neediest—serve the dual purpose of scaring us into submission while increasing profits for themselves.

Workers are told that what's good for American businesses is good for us—that when the stock market goes up—it's good for American workers—because many of us own stocks through pension and retirement plans. What they don't tell us is that ten percent of Americans—the wealthy elite—own 93 percent of those stocks.<sup>6</sup>

The only way to combat their fascist agenda is to refuse to submit en masse to their bullying campaign. And that will take working-class unity, solidarity

and independence from capitalist parties and politicians.

It requires the formation of independent, mass-based united front coalitions against the Trump/Musk anti-worker, anti-humanity, anti-environment agenda—the agenda of the American capitalist class.

Some people still seem to be waiting around for the Democratic Party to do something—but they are doing less than nothing—they are voting Trump's way.

Organized labor must break with the Democratic and Republican parties and start organizing independently of all capitalist parties and boldly take up the banner of all who are under attack by the U.S. government.

### **The labor aristocracy is silent**

Clearly, the organized labor aristocracy is not taking any leadership role in opposition to Trump at the present time. They are still wallowing in the morass of the Democratic Party that is, in fact, moving further and further to the right.

They have not yet come to terms with the rug being pulled out from under them by the Democratic and Republican competing parties for capitalist rule.

Some union leaders are even groveling for the good graces of Trump instead of organizing defiance of the Trump/Musk agenda!

Begging for crumbs from the Trump administration or any capitalist administration, in the name of labor, is a vast betrayal of all workers.

The current partnership that the labor aristocracy has with capitalism—when the union leaders sit down with the bosses at the bargaining table and try to come up with some agreement as to how much of a cut the boss can get away with—is a partnership with the devil.

You can't bargain with someone who's out to get you. As long as labor continues to partner with the bosses, we are freely turning our power over to them.

A new leadership has to emerge who will break this corrupt partnership, take the power into our hands and organize our own defense for the benefit of all workers—the capitalists don't need our help.

### **There's real power when workers stop being silent and take the lead**

Workers, organizing together, have the power to end deportations, the U.S./Israeli genocide of the Palestinian people, and the administration's overall attack on the poor and working class.

Ultimately, taking the means of production into our own hands—controlling our own destiny—is the only way to end the atrocities of capitalism.

### **Anti-labor laws**

We can strike. We can walk off the job or occupy the worksite until our demands are met industry-by-industry or job-by-job—but it's illegal under U.S. capitalist law for one union to go out on strike in sympathy of another union's demands—even though those demands could benefit them as well.

We must find a way around this and other anti-labor laws because these laws can get us arrested, fired from our jobs or even killed for standing in solidarity with our fellow workers.

The labor laws fortify capitalism's control over workers by outlawing labor solidarity—the general strike—the ultimate power the working-class majority has over the capitalist minority.

### **Organizing against anti-union, anti-worker laws**

Say, you're a union painter and you show up one morning to the job and you see a plumber's picket line around the building. The plumbers, your fellow workers, are on strike—and for good reason—but you have to cross the picket line or be fired.

The law, drawn up by capitalist lawyers and on their behalf, says the boss has the right to fire you if you refuse to cross a picket-line in support of a strike by workers from another union.

This means that the whole working class has to put our heads together to form democratically functioning organizations that can consolidate our power into a force strong enough to defend worker's rights and defeat capitalism's descent into fascist rule and, ultimately, back to barbarism.

### **The general strike**

The general strike—workers everywhere walking off the job together nationally and internationally—may be against the law, but it's the ultimate and unbeatable challenge to capitalist rule.

**What they don't tell us is that ten percent of Americans—the wealthy elite—own 93 percent of those stocks.**

With the full participation of the masses of the workers, the general strike can overturn the balance of power from rule in the interests of the minority to rule in the interests of the majority.

As it stands now, if one person refuses to cross a picket-line, they are powerless against getting fired. If everyone refuses to cross the picket-line, no one works, and no profits are created for the capitalists to steal.

Mass, general strikes are a direct challenge to capitalist rule. By organizing, carrying out, and winning a general strike, the working class displays the power we have to control our own destiny.

### **Strategizing our road to victory**

I had been pondering what steps could be taken to build steppingstones to the general strike—what kind of organization would be needed to build toward such a challenge to capitalist rule—and I was reminded of an article we printed in 2006, by a UAW auto-worker, Gregg Shotwell. Gregg was a member of a group within the union

called Soldiers of Solidarity that carried out a very unique tactic during negotiations for a new contract. They slowed down production at their jobsite by following each and every safety rule on the books. They called it, "work to rule."<sup>7</sup> And they won a good contract.

I began to contemplate how that tactic could be used to organize resistance to Trump and Musk's creeping fascist agenda at the workplace—actually slowing down production in protest of their agenda—without endangering the livelihoods of the workers on the job.

While it's against the law for one union to go out on strike in support of another union, it is not against the law to encourage all workers to abide by all the safety rules on their job. Safety rules are there to protect workers and the public from harm.

In the real world, workers are routinely forced to ignore safety rules to keep up with the boss's constant pressure to speed up production. The boss doesn't care if there's an accident, they can simply blame it on the worker for not obeying some rule or another. The boss is off the hook and the worker pays—sometimes with their life.

Now, let's say that the theoretical painter, referred to above, who didn't want to cross the plumber's picket line was the Painters Union representative on the job. What, if he spoke to his crew and instructed them to take extra care to follow all safety rules on the job until the plumber's strike was satisfactorily settled? Then what if they encouraged all the other workers on the job to do the same?

There's nothing illegal about it. Workers can't be fired or punished for following the rules. And it has the potential to add much more weight and encouragement to the plumber's strike—ultimately leading them to victory—and reinforcing solidarity and pride and power among all the other workers involved.

## Slowing down production as a prequel to the general strike

The boss knows that strictly abiding by all the safety rules certainly does slow down production.

But not only is it totally legal to insist that workers abide by all the safety rules—it's required! And it's required on virtually all jobs—union and non-union, in service, office or industry, in every state and in most countries across the world.

Shotwell reminds us that “work to rule,” has been used as a form of resistance by workers and slaves throughout history.

It is empowering. It encourages unity and solidarity and empathy with each other. It builds confidence in the working class. It builds workers up and diminishes the power of the bosses. It fills workers with the realization that actions taken on behalf of workers, in unity and solidarity, gives us real power over the bosses.

Today's labor unions could use this as a powerful tool to organize the unorganized while at the same time defending workers who are under attack from the fascist agenda of the capitalist class on the job, in our communities and in our schools.

Working to the rules is another way of hitting the capitalist class where it hurts the most—in their profit margins.

It fortifies our power and diminishes the power the capitalist class has over us.

It could be a prequel to a national and international general strike of the entire working class—one that can actually challenge the power of capitalist minority rule everywhere and win!

Actions such as strikes, work to rule, and cutting all ties to the Democratic and Republican parties—and all capitalist parties—are what the labor movement must begin to organize on a mass scale.

It is a fact that the masses of humanity—workers, employed and unemployed and their class allies—outnum-

ber the capitalist class by more than billions-to-one.

We have much more in common among ourselves than we have with members of the capitalist class.

They comprise less than .01 percent of humanity yet claim ownership to all the wealth produced by the working people of the world. They own the corporations, businesses, military manufacturers—they own all the means of production in virtually every country—and every penny of that profit is stolen from labor.

Trump is running the country like it's a business. And businesses are the oxymoron of democracy—they are rule from the top.

Every worker knows this. The boss is the boss! They will pay you as little as they can get away with.

The American capitalist class controls and dominates the wealth of the world. It has the most massive military power. They carry out, and financially support, bombings and genocide while at the same time, taking advantage of the strife they have created in order to bargain for the ownership of natural resources—or, as a last resort—forcefully take them from countries around the world.

The capitalists employ fascist repression when their system is in danger of collapse. They employ any and all means necessary to destroy resistance to their rule including paramilitary forces and the threat of death.

But every worker must learn, too, that it is we who have power to do away with capitalism and take the ownership and control of production into our own hands and for the good of all.

## Leave it to the youth

And here's where the kids were so prescient. They have learned that united together in unity and solidarity for freedom, justice and equality they have the power to create a new world. That conclusion is logical to them. What they have witnessed in their short lives

has not frightened them, it has empowered them into action on their own behalf and on behalf of all of us.

## These are the weeks where decades happen

Workers, young and old, planning production democratically can free humanity from the tyranny of capitalism's for-profit production methods that wastes precious resources and pollutes the environment—all in pursuit of the almighty dollar.

We are living in a critical time—time to take the weapons of death out of the hands of the capitalist class and dismantle them so they can never be used again. And we must use every means available to us in order to win.

If workers become the boss—the collective owners of the means of production—we can produce to satisfy the needs and wants of all and bring an end to war forever.

Our collective profit will be the well-being of all and the health of the planet we share.

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1 “California international students on alert as Trump ramps up arrests of pro-Palestinian activists”

<https://www.latimes.com/california/story/2025-03-28/california-pro-palestinian-student-activists-trump-visa-cancelations-immigration-arrests>

2 “Trump Administration Threatens to Withhold Funds From Public Schools”

<https://www.nytimes.com/2025/04/03/us/politics/public-school-funding-trump-dei.html>

3 “Trump Tries to Use White South Africans as Cautionary Tale”

<https://www.nytimes.com/2025/03/15/world/africa/south-africa-whites-trump.html>

4 “Columbia Agrees to Trump's Demands After Federal Funds Are Stripped”

<https://www.nytimes.com/2025/03/21/nyregion/columbia-response-trump-demands.html?searchResultPosition=1>

5 “German Chancellor Rebukes Vance for Supporting Party That Downplays Nazis”

<https://www.nytimes.com/2025/02/15/world/europe/scholz-vance-munich-germany.html?searchResultPosition=1>

6 “Stock Ownership Is What Really Divides Americans”

<https://www.nytimes.com/2025/04/12/opinion/stock-market-tariffs.html>

7 “Workers Will Rule When They Work to Rule” elsewhere in this magazine.

8 “Stock Ownership Is What Really Divides Americans”

<https://www.nytimes.com/2025/04/12/opinion/stock-market-tariffs.html>

# They Are Disappearing People

By SONALI KOLHATKAR

President Donald Trump promised to unleash mass deportations on immigrants during his presidential campaign. But he has gone much further, with the disappearing of hundreds of Venezuelan nationals from the United States to El Salvador's notorious gulag. It's a warning shot—one that has serious consequences for all of us, immigrant or not.

The method and speed of his actions are breathtaking. Over several years, there has been an exodus of millions of Venezuelans from the left-wing regime of Hugo Chávez, now overseen by President Nicolás Maduro. The U.S. Congress granted them Temporary Protected Status (TPS), enabling nearly 350,000 Venezuelans to legally reside in the United States.

That designation remained on the government's books until the beginning of 2025. But, within weeks of Trump's second-term inauguration in January 2025, he rescinded TPS for

Venezuelans, invoked a 1798 law called the Alien Enemies Act, and immediately dumped three planeloads of Venezuelan men to El Salvador's prisons for allegedly being gang members.

When an emergency ACLU-led court hearing resulted in U.S. District Judge James Boasberg ordering an immediate halt to the deportations, including a demand that the flights be turned around midair, the Trump White House defied the order and pressed ahead. Their justification was that the planes were outside U.S. airspace and, therefore, the order didn't apply.

This action, only one in an overwhelming series of violent political earthquakes unleashed by the Trump regime, is an intentional test of myriad institutional norms and laws.

First, Trump is making clear that this is no longer about deporting undocumented immigrants and that anyone can be disappeared at any time. His government is going after U.S. citi-

zens of color. It is targeting academics of color who are working or studying in the country with valid papers, particularly those who are Muslim or seeking justice for Palestine, such as Mahmoud Khalil and Bader Khan Suri. He is also targeting white Europeans and Canadian tourists, artists, and others. The situation is so dire that Germany and the UK have issued travel advisories against the United States.

Second, Trump is using disinformation so willfully and skillfully that he has news media fumbling on fact-checking him, as they take him at face value. He has asserted "pro-Hamas aliens" have infiltrated college campuses—relying on the bipartisan conflation of anti-Israel criticism with antisemitism—and is ominously taking his lead from a Zionist organization that sent him a list of thousands of potential deportees.

He has claimed the United States is being invaded by a dangerous and violent Venezuelan gang, Tren de Aragua—it is not. White House Press Secretary Karoline Leavitt outrageously libeled the Venezuelan men who were sent to El Salvador as "rapists, murderers, and gangsters." But there is no evidence of this, and even if there was, there are due process laws in place to deal with these allegations. Instead, innocent people have been indefinitely disappeared into a prison system known for torture and cruelty—what some have justifiably termed a "concentration camp."

To add to the confusion about his actions, Trump claimed he didn't sign the Alien Enemies Act—and why would he sign a 1798 law? But he did invoke it, in writing, on the White House website. This sort of confusion is designed to suck up media resources. For example, the *Washington Post* printed an entire story about it, wondering, "Did Trump



Rumeysa Ozturk, a 30-year-old doctoral student at Tufts University, is detained by masked Department of Homeland Security agents on a street in Somerville, Mass. on March 25, 2025. (Screenshot from security camera video)



misspeak? Is he trying to deflect responsibility for a decision?"

Trump did the same thing during his first term and many journalists tied themselves into knots attempting to cover his deception. "President Donald Trump lies, but not everything he says is a lie," said *CNN's* Brian Stelter in 2018. That's like saying, "this man is a rapist but does not rape every woman he encounters." The obfuscation is the point.

And third, Trump is testing the ability of the courts to stop him from breaking the law. Defying Judge Boasberg's order to stop the disappearances of Venezuelans into El Salvador's prisons, Trump violently railed against Boasberg as a "Radical Left Lunatic of a Judge, a troublemaker and agitator," and demanded he be impeached in a social media post. Supreme Court Chief Justice John G. Roberts, Jr. issued a rare rebuke denouncing such threats, but it was Roberts's court that ruled Trump was legally immune from prosecution for actions conducted during his presidential terms. As it stands now, the president faces no consequences for defying judicial orders. He has also threatened to sanction law firms for accepting cases challenging his policies.

There is no more apt time to remember the poem, "First They Came," by Martin Niemöller. Today the Trump administration is going after Venezuelans and Palestinians—tomorrow it can be any one of us.

Those Trump supporters who cheered on the president, thinking themselves and their loved ones safe from his hate, now face the deportations of spouses and neighbors.

Immigration and Customs Enforcement even mistakenly detained a pro-Trump naturalized U.S. citizen who voted for the racist president and who then expressed shock that he wasn't safe from Trump's white supremacist dragnet.

Progressives warned for years that Trump's presidency is based on maintaining white power and racial capitalism

at all costs in a demographically changing nation. Critics also cautioned Democrats like Chuck Schumer and Joe Biden against equating anti-Israel rhetoric with antisemitism and against leaning into anti-immigrant rhetoric and policies. They advised mainstream corporate media outlets against accepting and disseminating anti-immigrant narratives and social media platforms against spreading racist lies about immigrants.

**Tolerating  
anti-immigrant cruelty  
opens the door to all of  
us being victims of such  
savagery. No one is  
immune.**

Had liberal leaders and media outlets unabashedly embraced a multiracial democracy, there would have been a clear delineation between Trump's Republican Party and the opposition.

Instead, by accepting the dehumanization of Palestinians, Muslims, Latin Americans, South Asians and Arabs—as though there is a hard line between the humanity of immigrants and citizens—they opened the door to undermining all our rights. There is no limit Trump won't cross unless forcefully stopped.

One pro-Trump conservative whose organization boasts about successfully pushing for an extremist Supreme Court majority warned, "What's going to be on the horizon are denaturalization cases," which means Trump is likely to begin stripping naturalized citizens (like me) of their citizenship. He's also pursuing an end to birthright citizenship.

The danger of our current political moment is the inevitable outcome of accepting and internalizing dehumanizing narratives about people we deem "others." Tolerating anti-immigrant cruelty opens the door to all of us being victims of such savagery. No one is immune.

*Sonali Kolhatkar is the founder, host and executive producer of "Rising Up With Sonali," a television and radio show that airs on Free Speech TV and Pacifica stations.*

—*In These Times*, March 27, 2025

<https://inthesetimes.com/article/trump-ice-dhs-deportations-immigrants>

### "First They Came"

By Pastor Martin Niemöller<sup>1</sup>

First they came for the Communists  
And I did not speak out  
Because I was not a Communist  
Then they came for the Socialists  
And I did not speak out  
Because I was not a Socialist  
Then they came for the trade unionists  
And I did not speak out  
Because I was not a trade unionist  
Then they came for the Jews  
And I did not speak out  
Because I was not a Jew  
Then they came for me  
And there was no one left  
To speak out for me

<sup>1</sup> <https://hmd.org.uk/resource/first-they-came-by-pastor-martin-niemoller/>

# Trump's Tariffs: It's the Working Class Who Will Pay

BY DANIEL ALFONSO

Wednesday, April 9, 2025—Last week, on so-called “Liberation Day,” the Trump administration announced gargantuan tariffs on dozens of commercial partners. The announcement was coupled with the threat of even higher tariffs for those countries that had preexisting import taxes or had taken other economic measures against American products. Some tariffs, such as those against Vietnam (46 percent!) were far higher than those imposed on U.S. imports. While a few countries view the tariffs as Trump’s attempt to force new trade negotiations, many, including China, are responding with retaliatory tariffs of their own.

With a speed that astonished friend and foe alike, Trump counterattacked by imposing a further 50 percent increase on Chinese goods and announced on Tuesday evening that at midnight, increases totaling 104 percent, would take effect. This was raised to 125 percent on Wednesday. In response the Chinese government has raised tariffs to a total of 84 percent as of Wednesday. The European Union is also set to approve new tariffs that would take effect next week.

Markets have responded chaotically to the news, dropping precipitously after the initial announcement on April 2, only to recover, fall again, and then recover dramatically again today when Trump announced he would be temporarily suspending some of the so-called “reciprocal” tariffs on most countries, with the exception of China. Those on Mexico and Canada, however, remain.

**What all corporations want, after all, is cheap labor and they don't really care if it's American, Mexican, or Vietnamese.**

Despite this temporary recovery, there is still a growing consensus that a recession could be imminent if tariffs remain high or escalate even further—JP Morgan places the risk at 60 percent, Goldman Sachs at 45 percent. As always, capital is worried about its profit margins, but Trump’s brazen scheme will first and foremost affect the work-

ing class both at home and beyond the borders of the declining empire.

Trump’s tariffs, which violate the basic rules of imperialist globalization based on free trade, will have profoundly negative consequences if they remain in place—both for the real economy and the lives of millions, in particular the working class and the oppressed. Trump may back down further and instead attempt to use tariffs again as a form of extreme pressure to negotiate onerous conditions against the allies and commercial enemies of the U.S. alike.

## **Protectionist policies are not a solution to neoliberalism**

It may seem that the ongoing trade war started by Trump is being fought only on Wall Street, but this is not the case. This war is already materially expressed on the ground in Michigan, one of the states whose working class experienced first-hand the neoliberal offensive that left hundreds-of-thousands of workers in the rust belt in poverty. Workers there are already feeling the beginning of the consequences of these tariffs.

As is well known, 20 percent of Michigan’s economy is tied to the auto industry, which depends on parts and vehicles from Mexico and Canada, and on Chinese imports. This trade feeding Michigan’s economy is so dynamic that the state is the fifth largest importer and exporter in the United States.

Auto industry executives in Detroit are already accumulating stock of imported components and fighting suppliers due to price increase. The headquarters of the big auto companies have been transformed into “war rooms” to strategize how to lower production costs which, of course, includes lowering wages and increasing workloads.



Photo: Opening Bell Daily

Workers at the big auto plants also have been preparing for scarcity and there's fear of potential layoffs if demand falls due to price increases of vehicles. Red flags are popping up already. Just hours after the tariffs were announced, Stellantis laid off 900 workers at its factory in Indiana which sold supplies to factories in Mexico and Canada. The VIX index, which measures market volatility, surged.

### **Despite Trump's bravado, tensions brew within the administration**

Until now, despite clear evidence to the contrary, the Trumpist coalition and Trump himself have tried to project the idea that there is unity in the palace. The important differences between the tech tycoons, MAGA, the cabinet, and other sectors have already reached the headlines. This week Robert Navarro and Elon Musk have traded insults online, with the administration trying to sell it as an exercise in openness. Big Capital turned to Trump thinking that this new administration would be "all bark and no bite" and gleeful about the cuts to social security and tax breaks for the super-rich. They dismissed the idea that Trump had deep political objectives tied to his tariff crusade.

While Trump has temporarily backed off on some of the proposed tariffs, perhaps placating some of his critics, it's unclear whether or not discontent on Wall Street and within the ranks of the GOP will grow. Last week, the Senate voted on a resolution to end tariffs on Canada—four Republican senators supported the resolution. Republican Senator Chuck Grassley and Democratic Senator Maria Cantwell also introduced last week a bill to require Congress to be informed 48 hours before any tariffs go into effect and be subject to review by Congress in a 60-day period. They would expire if not approved. Bipartisan cooperation against the tariffs, however limited at this point, reveals some of

the administration's challenges and the GOP congressional majority, which has so far acted obediently but has its own agenda and substantial differences with Trump and Musk.

For weeks, Big Capital was mainly silent regarding tariffs but the harsh reaction of the markets and affectations over the real economy have pushed them to start being vocal. As the *Wall Street Journal* described a few days ago:

"Now, after a three-day market selloff and warnings from Wall Street titans such as Bill Ackman and Jamie Dimon, more business leaders are openly voicing concern. Ken Griffin, a billionaire and top Republican donor who runs hedge-fund firm Citadel, called the tariffs a 'huge policy mistake' at a Monday evening event at the University of Miami."

**Bernie Sanders and Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez have been rallying under the slogan of "Fight Oligarchy," as if the Democratic Party was not a party of the super-rich as well, fostering illusions in the idea that the Democrats will actually put up a fight.**

More important than the internal struggles in Trumpworld, made up of billionaires, neo-Nazis and obscurantists, are the many signs that the resistance against Trump has begun.

### **Tariffs affect the working class, as does capitalist globalization**

On Saturday, April 5, 2025, hundreds-of-thousands of people took to the streets against Trump's attacks on government institutions and in defense of Medicaid,

Social Security, and other social services and entitlement programs. The impact of the tariffs certainly contributed to the high attendance.

Saturday's massive demonstrations followed weeks of mobilizations which began last month across the country against the cuts, in defense of social security, and against the layoffs of public employees. We have also seen regular protests by migrants and their communities against Immigration and Customs Enforcement raids.

Disoriented and demoralized, the Democratic Party establishment has so far taken a wait-and-see approach to Trump's first ten weeks in office. Over the last couple of weeks, however, it has shifted towards a slightly more confrontational stance. Former president Barack Obama himself called for an active defense of Americans' "Democratic rights."

Meanwhile, Bernie Sanders and Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez have been rallying under the slogan of "Fight Oligarchy," as if the Democratic Party was not a party of the super-rich as well, fostering illusions in the idea that the Democrats will actually put up a fight. Regarding tariffs, the Democratic Party advocates for the free trade of the past which impoverished the working class of the Rust Belt and allowed U.S. corporations to make millions in profits from cheap Mexican labor. But neoliberal relocation did not only go to Mexico or China or Vietnam, it also went to the American South where there are significantly fewer unions and bosses have more leeway to impose precarious working conditions

Trump is promising to use tariffs to bring industry and industrial jobs back to America, but any such scenario, if it actually did come to pass, would have to be founded on a program of increased exploitation and repression of working people and their organizations, including unions like the United Auto Workers. What all corporations want, after all, is cheap labor and they

don't really care if it's American, Mexican, or Vietnamese.

In the face of these attacks, union leaders like Sean O'Brien and Shawn Fain are siding with Trump on tariffs, pitting the interests of the American working class against that of their class siblings across the world—especially across the southern border.

A cornerstone of Trump's political support is the rejection of the neoliberal agenda by large swaths of the working class—coupled with the ineptitude of a Democratic Party that clings to the *status quo*. Below the surface of the tariffs and the tensions in the bipartisan regime lay the political experience of the working class in the United States. Those who voted for Trump with the hopes of improving their lives will be forced to face the dire reality that Trump's strategy to resituate the U.S. internationally, his response to the steep decline of U.S. hegemony, relies, at its core, on attacks on remnants of the U.S. welfare state, more precarization of labor, and high levels of inflation and uncertainty.

In recent years, the regime has been able to channel discontent towards the ballot box, as was the case with Black Lives Matter in 2020. This time, however, the discontent with the Democratic Party runs deeper and the vanguard's experience is greater. It is essential to deploy the broadest unity of labor, social movements, and the student movement to stop Trump and raise an independent perspective so that this time, it is the working class and not the Democratic Party that is strengthened by the resistance against the new right in power.

—Left Voice, April 9, 2025

<https://www.leftvoice.org/trumps-tariffs-are-causing-chaos-on-wall-street-but-its-the-working-class-who-will-pay-the-price/>

## Trump Pledges \$1 Trillion for U.S. Military

Working class to foot the bill

By JAKE JOHNSON

President Donald Trump, on Monday, April 7, 2025, publicly backed an annual budget of roughly \$1 trillion for the U.S. military as his administration rushed ahead with a destructive tariff scheme that amounts to a major tax increase on American households, with working-class families set to bear much of the pain.

Speaking to reporters at the White House during a sit-down with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, Trump said his administration has signed off on an upcoming military budget in the vicinity of \$1 trillion, which would be a record sum. The military budget for the current fiscal year is \$892 billion, more than half of the federal government's discretionary budget.

"Nobody's seen anything like it," Trump said Monday of his \$1 trillion budget proposal.

Pentagon chief Pete Hegseth later chimed in on social media, voicing enthusiastic support for a \$1 trillion military budget and vowing to spend those dollars "on lethality and readiness."

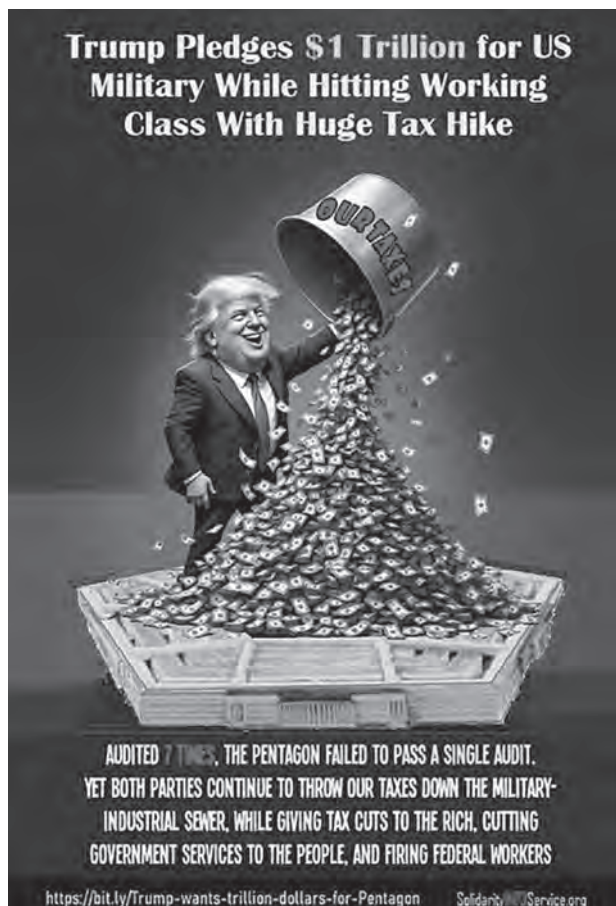
William Hartung, senior research fellow at the Quincy Institute for Responsible Statecraft, warned in a statement Tuesday that "spending \$1 trillion on the Pentagon while hollowing out resources for diplomacy and launching a global trade war is a recipe for international conflict and American decline."

"The wars in Iraq and Afghanistan should have

taught us that a military-first approach to foreign policy is both ineffective and immensely costly in blood and treasure," said Hartung. "As for dealing with the challenge posed by China, we need a more balanced approach that mixes diplomacy with deterrence and keeps open the option for dialogue and cooperation on urgent issues like climate change, pandemics, and the perilous state of the global economy."

"Pursuing a trillion-dollar Pentagon budget at the expense of other priorities," he added, "would be a trillion-dollar blunder."

Trump and Hegseth's remarks indicate that the Pentagon—long a hotbed of waste and egregious abuse of taxpayer money, largely for the benefit of



private contractors—will likely remain insulated from the Elon Musk-led effort to dismantle federal agencies under the guise of boosting government efficiency.

In February, Hegseth authored a memo instructing Pentagon leaders to draw up plans to reduce the military budget in each of the next five years. But it soon became clear that the Pentagon leadership is pushing to divert funds to Trump priorities—including his proposed Iron Dome for America boondoggle—rather than reduce overall spending.

Under Democratic and Republican presidents, and with overwhelming bipartisan support in Congress, the U.S. military budget has been steadily racing toward the \$1 trillion mark year after year, despite the Pentagon's inability to pass an audit and mounting evidence of large-scale fraud and misuse of taxpayer money.

Trump's budget proposal would have to be approved by the Republican-controlled Congress, which is currently working—with the president's support—to further slash taxes for the rich and large corporations and cut Medicare, food aid, and other federal assistance programs.

“Trump plans on liquidating Medicaid and SNAP benefits while giving the Pentagon a trillion dollars,” wrote Stephen Semler, co-founder of the Security Policy Reform Institute. “If the Democrats can't make a coherent political message out of these basic facts, they're not an opposition party, or even a party.”

—*Common Dreams*, April 8, 2025

<https://www.commondreams.org/news/trump-trillion-military-budget>

## Columbia at a Crossroads

**For a Democratic open town hall for all students, faculty, and staff against the repression and all the attacks**

BY MARYAM ALANIZ

Since Trump's inauguration, there has been a significant uptick in political repression in the United States. Columbia University has become the center of this battle between the U.S. regime and one of the most noteworthy movements in recent history, which questioned the genocidal campaign in Palestine. Columbia's overwhelmingly pro-Palestine student body came into confrontation with the university's administration, which has deep ties to U.S. imperialism.

As if the administration's true face weren't revealed during the repression of the encampments, when former university president Minouche Shafik called the NYPD on students, recent weeks have marked a leap in administrators' willingness to discipline students, collaborate with the NYPD and ICE, and engage in union busting. Their recent acquiescence to Trump's demands, in order to prevent \$400 million in cuts, is the latest confirmation of their “donors first” attitude.

The most striking confirmation came on March 28, when Columbia president Katrina Armstrong stepped down after less than eight months in

office. This sudden resignation is widely understood to be the result of pressure from the university's donors and the Trump administration, following Armstrong's comments at a leaked faculty meeting in which she appeared to downplay the university's detested agreement with the Trump administration. Even though she had publicly reaffirmed her support for Trump's policies just days earlier, it seems that even the appearance of dissent was too much.

Armstrong's ouster is a clear sign that the university apparatus is increasingly subordinated to the agenda of the Far Right. Any internal disagreement—even one expressed in private—can result in swift discipline, showing that loyalty to the regime's political line is now the litmus test for leadership at elite institutions.

Claire Shipman, now the acting president, inherits a campus in crisis and will be tasked with implementing the same Trumpian measures that led to her predecessor's downfall. Although she is being attacked by the Far Right—especially by figures like Elise Stefanik and Virginia Foxx, who have



denounced her appointment because of texts she sent calling the congressional hearings “Capitol Hill nonsense”—there’s no question where Shipman truly stands. Shipman played a leading role in the university’s disciplining of protesters during the Gaza Solidarity Encampment in April 2024 and played an active role in preparing the pro-Zionist narrative to defend the university before Congress last year. Her rise to the presidency confirms that the real issue isn’t individual presidents but the university’s institutional alignment with the regime—regardless of who is in charge, the Columbia administration serves bipartisan imperialism.

As the Columbia administration has shown, there is no in-between when it comes to the interests of the broader student body and workers at the university and the interests of the regime and the donors who profit from war and repression. These basic realities are animating recent events, like the attempts to deport Mahmoud Khalil, a former Columbia student and worker, as well as the expulsion of Student Workers of Columbia (SWC) union president Grant Miner, and even immigrant students like Ranjini Srinivasan and Yunseo Chung, who were targeted for their pro-Palestinian activism. More stories appear every day, and the level of repression seems unlike anything we’ve seen in the recent past harking back to McCarthyism.

Despite this right-wing offensive, it has attracted national attention and led to a broad outcry. Mahmoud Khalil’s petition, which received millions of signatures calling for his immediate release and for the defense of democratic rights like the right to protest, made waves. This public campaign, uniting sectors of the activist vanguard and everyday defenders of free speech, likely helped thwart Trump’s attempts to deport Khalil without a trial and forced the trial to be held in New Jersey instead of Louisiana, where Khalil is being held.

More sectors are being awakened again by the current situation. As Trump and Netanyahu resume their offensive in Gaza, those who mobilized for Palestine are angered by another wave of violence. Immigrants are kept on edge by constant news stories. The trans community is also being targeted by the Trump administration. Researchers are facing cuts and censorship. And the labor movement—from public sector workers to those in higher education, who had already been rising up against their precarity in recent years—is being galvanized, now that one of the UAW’s own was expelled from Columbia right before a bargaining session for a new contract. The labor movement has been pulled into the fight, even as labor leaders like Shawn Fain and Sean O’Brien express enthusiasm for Trump’s tariffs and the possibility of working alongside U.S. imperialism’s top figure.

**...regardless of who is in charge, the Columbia administration serves bipartisan imperialism...**

That’s why this moment is about the students, oppressed communities, and workers who are being hit the hardest. These are not isolated incidents because Trump and his collaborators have a job to do: stoke fear and prevent class struggle. That doesn’t mean the fight is over; in many ways it’s just beginning. But how did we get here in the first place?

#### **From encampments to repression**

It was barely a year ago that the encampment movement was on the rise, following months of protests on the streets to denounce Palestinian oppression at the hands of Zionism and its imperialist backers. As we explained, even before the encampment movement, the movement’s potential was being curtailed by lead-

erships that preferred to lobby the Democratic Party rather than organize independently from it.

Rather than a pressure campaign on parties like the Democrats—who were the architects of genocide even if they called for a ceasefire in their rhetoric—the movement could have benefitted instead from the development of mass democratic spaces, such as assemblies in schools, workplaces, and communities, where the millions who took to the streets at the peak of the movement could debate and decide on demands and coordinated actions rather than being told what to do by leaders with illusions in the Democratic Party.

Even groups like the Party of Socialism and Liberation (PSL), which led many of these protests, adapted to this approach by avoiding mass democratic spaces that could have fostered the independent organization of students, workers, and oppressed people. As the genocide continued, the protests seemed more symbolic than escalatory. People showed up, listened to speeches, chanted, and went home. But what was the strategy? What were the next steps? Who got to decide them?

Then came the encampment movement, which was born on Columbia’s lawn, spurred by the ongoing horrors of the genocide in Gaza and a deep sense of injustice. In many ways, the encampments were a reaction to the stagnation of the movement on the streets. Students adopted a logic of constant “escalation,” but here too the absence of democratic spaces of decision-making, paved the way for increasingly risky actions without bringing broader layers of students, workers, and community members into active, democratic participation. From our firsthand experience, we saw that while students were brave and determined, they took many actions without consulting or involving the broader student body or campus workers.

There were no mass assemblies where hundreds could debate tactics,

escalate together, or organize defense. The encampments became increasingly risky without building the mass participation and legitimacy needed to sustain and expand them. The lesson? Escalation must be paired with self-organization. That's because real escalation isn't just about chanting more radical slogans or taking defiant action; it means taking steps that shift the balance of power—by organizing open, democratic assemblies, involving as many people as possible, and forging strategic ties with workers who have the power to shut it all down.

Take the occupation of Hind's Hall in April 2024. In response to Columbia's ongoing repression and complicity in genocide, a small group of students occupied the building, renaming it Hind's Hall after a Palestinian child killed in Gaza, and issued bold demands to sever ties with war profiteers.

But despite its courage, the action was tactically isolated—carried out without mass assemblies, collective planning, or coordination with workers. This wasn't merely a problem of a few assemblies here and there—it was a problem of not building assemblies as centers of democratic decision-making for the base. We've seen these exist elsewhere—from Mexico to the CUNY (City University of New York) PSC (Professional Staff Congress) assembly organized by the rank and file during the CCNY (City College of New York) encampment. When built seriously, they aren't just symbolic spaces but spaces where large sectors of the movement can genuinely take control of their own struggle.

Because Hind's Hall was not rooted in that kind of mass participation, the administration and the state were able to move in with overwhelming force. The administration called in the NYPD, which stormed the building and arrested dozens of students. The media spectacle allowed figures like Mayor Eric Adams, Columbia's Board

of Trustees, and national Democratic politicians to frame the action as “extremist,” “antisemitic,” and “outside agitator driven.” The Democratic Party establishment seized on the moment to recast the entire movement as dangerous and illegitimate. That narrative opened the floodgates to repression—not just at Columbia but at campuses across the country.

This wave of repression didn't originate with Trump. It came from the Democratic Party—and that's the point. Trump is not an aberration. He is continuing what the Democrats have started and what they still support today. But he's willing to go even further to undermine our ability to organize as workers and students for years to come.

**The lesson? Escalation must be paired with self-organization. That's because real escalation isn't just about chanting more radical slogans or taking defiant action; it means taking steps that shift the balance of power—by organizing.**

#### **What is to be done?**

We are in a very different phase now, but we can still take lessons from our recent experiences. Clearly, the encampments lit the spark at universities across the world—but we need something more sustained, more democratic, and more rooted in the masses.

We need a space where everyone who wants to fight the repression can contribute. A space for people who may not be on the front lines but still want to participate. A space that's open and that, if built large and democratic

enough, can create its own protection through strength in numbers.

Toward that goal, a democratic, open town hall, open to all students, faculty, and staff at Columbia could be a first step. Who could come to this space? The overwhelming majority of students who voted yes in the recent referendum on divestment could join those already fighting campus repression, including immigrant and trans students facing attacks, as well as researchers, faculty, adjuncts, and staff who want academic freedom, no cuts, and better union contracts. All groups on campus could unite their struggles in a space like this to build collective strength and decide democratically how and for what we fight together.

A town hall like this should not be symbolic; its participants should vote on next steps, elect spokespeople, and form committees to coordinate actions based on mass agreement: walkouts, teach-ins, joint statements, petitions, mobilizations, and even political strikes.

The labor movement on campus, in particular, needs to use every tool in its arsenal to build such a space that can meaningfully fight back against the attacks. Working groups within the Student Workers of Columbia-UAW Local 2710 (SWC), like the International Students Working Group and Cops Off Campus, have already organized town halls, but we need something even broader and more sustained.

We also need our unions to take seriously the necessity of democratic spaces. We call on union leaders at every level at Columbia and beyond to treat the expulsions and deportations of SWC members as what they are: union-busting attacks, and to use every tool available to mobilize members and take political action democratically. Leaders must stop paying lip service to democracy and actually build it. Otherwise, they're enabling top-down structures that preserve the *status quo*.

**From repression to resistance:  
toward a mass movement  
against the far right**

Any serious resistance on campus must recognize the fight against Columbia's administration's attacks as inseparable from the fight against the far-right regime it collaborates with. In this context, our task is clear: we need to build spaces of resistance that confront both the university and the regime it serves. To combat the university's repression, we have to fight the regime itself—because the two are working hand in hand.

This means moving beyond reacting to each attack in isolation and instead developing a clear political strategy rooted in the understanding that our struggles on campus are part of a broader fight against a reactionary regime that serves the interests of U.S. imperialism and uses repression to maintain its hegemony. While the repression is escalating and our leaderships often feel slow to channel our rage into action, recent years have shown that students and workers are ready to respond.

From Black Lives Matter to the movement for Palestine, students and workers have had experiences that have shown us how an attack on one is an attack on all. But we need a political strategy for the rank and file to con-

front the moment, rather than succumbing to the idea that there is nothing we can do; that the best we can do is rely on the Democrats, who paved the way for these attacks, engage in mutual aid and legal support (which are necessary but insufficient), or believe that broader sectors won't join our fight.

**The way forward isn't  
through closed doors or  
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and mass action.**

Instead, we have the opportunity to give a voice to those broader sectors and unite all our struggles. This also includes uniting the fight for democratic rights, such as the right to protest and to free speech, with our struggles for divestment, for Palestinian liberation, in defense of trans folks, for immigrant rights, against budget cuts, and for SWC's contract. Without confronting the repression and connecting it to our larger struggles, we will be condemned to surrendering our ability to mobilize.

If we can overturn Mahmoud Khalil's conviction or reinstate Grant Miner, we

show the world that when we fight, we win. Every defense of our rights—every dropped charge, every rehired worker—builds confidence in the movement.

A democratic town hall can be a first step toward coordinating immediate actions—but it must be more than that. It must help lay the foundation for a mass movement that can fight repression, confront the Far Right, and build lasting power independent of the bipartisan regime and its allies. The way forward isn't through closed doors or symbolic gestures—it's through unity built through mass democracy and mass action. An open, democratic town hall can bring us together, give the rank and file a voice, and chart a real strategy to win at Columbia. It can jolt our movement in the right direction and help us build the kind of movement that can not only defend itself but also go on the offensive for what we really want.

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—Left Voice, April 3, 2025

<https://www.leftvoice.org/columbia-at-a-crossroads-for-a-democratic-open-town-hall-for-all-students-faculty-and-staff-against-the-repression-and-all-the-attacks/>

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## **Surrendering to Authoritarianism**

BY CHRIS HEDGES

I was not surprised when Columbia University's interim president Katrina Armstrong caved to the demands of the Trump administration. She agreed to ban face masks or face coverings, prohibit protests in academic buildings and create an internal security force of 36 New York City Police officers empowered to "remove individuals from campus and/or arrest them when appropriate." She has also surrendered the autonomy of academic depart-

ments, as demanded by the Trump administration, by appointing a new senior vice provost to "review" the university's department of Middle East, South Asian and African Studies and the Center for Palestine Studies.

Elite universities such as Harvard, Princeton, Columbia or Yale, were created to train and perpetuate the plutocracy. They are not and never have been centers of cutting-edge intellectual thought or hospitable to dissidents and

radicals. They cloak themselves in the veneer of moral probity and intellectualism but cravenly serve political and economic power. This is their nature. Don't expect it to change, even as we fall headlong into authoritarianism.

Armstrong, like most of the heads of our universities, is fruitlessly humiliating herself. She would, I expect, happily make space on her office wall to hang an oversized portrait of the president. But what she does not know, and what





Stomp of Approval – by Mr. Fish

history has taught us, is that no appeasement is sufficient with autocrats. She, and the rest of the liberal elites, groveling abjectly in an attempt to accommodate their new masters, will be steadily replaced or dominated by buffoonish goons such as those seeded throughout the Trump administration.

The Department of Education has warned 60 colleges and universities that they could face “potential enforcement actions,” if they do not comply with federal civil rights law that protects students from discrimination based on race or nationality, which includes anti-semitism. Columbia, stripped of \$400 million in federal grants, is desperately trying to restore the funding. I doubt it will work. Those mounting these assaults against universities intend to turn them into indoctrination machines. The so-called campaign against antisemitism is simply a cynical tool being used to achieve that end.

The warning follows an open letter signed by 200 faculty members on February 3 urging Columbia University implement measures to “protect Jewish students.” Amongst their demands are the removal of Professor Joseph Massad who teaches Modern Arab Politics and

Intellectual History at the university and beginning a Title VI investigation against him, that the university adopt the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance’s (IHRA) working definition of antisemitism, which conflates criticism of Israel with racism against Jews, and the university hire tenured pro-Israel faculty.

### Institutions of privilege

These institutions of privilege—I attended Harvard and have taught at Columbia and Princeton—have always been complicit in the crimes of their times. They did not, until the world around them changed, speak out against the slaughter of Native Americans, the enslavement of Africans, the crushing of labor and socialist organizations at the turn of the twentieth century and the purging of institutions, including the academy, during the Red Scare in the 1920s and 1930s, and later the witch hunts under McCarthyism. They turned on their students protesting the war in Vietnam in the 1960s as viciously as they are turning on them now.

**The law in authoritarian states protects the criminality of the powerful. It revokes due process, basic freedoms and the rights of citizenship. It is an instrument of repression.**

Many of the dregs of the Trump administration are products of these elite academic institutions. I can assure you their children will also attend these schools despite their public denunciations. Representative Elise Stefanik, who humiliated in congressional hearings the presidents of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Harvard and

the University of Pennsylvania, graduated from Harvard. Vice President JD Vance graduated from Yale Law School. Trump graduated from the University of Pennsylvania. Defense Secretary Peter Hegseth went to Princeton University and Harvard’s Kennedy School of Government. Secretary of Health and Human Services Robert F. Kennedy Jr.—who has ordered a review of grants to universities from his agency over allegations of antisemitism—graduated from Harvard.

Professor Katherine Franke, who taught at Columbia Law School for 25 years, recently lost her position at the university for defending Columbia students’ right to protest in favor of a ceasefire of the Israeli slaughter in Gaza and for Columbia University to divest from Israel. She also condemned the spraying of pro-Palestinian protesters on the campus with a toxic chemical that left students hospitalized.

“Part of why I think Columbia was such an easy target—and it’s not just Columbia, I think this is true for Harvard, for Yale, for the elite universities—is that the boards of trustees are no longer made up of people who are involved in education—committed to the educational mission, in some way professionally or otherwise—see themselves as custodians of the special role that the academy plays in a democracy,” she told me.

“Instead, they are hedge fund managers, venture capitalists, corporate lawyers and in our case, arms manufacturers as well.” She went on:

“And they see that responsibility is to protect only the endowment. I often describe Columbia—which is the largest residential landlord in New York City—as a real estate holding operation that has a side hustle of teaching classes. It has evolved over time into just a business that enjoys nonprofit status. And so, when the pressure started here, there were no voices on the boards of trustees to say, ‘Hey, wait a minute, we have to

be the front line of resistance.’ Or at a minimum, we have to defend our academic mission.’ When I was sitting in my living room watching [former] president Minouche Shafik testify before that House committee...I was upset because they mentioned me, but more importantly, the fact that president Shafik did not even begin to defend Columbia, its faculty, its students, our project, our history of being one of the premier universities in the world. Instead, she groveled before a bully. And we all know that when you grovel before a bully, it encourages the bully. And that’s exactly what’s happened here up until today, where they’re still negotiating with the Trump administration on terms that the administration has set. And this university, I think, will never be the same if it survives at all.”<sup>1</sup>

Universities and colleges across the country have shut down free speech and squandered their academic integrity. They have brutalized, arrested, suspended and expelled faculty, administrators and students that decry the genocide. They have called police to their campuses—in the case of Columbia three times—to arrest students, often charging them with trespassing. Following the lead of their authoritarian masters they subjected students to internal surveillance. Columbia University, out front on the repression of its students, banned Students for Justice in Palestine and Jewish Voice for Peace a month after Israel’s genocide in Gaza had begun in November 2023, when both organizations called for a ceasefire, long before the protests and encampments began.

Columbia’s violent suppression of protests and decision to lock down its campus, which is now surrounded by security checkpoints, paved the way for the abduction of Mahmoud Khalil, who was a graduate student at the School of International Public Affairs. He is a legal permanent resident. He did not commit a crime. But the university administration had already

demonized and criminalized Khalil and the other students, many of whom are Jewish, who dared to protest the mass slaughter in Gaza.

The video—shot by his wife on March 8—of Khalil being taken away by plainclothes federal agents from U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) who did not identify themselves, is a chilling reminder of the secret police abductions I witnessed on the streets of Santiago during the dictatorship of Augusto Pinochet.

**Elite universities such as Harvard, Princeton, Columbia or Yale, were created to train and perpetuate the plutocracy. They are not and never have been centers of cutting-edge intellectual thought or hospitable to dissidents and radicals. They cloak themselves in the veneer of moral probity and intellectualism but cravenly serve political and economic power.**

The law in authoritarian states protects the criminality of the powerful. It revokes due process, basic freedoms and the rights of citizenship. It is an instrument of repression. It is a very small step from the stripping of rights from a legal resident holding a green card to the stripping of rights of any citizen. This is what is coming.

Khalil was ostensibly arrested under the Immigration Nationality Act of 1952, also known as the McCarran-Walter Act. It gives the Secretary of State the power to deport foreign nationals if he has “reason-

able ground[s] to believe” their presence or activities in the U.S. “would have potentially serious adverse foreign policy consequences.” It was used to deny entry to the Chilean poet Pablo Neruda, the Colombian writer Gabriel Garcia Márquez and the British author Doris Lessing. It was also used to deport the poet and essayist Margaret Randall and civil rights activist and journalist Claudia Jones. Senator Patrick McCarran, an open admirer of the Spanish dictator Francisco Franco and a rabid antisemite, formulated the act to target not only dissidents and communists, but also Jews. When the law was enacted, it was used to ban Eastern European Jewish Holocaust survivors from entering the U.S. due to their alleged sympathies with the Soviet Union.

“The irony of that is not lost on any of us, that these are laws that are at their core, deeply antisemitic, that are now being deployed in the name of protecting Jewish citizens or our foreign policy goals with the state of Israel,” Franke said. “And that’s the cynicism of this administration. They don’t give a darn that there’s that history. They’re looking for every piece of power that they can get, every law, no matter how ugly that law may be. Even the laws that interned Japanese people during World War Two. I’m sure they would be more than happy to use those at some point.”

James Luther Adams, my mentor at Harvard Divinity School, was in Germany in 1935 and 1936 until he was arrested and deported by the Gestapo. He worked with the underground anti-Nazi church, known as the Confessing Church, led by dissident clergy such as Dietrich Bonhoeffer. Adams saw how swiftly and cravenly German universities, which like ours were considered some of the best in the world, surrendered to the dictates of fascism and self-destructed.

The theologian and philosopher Paul Tillich, a close friend of Adams, was fired from his teaching post and blacklisted ten weeks after the Nazis

came to power in January 1933. Tillich's book, *The Socialist Decision*, was immediately banned by the Nazis. Tillich, a Lutheran pastor, along with the sociologist Karl Mannheim and the philosopher Max Horkheimer, who wrote *Eclipse of Reason* which examines the rise of authoritarianism, were branded as "enemies of the Reich," blacklisted and forced into exile. The 1933 "Law for the Restoration of the Professional Civil Service" saw all Jewish professors dismissed. The vast majority of academics cowered in fear or, as with the case of the philosopher Martin Heidegger, joined the Nazi Party, which saw him appointed as the Rector of Freiburg University.

Adams saw in the Christian Right disturbing similarities with the German

Christian Church, which was pro-Nazi. He was the first person I heard refer to the Christian Right as "Christian fascists." He also warned us about universities and academics which, if the country fell into authoritarianism, would debase themselves to protect their status and privileges. Few would speak out or defy authority.

"If the Nazis took over America, 60 percent of the Harvard faculty would happily begin their lectures with the Nazi salute," he quipped.

And this is where we are. None of the liberal institutions, including the universities, the commercial media and the Democratic Party, will defend us. They will remain supine, hypocritically betray their supposed principles

and commitment to democracy or willingly transform themselves into apologists for the regime. The purges and silencing of our most courageous and accomplished intellectuals, writers, artists and journalists—began before Trump's return to the White House—is being expedited.

Resistance will be left to us. Enemies of the state.

—Sheerpost, March 24, 2025

<https://sheerpost.com/2025/03/24/chris-hedges-surrendering-to-authoritarianism/>

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<sup>1</sup> You can see my interview with Professor Franke here:

<https://chrishedges.substack.com/p/americas-constitutional-crisis-w>

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## Jeff Bezos Accidentally Exposes the Truth About "Western Democracy"

BY OWEN JONES

February 27, 2025—He really just went out and said it. Jeff Bezos, a plutocrat, the second richest man on earth, the guy who owns Amazon, also counts *The Washington Post* amongst his collection of toys. That happens to be one of the most influential newspapers in the United States, and indeed the world.

And yesterday, he made an announcement which confirmed all of the things the Left has long said—just like Donald Trump is discarding all of the pretenses about U.S. imperialism. Truly, we live in the age of "they're saying the quiet part out loud."

In a Tweet yesterday, Bezos said he'd shared a note with the *Washington Post* team about a "change coming to our opinion pages," as he puts it.

He says:

"We are going to be writing every day in support and defense of two pillars: personal liberties and free markets. We'll cover other topics too of course, but viewpoints opposing those pillars will be left to be published by others."

He goes on to say:

"There was a time when a newspaper, especially one that was a local monopoly, might have seen it as a service to bring to the reader's doorstep every morning a broad-based opinion section that sought to cover all views. Today, the internet does that job."

What is particularly funny is what he says next:

"I am of America and for America, and proud to be so. Our country did not get here by being typical. And a big part of America's success has been freedom in the economic realm and everywhere else. Freedom



Jeff Bezos, founder, executive chairman, and former president and CEO of Amazon, and second richest person in the world.

is ethical—it minimizes coercion—and practical—it drives creativity, invention, and prosperity.”

Freedom minimizes coercion, he solemnly declares, in a statement by a plutocrat ordering his newspaper to stop publishing opinions he doesn't agree with. Come on, that is genuinely funny. It's funny, too, because he declares that he's "confident that free markets and personal liberties are right for America." Personal liberties, right for America, but not right for the editors of the *Washington Post* opinion section!

**In the U.S., there are six media companies which own the vast majority of all media in the country.**

What he said underlines why we don't live in a real democracy, and never have, no matter what we're told.

This is also somewhat amusing given the notoriously coercive form of work which dominates Amazon. Referring to the surveillance they're under, workers have testified that "you feel like you're in prison."

After Bezos informed his opinion editor, David Shipley, that he was going to coerce him into restricting the range of opinions published, that man commendably resigned.

A few things here. "Personal liberties" and "free markets" is just code for "economic policies which favor extremely rich people like me." The guy runs a newspaper, and he wants it to be a propaganda rag which convinces ordinary citizens that economic policies which rig society in favor of people like him is actually in their best interest.

As for "free markets," Bezos is the living embodiment of this sham. A useful website tracks how much public subsidies Amazon benefits from, in turn, lining the pockets of Jeff Bezos. It turns out

his company has benefited from subsidies worth \$11.6 billion—and counting. His Blue Origin space company also benefited from tens-of-millions of dollars worth of public subsidies. Bernie Sanders led the fight against Congress bailing it out altogether.

Jeff Bezos also makes dosh from taxpayers the world over. Public contracts he's been awarded include for the Ministry of Defense here in the UK, while in 2022 it was reported he'd been handed £425 million worth of government contracts over two years.

The same people who like to decry what they call the evils of "big government" are the same ones lapping at the teats of government. (Apologies for the imagery.)

This underlines the nature of our economic system—socialism for the rich, capitalism for the poor. The state is rolled back when it comes to struggling Americans or Brits, but it provides the ultimate safety for corporate giants. For the average Joe, it's sink or swim, for the rich, the position of the state is— "we're at your service!"

What Jeff Bezos really wants is a newspaper which promotes the idea that cutting taxes on the rich and flogging public assets to billionaires benefits all of society. The fact the economic system has failed—and American wages for so many workers has stagnated—contradicts that claim, but he wants a newspaper that tries to brainwash people into believing otherwise.

Now it should be noted that Jeff Bezos ordered the *Washington Post* to violate its history of endorsing the Democrats in the last election. That decision came the same day that executives from his aerospace company met with Donald Trump, he claimed that was a coincidence and his decision wasn't driven by business interests. Note, however, that Washington's rulers have the power to block public contracts Bezos benefits from. In any case, the decision led to around 250,000 cancelling their *Washington Post* subscriptions.

He's also shelled out a vast sum to make a documentary about Melania Trump, and his Earth Fund halted funding for an initiative monitoring companies' decarbonization—both decisions widely understood as Bezos bowing down before Donald Trump.

Now his decision at the *Washington Post* has caused widespread anger. Jeff Stein, the chief economics reporter, tweeted:

"Massive encroachment by Jeff Bezos into *The Washington Post's* opinion section today—makes clear dissenting views will not be published or tolerated there. I still have not felt encroachment on my journalism on the news side of coverage, but if Bezos tries interfering with the news side I will be quitting immediately and letting you know."

Well, look, what Bezos has done is a real service here. He's proven us right. There are those of us who've said that rich moguls own newspapers in order to promote political agendas which benefit their interests. Bezos bought the *Washington Post* for \$250 million back in 2013, a fraction of what it had been worth a decade earlier, because that was a sound investment—he wanted to use it for political influence.

**...we've seen how media oligarchs cheerlead for their country's foreign policy—as of late, throwing their weight behind Israel's genocide in Gaza...**

This has always been the case. As British media mogul Lord Beaverbrook told the Royal Commission on the Press in 1948, he ran the *Daily Express* newspaper "purely for the purpose of making propaganda and with no other object... I look at it as a purely propagandist project."

Notably, back in 2003, all 175 newspapers owned by Rupert Murdoch just coincidentally all supported the invasion of Iraq. And indeed, we've seen how media oligarchs cheerlead for their country's foreign policy—as of late, throwing their weight behind Israel's genocide in Gaza.

Indeed, owning newspapers also buys political influence directly. As Russian media mogul Evgeny Lebedev—whose family once owned *The Independent* and still owns London's near-monopoly newspaper *The Evening Standard*—candidly put it: “It's unreasonable to expect individuals to spend millions on newspapers and not have access to politicians.”

In the U.S., there are six media companies which own the vast majority of all media in the country.

We don't live in a real democracy. That's because even though almost all adults have a vote, those with wealth are the ones with power. Society is rigged by people of a tiny elite who run entire countries as profit making enterprises, at the expense of the majority who live there.

This system is falling apart, unable to provide security and prosperity for so many. And that's led to the rise of right-wing populism which tells citizens that their lives are getting harder because of migrants, refugees, Muslims, you get the gist—rather than a society rigged in favor of a tiny few, like Jeff Bezos.

And until we fix that, humanity's future is looking pretty bleak.

—Owen Jones *Battlelines*, February 27, 2025

[https://www.owenjoness.com/p/jeff-bezos-accidentally-exposes-the?utm\\_source=post-email](https://www.owenjoness.com/p/jeff-bezos-accidentally-exposes-the?utm_source=post-email)

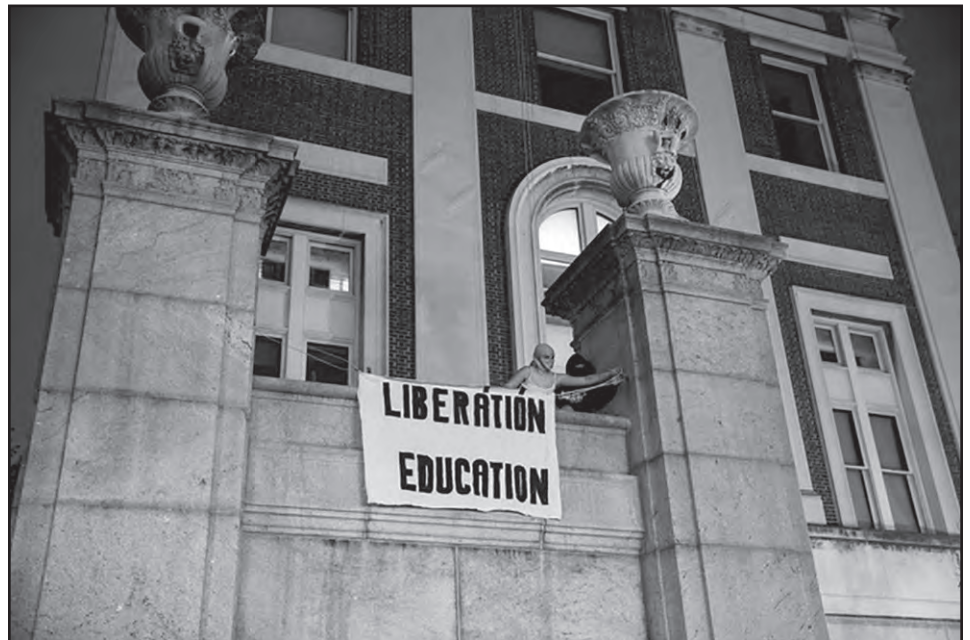
## Campus Cops Use Israeli Spy Tech to Crack Down on Students

BY TARA GOODARZI AND BRIAN DOLINAR

In the early days of his presidency, Donald Trump announced he would be “fighting anti-Semitism” on college campuses by prosecuting and revoking visas for certain students deemed to be “ Hamas sympathizers.” In a fact sheet accompanying an executive order with “measures to combat anti-Semitism,” Trump threatens students: “Come 2025, we will find you, and we will deport you.” The order itself states that the Department of Education will seek to familiarize institutions of higher education with these goals, so that universities may “monitor for and report activities by alien students and staff relevant to those grounds and for ensuring that such reports about aliens lead ... to investigations and, if warranted, actions to remove such aliens.” Because participation in pro-Palestine movements is often equated with antisemitism, advocates and journalists like Etan Nechin, a correspondent from *Haaretz*, were quick to identify this as a move from “a textbook authoritarian playbook meant to stifle any criticism of what's going on in Israel.”

The order blends Trump's fascist policies against immigrants and his obsession with mass deportations led by Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) with his commitment to Israeli occupation. And it dovetails seamlessly with the current surveillance networks many universities already have in place after the crackdown on students and community members during the spring 2024 encampments.

Last year's student-led movement for Palestine prompted a response that revealed the police surveillance technology amassed by campus law enforcement agencies across the United States. The images of militarized police flooding sanctuaries of higher learning and free speech has prompted public outrage. In some places, students and faculty have reiterated a longstanding call to remove cops of all kinds from college campuses. In other communities, activists protesting the occupation of Palestine are calling for universities to divest from Israeli entities, including campus police investments in Israeli



Students hang a banner from Hamilton Hall at Columbia University in New York City on April 30, 2024.

surveillance technologies that support occupation at home and abroad.

Today, most universities, and even many community colleges, maintain their own police force, in addition to relying on local city or county police. According to a 2015 report by the Bureau of Justice Statistics, among public four-year universities with more than 2,500 students, about 95 percent have their own police departments. Among private campuses, the figure is much less, at 38 percent, as funding a police force is expensive. Many campus police have rebranded themselves as softer-sounding “public safety” officers, but their true role remains the same: to protect property and other valuable educational resources, including university investment portfolios.

“When push comes to shove,” Alex Vitale, sociology professor at Brooklyn College and author of *The End of Policing*, wrote in *The Nation*, “campus police are no better than their off-campus counterparts and should be disbanded.” They are a “profound threat” to social justice and exist primarily to protect the neoliberal university.

### **A history of campus policing**

Despite the euphemistic rebrand, campus police have a track record of harming the students they are sworn to protect. In 2017, campus police fatally shot a nonbinary Georgia Tech student. Campus police killed a 19-year-old student in the lobby of a dorm at Liberty University in 2019. In 2012, campus police shot and killed a California State University, San Bernardino student.

This apparatus seeks to police the borders of the ivory tower, but the violence inherent to modern policing often spills over to impact community members unaffiliated with universities as well. For example, in 2018, Portland State University (PSU) police shot and killed Jason Washington, a 45-year-old man from the community who was trying to break up a fight. In 2015, a

University of Cincinnati police officer fatally shot unarmed 43-year-old Sam DuBose during a traffic stop.

Students and community activists have been diligently trying to limit the power of campus police forces. Following the Portland State murder, students renewed a #DisarmPSU campaign which first began when the university board voted to give guns to the campus police four years earlier.

In April 2018, after University of Chicago Police Department (UCPD) officers shot 21-year-old student Charles Thomas, students and community members launched a #CareNotCops campaign. UCPD is one of the largest private police forces in the country, with approximately 100 officers and an annual budget, student newspaper *Chicago Maroon* reported, of \$5.5 million. The University of Chicago butts up against Chicago’s majority-Black South Side, and the UCPD strictly police the border.

Community organizations Black Lives Matter Chicago and Black Youth Project 100 (BYP 100) joined in the 2018 protests. The University of Chicago, like other local institutions of higher education, “are not only complicit, but are active stakeholders in the mass-incarceration, over-policing, displacement and overall harm of Black and Brown communities” explained BYP 100. Organizers were calling for, among other things, the “disarming of UCPD officers and reduction of their budget.”

### **Deadly exchanges**

Police militarization has been further accelerated by more than two decades of “training expeditions” in which thousands of U.S. police have traveled to learn from Israeli police and military who enforce an occupation of Palestinians with the aid of high-tech surveillance technology. Such trips are also an opportunity for Israeli-based companies to sell their surveillance products. These include the ironically named Nice Systems, which provides

camera networks; SuperCom, which deals in electronic monitoring; and Cellebrite, which specializes in phone-hacking technology and has sold its products to agencies in at least 20 states. This influence is detailed by author Antony Loewenstein in his influential text *The Palestine Laboratory: How Israel Exports the Technology of Occupation Around the World*. He writes that Israel engages in the surveillance of all Palestinians *en masse*, “regardless of age, location, or intent.”

A report from Deadly Exchange, a campaign launched by Jewish Voice for Peace, details how such exchanges “expose U.S. law enforcement to the comprehensive monitoring and infiltration tactics and technologies in the Israeli arsenal, modeling the apparatus of a sweeping surveillance state.”

Some universities in the U.S. are also complicit in these trainings, such as the Georgia International Law Enforcement Exchange (GILEE) program based at Georgia State University, where Israeli police are invited to train U.S. law enforcement from major U.S. cities. Activists have called for ending the GILEE program, sponsored in part by the Atlanta Police Foundation, the nonprofit behind the large police training facility south of the city known as “Cop City.”

In 2019, Wayne State University’s chief of police traveled to Israel “to share law enforcement strategies” as part of a “delegation” of other police officers visiting from Cleveland, Cincinnati and Pittsburgh. He noted the importance of the university police’s jurisdiction, “not only [on] campus, but also [in] the greater Midtown Detroit area—all neighbors and members of our community.”

As police try to legitimize their growing repression, communities continue to resist. In 2020, Tufts University students voted in a referendum to prohibit campus police from attending future retreats in Israel. Amnesty International noted that funds spent

“to train our domestic police in Israel should concern all of us,” explaining that many domestic police abuses documented parallel “violations by Israeli military, security and police officials.”

### **Spying from the Ivory Tower**

During the wave of pro-Palestine encampments that swept the country last spring, campus police took the opportunity to amplify traditional strong-arm behaviors (which included numerous violent assaults against professors and students alike) with newly acquired surveillance technology. This dangerous combination led to more than 3,200 arrests nationwide.

Universities supported these efforts by quickly suspending First Amendment rights to peaceable assembly, with some even enforcing archaic anti-mask laws against student protesters (originally enacted in response to the Ku Klux Klan) to aid police use of facial recognition software.

The student newspaper *Columbia Spectator* exposed in September how the administration at Columbia University and Barnard College spied on student activists before and after the encampments. Following a “Resistance 101” workshop held by a campus divestment group earlier in the spring, campus police started collecting information on demonstrators, gathering footage from campus surveillance cameras and tracking student IDs swiped at building entrances. They also sent private investigators to interrogate students at home, *Columbia Spectator* reports. The administration then began to suspend students, expel them from housing and call them before disciplinary hearings. New York City Police Department (NYPD) conducted multiple sweeps of student spaces.

In a press conference on May 1, during the height of the campus protests, New York City Mayor Eric Adams thanked Columbia professor Rebecca Weiner, who joined him onstage, for “monitoring the situation” when pro-

tests first began across the city. Professor Weiner, who conveniently moonlights as the NYPD’s deputy commissioner for intelligence and counterterrorism, serves as the liaison between NYPD’s Tel Aviv branch (built in 2012 on the rubble of the destroyed Palestinian village Kfar Saba) and NYPD stateside. Weiner boasted that her office in New York had received “hourly updates” from the NYPD’s Tel Aviv precinct since October 7, ensuring that the militarized army terrorizing Palestinians was aligned with those harming U.S. students.

**Police militarization has been further accelerated by more than two decades of “training expeditions” in which thousands of U.S. police have traveled to learn from Israeli police and military who enforce an occupation of Palestinians with the aid of high-tech surveillance technology.**

At Yale University, the 93-officer private police department kept an eye on campus protests with help from the FBI. As journalist Theia Chatelle reported in *Jewish Currents*, documents obtained from the settlement in a lawsuit for public records revealed that Jennifer Wagner, the head of the FBI’s New Haven office, reached out to Yale Police Chief Anthony Campbell to offer assistance: “The FBI has been monitoring the widespread protests related to the Israel/Hamas conflict at several colleges and universities.” After an alleged assault in April, the FBI got a search warrant for the home of a pro-

Palestine student and performed what Yale Public Safety referred to as a “dump” of information from their cell phone, a serious invasion of their personal property. The Yale Police Department “installed cameras on campus, tracked students’ social media accounts and monitored students using aerial drones,” according to Chatelle.

These invasions of privacy preceded a lawsuit filed by the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) against the FBI and other federal agencies in July 2024 over their history of targeting activists and communities of color “for unwarranted surveillance under the false guise of national security.” Yale Police Department’s surveillance of pro-Palestinian protesters last spring also led to the Yale College Council voting just last month to establish a new oversight committee for the Yale Police Department.

### **Israeli tech on campus**

One of the nation’s largest public universities, the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign (UIUC), has taken a particularly aggressive approach to targeting activists. It’s currently pursuing felony mob-action charges against encampment demonstrators, using evidence from license plate readers and monitoring social media posts. UIUC is a test case for the militarization of campus police. The University of Illinois Police Department (UIPD) had a total budget in fiscal year 2022-2023 of \$13.5 million. There are currently 2,300 cameras installed throughout the campus. The university recently won a federal grant of nearly \$1 million to establish a Real Time Crime Center that will allow police to monitor surveillance cameras, search databases and use license plate readers.

Information obtained from public records requests reveal the capabilities of UIPD’s surveillance: In one instance, a detective with the UIPD sent photos of a student protester to the Illinois State Police Statewide Terrorism &

Intelligence Center, a fusion center opened on May 14, 2003. Photos from UIPD were run through facial recognition software possessed by the fusion center to successfully identify the student, leading to their prosecution.

Campus and community activists have found that since at least 2021, the University of Illinois Board of Trustees has contracted with Cellebrite, the Israeli-based company that sells surveillance technology and is known for being the phone-hacking software of choice for the FBI. The board most recently renewed its contract with the tech firm in November 2024, for use of “Digital Collector” and “Inspector” subscriptions. The former is advertised as a “must-have tool in the digital forensic toolbox ... for investigators,” while the latter is marketed to find “Internet History, Downloads, Locations, Recent searches, and more.” The board has spent at least \$17,464.40 on such technology, according to information obtained from Illinois Freedom of Information Act requests.

UIUC’s contract renewal comes after more than a year of Palestinian ethnic cleansing by Israel and underscores the university administration’s commitment to Israeli interests in direct opposition to the concerns of student, alumni, faculty and community activists. Students have been trying to pass boy-

cott, divestment, sanctions referenda at UIUC since at least 2020, to no avail. Lauren Knutsen, a concerned alumni who recently spoke out in favor of divestment at the quarterly board meeting, feels like this contract renewal is a slap in the face to student activists after everything that has gone on over the last year. She told *Truthout* that even though students have been asking their university to listen, and “they just continue to be ignored.”

The university is now a repeat customer of a company that has been accused of facilitating human rights abuses by activists for years, including by Amnesty International. Cellebrite has academic institutions like UIUC to thank for an “excellent 2024” in which Cellebrite “exceeded [their] original revenue” and other financial targets, according to interim CEO Thomas E. Hogan. The *New York Times* reported that Cellebrite has sold about \$54 million in “investigative tools” to ICE which can now be used to power Trump’s current immigration crackdown.

Partnering with Cellebrite is one weapon in UIUC’s arsenal to stifle student speech on campus, a pattern of behavior that caused the ACLU of Illinois to issue a scathing letter on January 14, 2025, directly to university administrators. The letter stated among other things that UIUC needed to

exercise “greater restraint in enforcing policies restricting student activism.”

When asked to comment, UIUC Executive Communications and Issue Management Director Pat Wade claimed that campus police do “not use Cellebrite technology for surveillance,” and only use the program for “cellular device extraction and analysis” with consent or a warrant. He also asserted that the university “remains committed to creating an environment that fosters free speech.”

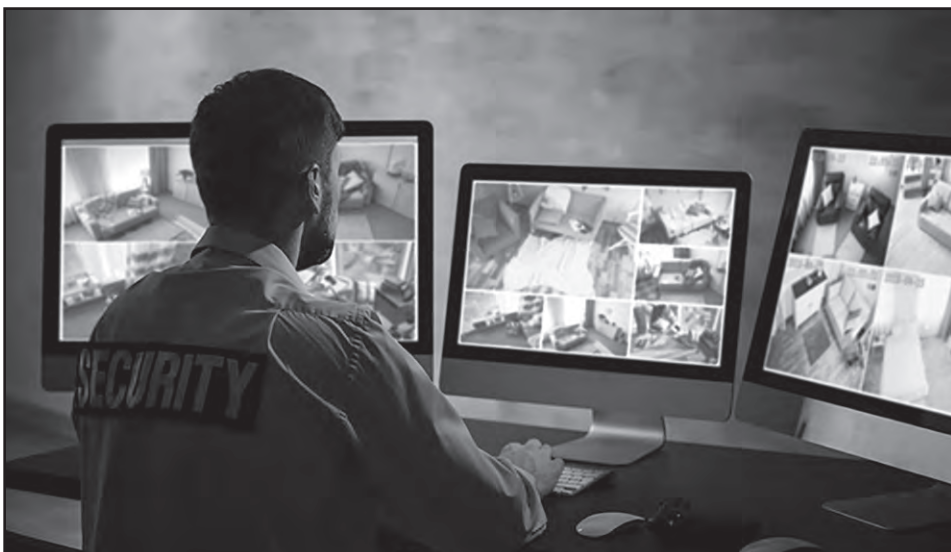
*Truthout* reached out to Cellebrite, but they failed to respond with a comment.

Sana Saboowala, a member of the Champaign-Urbana Muslim Action Committee and a Ph.D. candidate at UIUC, helped expose this UIUC-Cellebrite connection. As she told *Truthout*, “The FBI and ICE have paid millions of dollars to Cellebrite, which is run by former IDF members, and now these military tools are in the hands of corrupt regimes, ICE and our campus police. It is unacceptable.” The Muslim Action Committee was concerned, Saboowala says, because “historically Muslims have suffered from mass surveillance in this country, so therefore our ongoing investment in surveillance technology at every level—from campus to local police, to the federal government—is a concern for the Muslim community.”

Kathryn Clancy, a UIUC professor and member of Faculty for Justice in Palestine, is disturbed by the university’s decision to “make it impossible for students to participate safely in protest.” In her view, an important part of a university education is “the cultivation of bravery, of standing up for something you believe in.” In the end, the response to the spring encampment illustrates “that campuses care more about their property than their students.”

—*Truthout*, February 24, 2025

<https://truthout.org/articles/campus-police-are-using-israeli-spy-tech-to-crack-down-on-student-protest/>





# The Tech-Brologarch Nightmare

BY RAY ACHESON

February 16, 2025—Over the past few weeks, the false promise of the American Dream has been replaced by the brutal reality of the Brologarch Nightmare. Crafted by a dystopian team-up of tech billionaires, white Christian nationalists, and various transphobes, misogynists, rapists, and racists, all the horrors of the United States have been amplified and accelerated. At the same time, any artifacts of progressive potential are swiftly being erased, deported, or incarcerated. As tech bros disassemble the government with assistance from artificial intelligence (AI), they are building both the world they want and the weapons to secure it.

While some might find legitimate merit in the disassembly of the U.S. government, which has operated as an imperialist warmonger for more than a century while generating vast inequalities and repression at home, the concerns expressed here are not about defending what was, but are about what is being built in its place, and who is building it, and what harms they are producing now and intend to inflict moving forward.

## Hacking the government

“In the span of just weeks,” reports *Foreign Affairs*, “the U.S. government has experienced what may be the most consequential security breach in its history—not through a sophisticated cyberattack or an act of foreign espionage, but through official orders by a billionaire with a poorly defined government role. And the implications for national security are profound.”

The breach has seen Elon Musk’s unsanctioned and unsupervised “Department of Government Efficiency” (DOGE) modifying computer programs, accessing encrypted keys that secure financial transactions, altering audit logs that record system changes, connecting unauthorized servers into networks, and

training AI software on sensitive data. The young misogynist tech bros working for Musk have brought the “move fast and break things” ethos of Silicon Valley to Washington, DC. As Kelly Hayes notes, “what’s being broken is the machinery of government.”

*Foreign Affairs* warns that the situation has gone far beyond unauthorized access—any of the systems that the DOGE boys have mucked around in could now be vulnerable to anyone seeking access to federal data. Furthermore, as the *Philadelphia Inquirer* eloquently explains, the blitzkrieg led by Elon Musk “and his small cult of 20-something dude-bro minions against the federal government” has so far included “crushing foreign aid and consumer protection, threatening the Department of Education and seeking a chokehold over the entire federal payment system.”

The way DOGE has approached the government reflects the same dangerous spirit with which Musk has operated his companies, including the

cavalier attitude he has displayed in regard to his exploding rockets. (When the Federal Aviation Administration grounded Space X launches due to safety concerns, Musk complained about the “broken regulatory structure” and asserted, “Under those rules, humanity will never get to Mars.” Unsurprisingly, Trump fired the FAA’s top administrator as one of his first acts in office.) It’s also the same anti-regulation and anti-transparency attitude with which Musk has run Tesla. A former Deputy Assistant Secretary of Labor at the Occupational Safety and Health Administration once said that Musk “considers himself to be a master of the universe and these rules just don’t apply to people like him.”

But the “move fast and break things” approach to government is even worse than crashing rockets or self-driving cars. The *Philadelphia Inquirer’s* description of Musk’s rise to unelected leader of the United States is particularly apt:

The newest dystopian thriller that everyone is talking about these days is



Cops in high-tech combat gear patrol the campuses.

a little hard to swallow, even by Hollywood standards. The supervillain is an almost cartoonish sort: The world's richest man with a drug habit, 11 scattered kids, and a penchant for sleeping on couches (if at all.) With his posse of young male tech groupies, he uses his billions to first buy the political discourse, then a greedy puppet president, and finally, through him, the levers of government.

It's almost too late when the masses learn the villain's real purpose: To replace the flawed humanity of democracy with machines designed by an unaccountable tech elite. And the heroes of our story—a gaggle of activists, outsider journalists and mid-level politicians who realize the truth—are running out of time.

Musk's rampage through the Treasury Department and other federal agencies, firing workers and cancelling programs that have helped millions of people survive in the United States and abroad, is in part about funding tax cuts for the rich and financing the Musk's companies. (Musk's claims about freezing government contracts and ending corruption are vanquished by reality—while Musk is decimating the U.S. foreign aid and education budgets, SpaceX received a \$7.5 million contract with NASA and Telsa is forecast to win a \$400 million contract to provide armored vehicles to the State Department—although after *Drop Site News* broke that story, the government has reportedly scrambled to conceal or even backtrack the contract.)

But the DOGE mission is about more than money—it's fundamentally about dismantling democracy. It's about replacing humans with machines. "Everything that can be machine-automated will be," one government official told the *Washington Post*. "And the technocrats will replace the bureaucrats." Even other Silicon Valley executives are ringing the alarm bells about the fundamentally undemocratic nature of the DOGE project. Mike Brock of

the financial technology company Block writes, "DOGE is not about efficiency. It is about erasure. Democracy is being deleted in slow motion, replaced by proprietary technology and AI models. It is a *coup*, executed not with guns, but with backend migrations and database wipes." He explains that those supporting DOGE's efforts "believe that democracy is a kind of inefficient mob rule, broken beyond repair," and "that a high-tech-flavored 'creative destruction' could replace it with a notion of better government through computer engineering."

**The Costs of War project also found that from 2021 through 2023, venture capital firms reportedly pumped nearly \$100 billion into military tech startup companies.**

DOGE's use of artificial intelligence to pursue its goals are key to the pace and intensity of the ongoing destruction. The *New Yorker* reports that DOGE is using AI software to identify potential budget cuts at the Department of Education and to scan Department of Treasury grant proposals for forbidden terms—including "climate change" and "gender identity"—and then block the proposals. In the process, the *New Yorker* argued, "Musk is not only sidelining Congress and threatening to defy the courts, helping to bring the country to the point of constitutional crisis; he is also smuggling into our federal bureaucracy the seeds of a new authoritarian regime—technofascism by chatbot."

*TechPolicy* has described DOGE's actions as "an AI *coup*," noting that it "concentrates power with those who understand and control this system's maintenance, upkeep, and upgrades."

Brian Merchant, author of *Blood in the Machine*, argues that what's happening at the federal agencies is "a stark portrait of why power seeks to automate—and why, in enterprise AI, it has found an ideal vessel for corporate and administrative automation." Displacing labor is part of the goal, Merchant explains, noting that DOGE "is seeking to winnow the federal workforce by driving out nonpartisan workers with the lowest tolerance for the new, ideologically motivated regime, and promising to replace the bulk of their tasks with AI." But more than that, the AI *coup* is about control:

Automation necessitates the narrowing of scope, of information input into a system, of possibility—so that a job or a task or work can be more predictably and repetitively performed on behalf of an administrator. In DOGE, we see the logic of automation—of enterprise AI—being imposed by a nascent oligarchic state. We thus see less information available to the world, fewer options available to the humans working to provide it, fewer humans, period, to contest those in power, as that power concentrates in their hands.

The idea that "millions of government workers can be replaced by AI systems that have trouble counting to 50, are still prone to hallucinations, cannot ably function in physical spaces, and have no institutional knowledge—is absurd on its face," argues Merchant. Similarly, the *Philadelphia Inquirer* points out that "government by AI isn't more efficient, just inhumane, and it's also a lie, because the real decisions aren't actually being made by computers, but by the corrupted humans who program them."

But the absurdity of the claims of efficiency or neutrality offered by the AI *coup* is not really the point. The motivations of those behind the *coup* are clear: AI, the *Inquirer* notes, "offers an excuse to govern America with the same foundations of white supremacy and misogyny that thrive in the tech

world,” and to generate “more obscene wealth for themselves and the same impunity for their crimes that Trump has granted himself.”

As *WIRED* reported, Musk recruited some of his minions from Palantir, a company that provides its AI technology to Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and the Israeli Defense Forces, and whose co-founder Peter Thiel financially backed JD Vance’s political career all the way to the vice presidency. *WIRED* notes that each of these men “display a childish hunger for power as well. This hunger is childish in that there remains no conception of the other. Our lives do not matter to these people—in the adolescent sense of superiority that pervades the tech robber baron class we are lesser beings, therefore undeserving of say in the world they childishly believe they created.” They are actively trying to build a new world but fail to recognize or acknowledge that their world is one of massive inequality, a climate crisis, and overt fascism.

Inequality, climate crisis, and human rights violations are being exacerbated by these men’s development of, support for, and use of AI. Arguing that AI is doublespeak for austerity, Amnesty Tech staffers point out that where AI has been deployed in the public sector it has consistently created punished people living in poverty and marginalized communities. Stargate, Trump’s vanity AI project to build clusters of gigantic data centers across the country, is case in point. The data centers, activist Koohan Paik-Mander writes in *CounterPunch*, will be built on federal lands, collectively use as much power as small European nations, require massive volumes of water, and compel the construction of new nuclear reactors. While this may suit the technofascist vision of billionaires, it will mean further poverty and pain for most people and the planet.

As *WIRED* says, the brologarchy continues “to act as greedy children, dump-

ing billions into an AI industry that sucks up our water, backing Trump and fossil fuel extraction, and attacking any semblance of democracy.” Within this wreckage, “there isn’t space for most of us in the world that will result from their actions. They’d prefer to replace workers with robots and AI, with no plan for the billions of angry people who will remain except violence.”

### Weapons of the brologarch

Violence is indeed a big piece of the AI project. And as always, the U.S. government is seeking a monopoly on violence.

The tech bros have been laying the groundwork for this AI *coup* for years, but the shape of it is becoming crystal clear now. Speaking at the Artificial Intelligence Action Summit in Paris on February 11, Vance ominously warned the world that it must support Big Tech and U.S. artificial intelligence enterprises—or else. Accusing certain governments of “tightening the screws” on U.S. tech companies, he said, “America cannot and will not accept that, and we think it’s a terrible mistake, not just for the United States of America, but for your own countries.” Railing against European regulation of AI, Vance claimed, “The AI future is not going to be won by hand-wringing about safety.” The United States refused to sign the multilateral pledge, endorsed by 60 other governments at the Summit, to “reduce digital divides” and “ensure AI is open, inclusive, transparent, ethical, safe, secure, and trustworthy.”

This approach to global AI governance is quite the turnaround from 2023, when tech industry leaders, including Musk, Sam Altman of OpenAI, and a top Google AI researcher—signed an open letter warning that “the risk of extinction from [artificial intelligence] should be a global priority.” Musk, Altman, and others also signed another open letter calling for a six-month pause on the development of AI, citing concerns about “an out-of-control race to develop and deploy ever

more powerful digital minds.” However, many of the signatories, including Altman and Musk, proceeded full steam ahead with AI development.

Now, as *The New York Times* reports, “there’s much less talk about AI risks” because “executives seemed to have realized it’s easier to get policymakers excited about AI if they’re not worried it’s going to kill them.” Downplaying the risks of the technology is essential to its use for taking over the government and dismantling democracy. Downplaying the risks is also essential for its weaponization. And as the tech bros take over the U.S. government, there are also insidious signals about their designs on the military—specifically, on the development and management of weapon systems.

Just ten days after the inauguration of Big Tech to the White House, OpenAI announced that it had signed an agreement with the U.S. National Laboratories, including in relation to a “comprehensive program in nuclear security.” *Futurism* raised significant concerns about this announcement, highlighting “plenty of instances of OpenAI’s AI models leaking sensitive user data and hallucinating false claims with abandon” and asking how the company can ensure that its “frequently lying AI chatbots won’t leak the nuclear codes or trigger the next nuclear war.” Furthermore, given what has transpired at the federal government over the past few weeks, it’s not possible to have any confidence in tech bros having any access to anything related to nuclear weapons—especially as Musk keeps trolling Altman about taking over his company.

The coupling of AI and nuclear weapons, while terrifying, is not the only concern about how this technology is and will be used. The brologarch is already producing horrific AI technologies to “predict” crime or criminal behavior, monitor and track migrants, and surveil activists. It’s now also going to fuel Trump’s deportation machine,

and could be used soon to surveil online “sentiment” about ICE. The implications of this are profound for the constitutional right to freedom of speech. Together with the crackdowns on pro-Palestinian protestors—including the use of facial recognition to identify them and threats to deport them—attempts to silence critics of ICE are terrifying, as a senior counsel at the Electronic Privacy Information Center told *The Intercept*. “Threats to ‘punish’ opponents or deport those exercising 1st Amendment rights combine with these invasive practices to create a real ‘thought police’ scenario.”

The use of AI to suppress dissent won’t stop silencing activists and migrants. The trajectory of horror this technology can produce is well demonstrated by the startup Anduril. As Michael Klare explains, Anduril began in 2017 with border security contracts, installing AI-enabled perimeter surveillance systems at U.S. military bases in Japan and the United States. Later, it was awarded a contract to build surveillance towers on the U.S.-Mexican border. After that, contracts for surveillance and attack drones started rolling in, and the company is now developing a prototype for the Air Force’s proposed Enterprise Test Vehicle, a medium-sized drone intended to launch salvos of smaller surveillance and attack drones. Most recently, Anduril announced that it is building a new billion-dollar factory that could “eventually produce tens-of-thousands of autonomous systems and weapons each year.”

The violent technologies produced by these companies can be applied to borders, policing, and war—and as long as the shareholders are making a profit, it seems there is no line they won’t cross. In fact, many of the brologarchs celebrate the violence of their products in ways that would make George Orwell gasp. At a conference sponsored by Palantir in May 2024, the top weapon manufacturers and technology companies gathered for the inaugural “AI Expo

for National Competitiveness.” Palantir’s CEO Alex Karp justified Israel’s war crimes in Gaza and blasted the student encampments for Palestine, asserting, “The peace activists are war activists,” while those providing the weapons “are the peace activists.” Similarly gobsmacking, a recent *New York Times* article about the relationship between Christianity and tech billionaires quoted Anduril’s co-founder Trae Stephens as saying that he believed his company’s products are “just and moral” and that, like Oppenheimer, he is “accepting the fate of the divine in the execution of justice,” rather than a “love of violence.”

In reality, we’ve already seen the devastating effects of Israel’s use of AI systems in its identification and targeting of Palestinians to commit genocide. It is a horrifying example of the execution of injustice, and arguably, based on the glee with which Israeli soldiers have committed war crimes—as demonstrated in their own social media posts—does reflect a love of violence.

U.S. companies, as usual, are keen not to miss out on building the capacity for this kind of slaughter. (Israel’s tech developments and deployments often guide that in the United States.) Just two weeks after Trump’s inauguration, Google dropped its pledge not to build AI for weapons or surveillance. (Google has also removed Black History Month, Pride Month, Indigenous People’s Month, and others from its calendars and renamed the Gulf of Mexico to Gulf of America on its maps, cementing its brologarchy lapdog status.) Once upon a time, Google workers rose up against the company’s contract with the Pentagon to provide Project Maven’s drone targeting program. A few years later, the company is eager to get back in the game.

The game is already afoot. The United States has been developing AI-enabled weapons and autonomous weapon systems for years, while simultaneously blocking international regulation of such weapons. In 2023, the

Biden administration greenlighted the Replicator initiative to “award contracts directly to startups for the rapid development and delivery of cutting-edge weaponry.” At the same time, Biden’s diplomats at the UN in Geneva were stalling the negotiation of international law prohibiting and restricting autonomous weapon systems, even as the majority of the world is pushing for binding rules against weapons operating without meaningful human control.

### **Brologarch industrial complex**

Echoing Eisenhower’s warning about the military-industrial complex in his 1961 farewell address, former U.S. President Biden warned of the tech-industrial complex. “Today, an oligarchy is taking shape in America of extreme wealth, power and influence that really threatens our entire democracy, our basic rights and freedom and a fair shot for everyone to get ahead,” said Biden. Unsurprisingly, he did not acknowledge the role of his own or past Democratic administrations in paving the way for this, including by providing ever-increasing funds for the border industrial complex, prison industrial complex, military-industrial complex, and nuclear weapon complex, and the emerging tech-industrial complex and likely AI arms race.

Big Tech has increasingly received Pentagon contracts over the past six years. According to the nonprofit research organization Tech Inquiry, three of the world’s biggest tech corporations were awarded approximately \$28 billion from 2018 to 2022, including Microsoft (\$13.5 billion), Amazon (\$10.2 billion), and Alphabet, which is Google’s parent company (\$4.3 billion). The Costs of War project also found that from 2021 through 2023, venture capital firms reportedly pumped nearly \$100 billion into military tech startup companies.

The Democrats, as usual, have set the stage for the new regime to pour buckets of taxpayer money to develop the weapons it wants. Which is likely

why DOGE hasn't yet gone near the Department of Defense (DoD)'s \$850 billion military budget—which includes for this year \$143.2 billion for research and development and another \$167.5 billion for the procurement of weapons. The Pentagon's budget accounts for about half of all federal discretionary spending, and as activists have pointed out, “is plagued by cost overruns and it too often purchases dysfunctional weapons systems that don't perform as advertised and don't align with the department's own declared strategy.”

While there are reports that DOGE has the DoD in its sights, and Trump has said he would like to cut the military budget in half,<sup>1</sup> Senate Republicans are simultaneously pursuing an increase to the military budget by up to \$346 billion over the next four years to fund both the Pentagon and the government's cruel mass deportation plan, for which it wants to use the military.

DOGE also has not yet addressed the Department of Energy's budget for nuclear weapons, even though ending the U.S. nuclear weapon program would cut \$2 trillion from the federal budget—and help save the world from potential nuclear Armageddon. As Dan Vergano of *Scientific American* argues, that would be “much more real, and smarter, than the imaginary trillions that Trump's budget director paused in January to sniff for ‘woke gender ideology, and the green new deal,’ among other targets.” Trump is reportedly interested in reducing spending on nuclear weapons and “denuclearizing” along with China and Russia but has also said this would only happen when things “calm down a bit”.

Musk, who operates his own industrial complex (which *Reuters* has found to have resulted in harms to consumers, worker, and laboratory animals,) has had a tense relationship with the Pentagon. He has previously *critiqued* wasteful spending, with the F-35 fighter jet a principal (and legitimate) target of his wrath. But it remains to be seen

how the traditional military-industrial complex, as compared to the new tech-industrial complex of Silicon Valley startups, might fare under the new regime in Washington.

Michael Klare suggests that if the military budget is increased, funding will likely keep flowing to both traditional weapon contractors like Lockheed Martin and RTX as well as the startups. But if the budget is cut by DOGE, competition between the two versions of the military-industrial complex could arise. Klare points out that this “might trigger divisions within Trump's inner circle, pitting loyalists to the old MIC against adherents to the new one.”

Either way, weapon makers will profit, and people will die.

### The need for neo-Luddites

From its use to destroy democracy to its potential to destroy humanity, AI risks are very real, and very present. Much of the mainstream discourse on AI from those who are concerned about it focuses on “good governance” and “AI ethics”. But some human rights experts and activists are asking, is AI good for anyone?

From predictive policing to border control to targeting systems for weapons, AI is leading to human rights violations and even death. Furthermore, AI's enormous energy consumption undermines any attempts to mitigate the climate crisis; the mining for minerals necessary to AI is leading to armed conflict and human rights abuses; and mega corporations are monopolizing the market on computing power, materials, and infrastructure.

Lawyer Marlena Wisniak and researcher Matt Mahmoudi note that the core logics underpinning how AI is designed are also destructive. These include the necessity of surveillance—and thus privacy violations—to make AI models work; the “very skewed, colonial, patriarchal, misogynist, and disinformation-laden hierarchies of knowledge” that AI models are trained

on; and that “the outputs of AI systems are often seen as predictions, when they're at best problematic ‘guestimates’ based on often unreliable and inappropriate logics and datasets.”

Wisniak and Mahmoudi urge us to refuse the techno-fascist fantasy of a world order ruled by AI, and call instead for the imagining of something different:

What if the enthusiasm and resources spent on AI were redirected to health and social programs? How might communities' lives improve if the funds used for automated policing were invested in justice and reparations? What if the water consumed by data centers was returned to indigenous communities? What if we had the right to refuse rampant datafication and have meaningful choice in the aspects of everyday life we want to engage in digitally?

In the 1800s, as Brian Merchant writes in *Blood in the Machine*, working people rose up against automation threatening their livelihoods and lives. The Luddites took aim at the entrepreneurs, factory owners, and the machines themselves. “Even though that uprising took place two centuries ago,” argues Merchant, “it contained the seeds of a conflict that continues to shape our relationship to work and technology today. In many ways, our future still depends on the outcome of that conflict.”

We can see other remnants of the Luddites in the tech workers that have organized within their companies to cancel Pentagon contracts or who have quit their jobs in protest. We can even see these remnants in the development of alternative tech platforms that undermine surveillance, fascist algorithms, or monopoly power. But saving humanity from the destructive potential of AI—whether it comes in the form of a cut of a life-saving program or *The Terminator*—will require not just tech workers but all of us to refuse the world the brologarchs are building and work in solidarity to build something that works for the rest of us.

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# Legacy from the Vietnam Anti-War Movement

INTERVIEW WITH CLIFF CONNER

*The following is an interview with Cliff Conner, a Vietnam Anti-War activist and former member of the Socialist Workers Party (SWP) whose members were key organizers of the antiwar movement during the Vietnam war, by the French magazine, The International, February 2025.*

**The International:** What does “April 1975” mean to you?

**Cliff Conner:** I remember it as the time that the American helicopters were taking off from the buildings in South Vietnam to escape from the North Vietnamese taking over the entire country. What it meant to us was that it was the end of the war and that the Vietnamese people had won and that the United States imperialists had lost the war. Now, you could look back

at it and say, well, it wasn't as clear a victory as might have been expected. The United States had bombed Vietnam mercilessly. One might ask, “How could the Vietnamese say they'd won?” But they did win. I visited Vietnam later and talked to some Vietnamese who had fought with the National Liberation Front (NLF), and also to American expatriates that were still living there. “How come the Vietnamese aren't bitter against the United States for all the damage they did to Vietnam over ten years' time?” And the answer I got was, well, the Vietnamese are not bitter against Americans today because the Vietnamese believe they won the war. And in fact, they did win the war, because their entire objective was not to allow the United States to conquer

Vietnam and decide its future. And they were able to militarily accomplish that through tremendous struggle!

**The International:** What led American imperialism to acknowledge the defeat so suddenly in 1975?

**Cliff Conner:** It was what had happened on the ground. The whole of Vietnam had risen against the United States, and the United States was militarily defeated. But I will say one thing: the role that the American antiwar movement had in bringing the American government to the realization that it could not defeat Vietnam. Answering that I have to be very careful, because I don't want it to seem as if I'm saying the United States antiwar movement won the war. It was first of all the extreme sacrifice of the Vietnamese people and their own struggles that militarily won the war. But I think the antiwar movement in the United States gave the Vietnamese freedom fighters a great deal of help and solidarity.

We started off in 1965 or 1966 with a very small movement against the war. It grew and grew and grew over ten years to the point where millions of Americans, whether they understood the justice of the Vietnamese people's struggle or not, came to understand that the United States was not waging a just war.

It was an imperialist war even if most Americans wouldn't have used that word. The Vietnam Anti-War movement, led essentially by young people, students on campuses, was able to influence tens-of-millions of Americans to oppose the war, then that in turn influenced the American G.I.s in Vietnam who themselves began to turn against their commanders. They would refuse to fight. They would go off into the woods and smoke pot.



Anti-Vietnam War protesters facing troops guarding the Pentagon, October 21, 1967.

The American government called this a “morale” problem. They said the troops’ morale in Vietnam was very low and they didn’t want to fight. Well, the reason they didn’t want to fight was that the antiwar movement had convinced a majority of the American population that this war was not for the freedom of the Vietnamese people, but a war to oppress them. It wasn’t a cause the American G.I.s wanted to die for.

The Vietnamese people fought back—they weren’t going to be defeated. So, at that point, when the American troops would no longer follow their commanders’ orders. The American government realized that it was all over. The war could not be won militarily.

**The International:** So, the antiwar movement started in universities, why? How did it develop? And what forms did it take?

**Cliff Conner:** The very first demonstration against the war in Vietnam that I remember, was in 1965, it was called by a very small socialist organization called the Workers World Party. It had split off from the Socialist Workers Party, which was the main Trotskyist organization in the United States at that time. It was one of the leading proponents of creating a Vietnam Anti-War mobilization. At the very beginning the antiwar movement consisted of a very small number of pacifists and socialists. The first demonstration was very small, it attracted maybe a few hundred people at most. The problem was that their focus wasn’t on stopping the war, but on condemning American imperialism, which didn’t have much of an appeal for most working people in the United States. Over the following years, the Workers World Party continued to call anti-imperialist demonstration. Every year the same few hundred people came to their demonstrations, and they never made any progress.

Meanwhile, over the next few years, in 1965, 1966, 1967, and 1968, the

Socialist Workers Party called demonstrations. But these were not the same as the Workers World Party’s, they were explicitly focused on ending the Vietnam War, nothing else.

The SWP didn’t limit itself to calling demonstrations in its own name. We tried, and succeeded, in creating coalitions of organizations that opposed the war for many different reasons. There were pacifist groups, human rights groups, civil rights groups, young people who didn’t want to be drafted.... Anybody who wanted to stop the war was welcome—they didn’t have to be socialists or anti-imperialists. We were trying to use a strategy that Trotskyists called a “united front.”

And this strategy was successful. Soon the demonstrations grew in size from hundreds to thousands, and then tens, and hundreds-of-thousands!

The biggest response that calls for demonstrations against the war in Vietnam received was on college campuses, from students. And so, a student movement began to grow, and one of the main concerns of the student movement was to oppose the draft. At that time in the United States, young men between certain ages were subject to the draft; they could be sent to Vietnam to fight and die. The draft was supposedly universal, but wealthy families could afford to arrange for their sons to be granted deferments. The draft became very unpopular on college campuses, as you can imagine. And so, a major part of the early Vietnam Anti-War movement was a demand to stop the draft and to no longer force young people who didn’t want to fight in an immoral war and give their lives for a bad cause. But the general part of the antiwar movement was calling for an end to the war. That may seem straightforward and, among people who opposed the war, uncontroversial. But there were serious differences among the organizations who were mobilizing against the war.

**The International:** What were the different positions within the antiwar movement?

**Cliff Conner:** I would say that there were three main currents of opinion with regard to how to stop the Vietnam War.

The first was what might be called the “reformist” current. The people who were in this current saw the war in Vietnam as simply a policy choice that was made by American politicians. They had chosen to wage war against a small country in Southeast Asia, and they could change that policy. The job of the antiwar movement was to convince them to change that policy and stop the war. So, who were these “reformists?” Many were pacifists, and people who opposed war on religious grounds. Many were mainly adherents of the Democratic Party who in the United States are called “liberals.” Behind the scenes, the organizational framework of the reformist current was provided by the CPUSA, the American Communist Party. I don’t mean this in a conspiratorial sense. The CP members were an entirely legitimate part of the Vietnam Anti-War movement, but the leadership they provided was aligned with the Democratic Party. Their solution to ending the war was to elect Democratic Party candidates who claimed to be opposed to the war.

And that brings us to the second current of opinion, the one we, the SWP, represented and tried to lead. We knew that influencing the Democratic Party was not the way to end the war. We knew from long experience that the Democratic Party was the graveyard of social movements. The Democratic Party would try to lead the Vietnam Anti-War movement into ringing doorbells for liberal political candidates. They would use the antiwar movement as a way to get elected; and then they wouldn’t do anything to stop the war.

The alternative we wanted to offer was a “mass action in the streets” strategy based on the belief that the way to end the war was to build a mass movement of tens-of-millions of Americans by convincing them that the war was immoral, a bad cause, unjust in every way. And as I said before, this did indeed result in helping to end the war through the agency of the American G.I.s. It wasn’t Democratic Party candidates like George McGovern or Robert Kennedy, but the mass of the American people themselves that turned against the war, and “demoralized” the fighting force that had to actually fight the war.

The demonstrations got larger and larger, sometimes reaching massive proportions—half-a-million or a million protestors. A great deal of this activity was generated on the campuses of the United States, involving 2,000 to 3,000 universities, each one with a growing antiwar coalition. And they would drive the major national antiwar coalitions to call demonstrations for Washington, DC and San Francisco. Hundreds of thousands of students would show up and demonstrate and prove that the American people were not swallowing the government propaganda that this was a war fought to enhance the freedom of the Vietnamese people.

But there was a third current also contending for leadership of the movement, and although it wasn’t the most important, it was also promoting a false alternative to mass action, and it was necessary to fight against it. That was the “ultraleft” current, which consisted of small groups who claimed to be communist, anarchist, Maoist, and some claimed to be Trotskyist.

Even though those groups were not numerically significant, some were very militant, and well organized, and were capable of making a lot of noise. Their strategy was always confrontational. They wanted to confront the police and provoke them into violence against demonstrators. The problem was the confusion this caused among

the millions of Americans who were beginning to turn against the war. Prowar politicians and media in the United States pointed to the small, confrontational actions in order to frighten ordinary Americans away from antiwar demonstrations.

The massive demonstrations that we called and led were not, in fact, at all confrontational. We did not want confrontation with cops. We did not want to lead antiwar demonstrators into violent confrontations where the cops would break people’s heads. That was not a strategy for protests that could attract millions of working people and other ordinary Americans. We knew that if that became the image of the antiwar movement, working people would not come out. That’s what we tried to avoid. And I think in the long run, we were successful. Although to this day, if you read histories of the Vietnam Anti-War movement, you’ll see echoes of that idea that the antiwar protesters were essentially violent and confrontational.

What would stop the war? Nothing but forcing the American government to bring the troops home. And that was our slogan “Bring the troops home now”—shortened sometimes to “Out Now”—that was the slogan that brought success.

Our ultraleft opponents complained, “Oh, that’s not militant enough. We need to end capitalism in the United States. Now!” Well, of course, we in the Socialist Workers Party were 100 percent in favor of ending capitalism in the United States. But that was obviously not on the agenda during the Vietnam War. During the war, the number one political issue was how to stop the war, and we thought the way to stop the war was to mobilize hundreds-of-thousands of people, sometimes millions of people, in the streets demanding “Out Now!”

One slogan that was constantly raised was for a general strike against the war now. There were some labor actions against the war that were very

helpful, especially in San Francisco where the longshoremen from time to time would call a strike against loading war materials to be sent to Vietnam. Everybody who was against the war was in favor of that. But the idea to not call for stopping the war by bringing the troops home, but instead calling for stopping the war by a general strike of the entire labor force of the United States, was simply not a viable slogan.

It was obvious to us that if we called for a general strike, we might get a demonstration of 5,000 or 10,000 people. But if we called for bringing the troops home now, we might attract a demonstration of hundreds-of-thousands of people, perhaps a million or more in Washington, D.C.

And part of our job during the mobilizations was to fight for the mass action strategy against what the other two proposed.

**The International:** Were you personally confronted with the threat of the conscription?

**Cliff Conner:** No, I was a little bit older. Well, rather, I was married before the Vietnam war. At the beginning, in 1963 they were not drafting—conscripting—married men. And then a little later, I had children, and at that time they were drafting married men, but not married men with children. So it was just by luck that I happened to always be one step ahead of the draft. And by the time the Vietnam War actually started and conscription started for that, I was just barely over the age limit. I was never conscripted into the army, but people one year younger than me were, that’s why I was involved with students in the Anti-Draft Movement, even though I wasn’t personally threatened by conscription.

**The International:** Were young people trying to escape the conscription?

**Cliff Conner:** There were ways that people were trying to avoid being conscripted. At that time the military chiefs did not want gay men to be sol-



diers. So, some men who were not gay claimed to be gay to avoid conscription. That was before there was a gay rights movement so that was not necessarily a good idea! But it was something that people did to avoid being sent to Vietnam.

And another one was to claim physical disabilities. The most famous of those nowadays is the criminal who's going to become our president in a few days. His family had a lot of money, so his father was able to hire doctors to swear that his son was physically unfit for military service. He claimed he had bone spurs in his heels and avoided conscription that way.

And finally, one way that people avoided conscription was moving out of the country, primarily to Canada. Several thousands of young men did that.

But most working-class young men were either drafted or were just lucky that their number wasn't called. And those who were actually fighting in Vietnam tended to be such a normal, ordinary part of the population, that that's why they began to be "infected" by the antiwar spirit when the antiwar movement reached massive proportions. They said, "We don't want any part of this." They were against the immoral war that they were being asked to die for.

**The International:** What happened to those who went to war when they got back? How were the war veterans treated?

**Cliff Conner:** This shouldn't actually be a part of what we're talking about, but it is because, shamefully, when the veterans from the war came back, they were not treated well by the people who sent them there in the first place. A false issue was created by the right-wing, pro-war media. They falsely claimed that when the Vietnam veterans returned home, the young people who had not gone to war, who had demonstrated against the war, harassed them by calling them "war criminals," and things like that.

That was not true. That was not how the antiwar movement viewed the G.I.s. We did not hold the G.I.s to blame for the war crimes in Vietnam. They were for the most part young men who were forced to go there and fight against their will. They were given guns and sent out in the field to fight against Vietnamese soldiers with guns. And of course, they fought in defense of their own lives.

But we did not consider them to be the bad guys in this war. We considered the American G.I.s. to be victims, too. Most antiwar demonstrators saw the G.I.s in Vietnam as allies. I worked with antiwar GIs, for example, in Fort Jackson, South Carolina. Antiwar G.I.s in the army were joining protests in uniform and this upset their officers so much that they put them in prison. We in the SWP organized a large protest movement against the victimization of American G.I.s who were being victimized for exercising their citizenship rights to protest against the war, which was their right even though they were in the army. We won a lot of those cases. We had lawyers representing them and that helped to create a significant movement among active GIs to protest the war, as well as movements of veterans who were against the war. These were quite large organizations, and they played a big role in ending the war.

**The International:** What particular role did Black Americans play during the Vietnam War.

**Cliff Conner:** I'm glad you mentioned that. The fact that so many of the G.I.s fighting in Vietnam were Black—I don't know what the percentage was, but it was far greater than their percentage in the society as a whole. And because of that, there was a natural alliance here in the United States between the Civil Rights movement and the Vietnam Anti-War movement. I happened to be in one of the places where that alliance was the strongest. It wasn't geographically the strongest part of the antiwar move-

ment, because it was in the South of the United States, and the South, as you probably are aware, tended to be politically more reactionary.

I lived in Atlanta, Georgia, and the first antiwar demonstrations we called in Atlanta attracted no more than a hundred people. But then they began to grow to be a couple hundred, three hundred, four hundred.... But the number of activists who organized the demonstrations was only maybe 20 or 30. Whereas in New York City, or on college campuses, you might have 50, 100, or 1,000 activists that, as time went by, could call and organize much larger demonstrations. But Atlanta was one of the centers of the civil rights movement. Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr. had his main organization in Atlanta at the Ebenezer Baptist Church, of which he was the pastor. The civil rights organization was called the Southern Christian Leadership Conference—the SCLC. They had a large institution there with a lot of offices and a large staff. They reached out to us. By "us" I mean the Vietnam Anti-War movement. As early as 1965, Reverend King had begun speaking out publicly against the war. But in April 1967, he became one of the most powerful and prominent opponents of the war. You may remember that he, and Muhammad Ali, and Malcolm X—a lot of the Black leaders in the United States—began to speak out directly against the immorality of the Vietnam War. It was an imperialist war designed to crush an insurgency in a small country halfway across the world. The Civil Rights movement, and especially the radical wing of it, including Malcolm X and the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, were attracted to the antiwar cause. So, in Atlanta, as I said, we collaborated closely with Reverend King's organization and the Student Non-violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC).

One of the leaders of SNCC was Julian Bond. He was very active in the Vietnam Anti-War movement as well

as the civil rights movement. Another major leader of Martin Luther King's organization was Reverend Andrew Young, whom I got to know because he was very close to the antiwar movement. He offered us office space and some of the SCLC staff to actually help organize antiwar demonstrations. So, we had a very close relationship, but that was really just a reflection of the closeness of the two movements throughout the whole country.

**The International:** What are the traces that have been left in the collective memory of the American people regarding the war in Vietnam? What is the legacy of the movement?

**Cliff Conner:** That's complicated. The movement had a powerful effect for many years. The war ended in 1975. The American ruling class was very upset for a long time about what they called the Vietnam Syndrome. The Syndrome was that the American people as a whole, the electorate, was not in favor of imperialist war anymore.

Although the word "imperialist" was never used very much, that was what the reality was. American troops were sent overseas to impose American corporate values and American foreign policy on small countries and large countries all over the world.

But the American people could no longer be counted on to support that. So, from 1975 to 2001, some 26 years, the Vietnam Syndrome played a major role in American politics. It didn't stop American warfare around the world completely, but it did hold it down and kept it from being as effective as the ruling class wanted it to be.

Now, I'm sure you're aware of what changed. That was the 11th of September 2001, when the World Trade Center was destroyed by Islamist radicals. The United States at that point began to use that attack as an excuse to launch major wars that have gone on, for a long, long time after that, at least 20 years and still continuing, although

not as openly as they had been in Iraq and Afghanistan in particular, and many other parts of the Middle East.

Anyway, they were able to use that attack as an excuse to dismantle the Vietnam Syndrome and begin to undermine the idea among the American people that the American army is just an imperialist force. They said the Jihadist attacks demonstrated that we need the army. We need the American military. "The American military is our friend. It supports us. It defends us. We need it." And so that was what began to undermine the Vietnam Syndrome. Today, I'd say it hardly exists at all.

We've found it very difficult to build a new antiwar movement against the U.S. wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. Although we could occasionally turn out hundreds-of-thousands of people, the vast majority of American people were convinced by the American government that they were being targeted by terrorists and that the terrorists were a major threat to our "national security." They convinced the American public that we need the armed forces to do everything they are doing. So that's the situation we're in today.

There is an important legacy from the Vietnam Anti-War movement, but it needs to be revived. With regard to the mobilization on campuses against the genocide in Gaza, there has been some discussion of the parallels with the Vietnam Anti-War movement.

I feel it myself among students and other anti-Zionist protesters. I feel the similarity of the emotions and passion that the students have, the conviction that what's going on Gaza is completely immoral. It may even be worse than what the United States did in Vietnam because what's happening in Gaza is total genocide. Even before I became a socialist, I felt a powerful opposition to the Vietnam war. When I became a socialist, I realized the role of capitalism and imperialism, but it started

with the instinctive disgust with the extreme immorality of the war. The main slogan at the beginning was, "Hey, hey, LBJ, how many kids have you killed today?" And I'm feeling echoes of that sentiment on campuses now, although the problem is that we don't yet have a large enough movement among the American people to counter the genocide in Gaza.

We eventually did. By the 1970s, the Vietnam Anti-War movement had developed some real political power in the United States. We haven't reached that level yet on the Gaza question, but I see the roots of it there, and I see that the heritage and legacy of the anti-Vietnam war movement can be helpful to the young people organizing against the genocide in Gaza.

—*The International* (France),  
February 2025

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Continued from page 29

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—*CounterPunch Plus*, February 16, 2025

<https://www.counterpunch.org/2025/02/16/the-brologarch-nightmare/>

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<sup>1</sup> "Trump promises \$1 trillion in defense spending for next year," *Military Times*, April 8, 2025

<https://www.militarytimes.com/news/pentagon-congress/2025/04/08/trump-promises-1-trillion-in-defense-spending-for-next-year/>

# From Gaza to Syria: The Unyielding Reality of Israeli Settler Colonialism

BY RAMZY BAROUD

March 11, 2025—The conversation on settler colonialism must not be limited to academic discussion. It is a political reality, clearly demonstrated in the everyday behavior of Israel.

Israel is not merely an expansionist regime historically—it remains actively so today. Additionally, the core of Israeli political discourse, both past and present, revolves around territorial expansion.

Frequently, we succumb to the trap of blaming such language on a specific set of right-wing and extremist politicians or on a particular U.S. administration. The truth is vastly different: the Israeli Zionist political discourse, though it may change in style, remains fundamentally unchanged throughout time.

Zionist leaders have always associated the establishment and expansion of their state with the ethnic cleansing of the Palestinians, later referred to in Zionist literature as the “transfer.”

Theodor Herzl, the founder of modern political Zionism, wrote in his diary about the ethnic cleansing of the Arab population from Palestine:

“We shall try to spirit the penniless population across the border by procuring employment for it in the transit countries, while denying it any employment in our own country... Both the process of expropriation and the removal of the poor must be carried out discreetly and circumspectly.”

It is unclear what happened to Herzl’s grand employment scheme aimed at “spiriting” the population of Palestine across the region. What we know is that the so-called “penniless population” resisted the Zionist project in numerous ways. Ultimately, the depopulation of Palestine occurred through force, culminating in the Nakba, the Catastrophe of 1948.

The discourse of the erasure of the Palestinian people has been the shared

foundation among all Israeli officials and governments, though it has been expressed in different ways. It has always had a material component, manifesting in the slow but decisive takeover of Palestinian homes in the West Bank, the confiscation of farms, and the constant construction of “military zones.”

Despite Israeli claims, this “incremental genocide” is not directly linked to the nature and degree of Palestinian resistance. Jenin and Masafer Yatta illustrate this clearly.

Take, for example, the ongoing ethnic cleansing in the northern West Bank, which, according to UNRWA, is the worst since 1967. The displacement of tens-of-thousands of Palestinians has been justified by Israel as a military necessity due to the fierce resistance in that region, primarily Jenin, but other areas as well.

However, many parts of the West Bank, including the area of Masafer Yatta, have not been engaged in armed resistance. Yet, they have been primary targets for Israel’s colonial expansion.

In other words, Israeli colonialism is in no way linked to Palestinian resistance, action or inaction. This has remained true for decades.

Gaza is a stark example. While one of the most horrific genocides in recent history was being carried out, Israeli real estate developers, members of the Knesset (Parliament), and leaders of the illegal settlement movement were all meeting to discuss investment opportunities in a depopulated Gaza. The callous tycoons were busy promising villas on the beach for competitive prices while Palestinians starved to death, amid an ever-growing body count. Even fiction cannot be as cruel as this reality.

It is no wonder that the Americans joined in, as evidenced by equally ruthless comments made by Jared Kushner, the son-in-law of U.S. President Donald Trump, and eventually by the President himself.

While many at the time spoke about the strangeness of U.S. foreign policy,



Image by Cole Keister.

few mentioned that both countries are prime examples of settler colonialism. Unlike other settler colonial societies, both Israel and the U.S. are still committed to the same project.

Trump's desire to take over and rename the Gulf of Mexico, his ambition to occupy Greenland and claim it as American territory, and, of course, his comments about owning Gaza are all examples of settler colonial language and behavior.

The difference between Trump and previous presidents is that others used military power to expand U.S. influence through war and hundreds of military bases worldwide without explicitly using expansionist language. Instead, they referenced the need to challenge the Soviet "red menace," "restore democracy," and launch a global "war on terror" as justifications for their actions. Trump, however, feels no need to mask his actions with false logic and outright lies. Brutal honesty is his brand, though in essence, he is no different than the rest.

Israel, on the other hand, rarely feels the need to explain itself to anyone. It remains a model of a ferocious, traditional colonial society that fears no accountability and has no regard for international law.

While the Israelis pushed to conquer and ethnically cleanse Gaza, they remained entrenched in southern Lebanon, insisting on remaining in five strategic areas, thus violating the ceasefire agreement with Lebanon, which was signed on November 27.

A perfect case in point was the immediate—and I mean immediate—expansion into southern Syria, the moment the Syrian regime collapsed on December 8.

As soon as the events in Syria opened up security margins, Israeli tanks rolled in, warplanes destroyed almost the entirety of the Syrian army, and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu canceled the armistice agreement signed in 1974.

That expansion continued, though Syria represented no so-called security threat to Israel whatsoever. Israel is now in control of the Sheikh Mountain and Quneitra inside Syria.

**While one of the most horrific genocides in recent history was being carried out, Israeli real estate developers, members of the Knesset (Parliament), and leaders of the illegal settlement movement were all meeting to discuss investment opportunities in a depopulated Gaza.**

The unquenchable appetite for land in Israel remains as strong as it was upon the formation of the Zionist movement and the takeover of the Palestinian homeland nearly eight decades ago.

This realization is crucial, and Arab countries, in particular, must understand this. Sacrificing Palestinians to the Israeli death machine with the

flawed calculation that Israel's ambitions are limited to Gaza and the West Bank is a fatal mistake.

Israel will not hesitate for a minute to militarily move into any Arab geographic space the moment it feels able to do so, and it will always find U.S. support and European silence, regardless of how destructive its actions are.

Jordan, Egypt, and other Arab countries could find themselves facing the same predicament as Syria today: watching their territories being devoured while remaining powerless and without recourse.

This realization should also matter to those busy finding "solutions" to the Palestinian-Israeli "conflict," which narrowly frame the problem to that of the Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza.

Settler colonialism can never be resolved through creative solutions. A settler colonial state ceases to exist, and a settler colonial society ceases to function if territorial expansion is not a permanent state of affairs.

The only solution to this is that Israel's settler colonialism must be challenged, curtailed, and ultimately defeated. It may be a difficult task, but it is an inescapable one.

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<https://www.counterpunch.org/2025/03/11/from-gaza-to-syria-the-unyielding-reality-of-israeli-settler-colonialism/>

# Which Way Forward for Palestinian Liberation?

By JOSEPH DAHER

The ceasefire agreement between Hamas and Israel, which had conducted a genocidal war on Palestinians in Gaza for over a year, poses strategic questions for the Palestinian liberation struggle and those in solidarity with it. Up till now, the dominant strategy has been to cultivate an alliance with Iran's so-called "Axis of Resistance" to back military assaults on Israel, but that network has suffered devastating setbacks from the combined might of Israel and the U.S.

Israel's repeated assassination of Iranian leaders and direct attacks on Iran itself have exposed the weaknesses and challenges Iran faces in the region. Tel Aviv's brutal war on Lebanon significantly damaged Hezbollah, the jewel in the crown of Iran's Axis, and collectively punished the Lebanese people, particularly Hezbollah's base in the country's Shia population. The fall of Iran's other close regional ally, Bashar al-Assad, has further undermined the Axis. Only the Houthis in Yemen have survived the onslaught relatively intact.

Of course, Israel did not accomplish its main goals in Gaza of destroying Hamas and ethnically cleansing the population, and it has been discredited and delegitimized globally as a genocidal, settler-colonial, apartheid state. Nevertheless, the strategy of military resistance to Israel based on support from the Axis has shown its limitations if not its inability to win liberation. So, what have we learned about the Axis? What is its future? What do the region's masses think of the Axis? What is the alternative to the military strategy against Israel? How should the international Left position itself in these strategic debates?

## Origins and development of Iran's so-called "Axis of Resistance"

In the 2000s, the Iranian regime expanded its influence in the Middle East, primarily through The Islamic

Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC). It took advantage of the defeat suffered by the U.S. and its allies in their so-called War on Terror in the Middle East and Central Asia. George Bush's ambition for regional regime change was blocked by resistance to the U.S. occupation of Iraq and Afghanistan. Iran secured allies with Iraq's various Shia Islamic fundamentalist parties and militias and their representatives in state institutions, becoming the most influential regional power in the country.

**Iran's policy is entirely driven by its state and capitalist interests, not some liberatory project.**

Iran also increased its influence in Lebanon mainly through its alliance with Hezbollah, which has grown in popularity after its resistance against

Israel's 2006 war on Lebanon. Since the mid-1980s, Tehran has supported Hezbollah, providing it with funding and arms. In the 2010s, the Iranian regime also strengthened its relations with other organizations in the region, particularly the Houthi movement in Yemen, especially after Saudi Arabia's war on the country in 2015. Since then, Iran has provided the Houthis with military support. In addition, Tehran struck a close alliance with Hamas in the occupied Palestinian territories.

Iran's regional alliance reached its peak in the late 2010s with Hezbollah dominating the political scene in Lebanon, the Iraqi militias asserting their power, Iran's own forces combined with those of Hezbollah backing Assad's counter-revolution in Syria, and the Houthis securing a truce with Saudi Arabia. The IRGC has been the main agent in consolidating the Axis. It is to some extent a state within the state in Iran, combining military force, political influence, and control over a



An Israeli army bulldozer demolishing streets and houses in the Nur Shams camp in the West Bank during Ramadan.

major sector of the national economy. It has carried out armed interventions in Iraq, Syria, and Lebanon.

### **Pursuing regional power not liberation**

Iran has been attempting to achieve a regional balance of power against Israel and the U.S. as well as pursue its own military and economic aims in the region. The regime views any challenge to its influence in Iraq, Lebanon, Yemen, and the Gaza Strip, whether from below by popular forces or from Israel, other regional powers, and the U.S. as a threat to their interests. Iran's policy is entirely driven by its state and capitalist interests, not some liberatory project.

That explains why Iran and its allies in the Axis oppose not just other antagonistic powers, but also popular struggles for democracy and equality. The Iranian regime denies its workers basic rights to organize, collectively bargain, and strike. It crushes any protests, arresting and jailing dissidents, tens-of-thousands of whom languish as political prisoners in the country's prisons. The regime imposes national oppression on Kurds as well as people in Sistan and Baluchistan repeatedly provoking resistance, most recently in 2019. It also subjects women to systematic oppression, creating conditions so intolerable that it triggered the mass movement "Woman, Life, Freedom" in 2022.

Tehran also opposes popular protests against its allies in the Axis. It condemned mass protests in Lebanon and Iraq in 2019, claiming that the United States and its allies were behind them in spreading "insecurity and unrest." In Syria, Iran supplied its forces, fighters from Afghanistan and Pakistan, and Hezbollah's militants as ground troops while Russia mobilized its air force to back Assad's brutal counter-revolution against the democratic uprising in 2011.

Iran's allies in the Axis have also crushed popular movements. In Lebanon, Hezbollah has collaborated

with the rest of the country's ruling parties, despite their disagreements, in opposing social movements that have challenged their sectarian, neoliberal order. For example, they united against the Lebanese Intifada of October 2019. Hezbollah's leader, Hassan Nasrallah, claimed the uprising was financed by foreign powers and sent party members to attack demonstrators.

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In Iraq, militias and parties allied with Iran, such as the Popular Mobilization Units, have repressed popular struggles. They launched a violent campaign of assassination and repression of civilian protesters, organizers, and journalists, killing several hundred and wounding several thousand. Both Hezbollah and the Iraqi militias justified their repression of protests in 2019 by claiming they were the catspaws of foreign powers. In reality, these were the expressions of aggrieved people fighting for legitimate demands to reform their countries, not carrying out some hidden agenda of another state. That's why activists raised slogans like "Neither Saudi Arabia, Nor Iran" and "Neither USA, Nor Iran."

Truth be told, Iran is not a principled or consistent opponent of U.S. imperialism. For instance, Iran collaborated with U.S. imperialism in its invasions and occupations of Afghanistan and Iraq. Nor is Iran a reliable ally of Palestinian liberation. For example, when Hamas refused to support Assad's regime and its brutal crackdown on the Syrian uprising in 2011, Iran cut its financial assistance to the Palestinian movement.

That changed after Ismael Haniya replaced Khaled Meshaal as the leader of Hamas in 2017, restoring closer relations between the Palestinian movement, Hezbollah, and Iran. But the schisms between Iran and Palestinians remain, especially on the question of Syria. Large sections of Palestinians in occupied territories and elsewhere celebrated the fall of Iran's ally Assad, who was widely seen as a murderous tyrant and enemy of the Palestinians and their cause.

Moreover, Hamas's alliance with Iran has been criticized by segments of Palestinians in Gaza, even from those close to Hamas's base. For example, a group of Palestinians tore down a billboard in Gaza City in December 2020 with a giant portrait of the late General Qassem Soleimani, who had commanded Iran's Quds Force, just days before the first anniversary of his death. Washington's air strike that killed Soleimani in Baghdad in 2020 was condemned by Hamas, and Haniyeh even traveled to Tehran to attend his funeral.

These groups of Palestinians denounced Soleimani as a criminal. Several other signs and banners with Soleimani's portrait were also vandalized. In just one video, an individual called the Iranian leader a "killer of Syrians and Iraqis."

All this demonstrates that Iran and its allies have played a counter-revolutionary role in various countries of the region, opposing popular protests for democracy, social justice, and equality. They were never an Axis of Resistance, but an alliance committed to their members' self-preservation and assertion of regional power.

### **"The Axis of Restraint"**

This reality was confirmed by Iran's response to Hamas's October 7 attack and Israel's genocidal war in Gaza. While the Iranian regime affirmed its support for Hamas and the Palestinians, it consistently sought to avoid any generalized war with Israel and the U.S. out of concern for its survival in power.

Because of this, Iran restrained its responses to Israel's repeated strikes against Iranian and Hezbollah targets in Syria and its assassinations of senior Iranian officials, including in Iran itself.

Tehran initially tried to put pressure on the United States by ordering pro-Iranian militias in Iraq and Syria to attack U.S. bases in Syria, Iraq, and to a lesser extent Jordan. However, after the U.S. airstrikes in February 2024, Iran reduced these attacks to a minimum. Only the Houthis in Yemen continued to target commercial ships in the Red Sea and launch some missiles against Israel.

Iran did conduct military operations directly against Israel for the first time since the establishment of the Islamic Republic of Iran in 1979, but always in a calculated manner designed to avoid any generalized confrontation. Each exchange between the two powers proves this. In April 2024, Iran launched Operation True Promise in response to Israel's missile strike on the Iranian embassy in Damascus on April 1, which killed sixteen people, including seven members of the IRGC and the commander of the Quds Force in the Levant, Mohammad Reza Zahedi.

Before Iran retaliated, it gave its allies and neighbors 72 hours' notice so they would have time to protect their airspace. Given this warning, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates helped neutralize the attack by sharing information with Israel and the U.S. The Saudi and Iraqi governments also allowed U.S. Air Force tanker planes to remain in their airspace to support U.S. and allied patrols during the operation.

Only after all this, did Iran launch three hundred drones and missiles at Israel, but this attack was largely symbolic and calculated to avoid causing real damage. The drones took hours to reach their destination and were easily identified and shot down. Iran importantly did not call on its allies like Hezbollah to join its attack. After the operation, Iran's Supreme National

Security Council declared that no further military action was planned and that it considered the "matter closed."

In other words, Iran carried out the strike primarily to save face and deter Israel from continuing its attack on the Iranian consulate in Damascus. In doing so, the Iranian regime made clear that it wanted to avoid a regional war with Israel and especially any direct confrontation with the U.S. Iran acted primarily to protect itself and its network of allies in the region.

Tehran then launched a second attack of nearly 200 missiles on Israel on October 1 to "avenge" the assassinations of Hassan Nasrallah in Lebanon and Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh in Tehran. While this was certainly an escalation on Iran's part, it was entirely designed to prevent the loss of its credibility among its allies and Lebanese supporters of Hezbollah. Yet again, the attack was limited and done in such a way as to minimize confrontation with Israel and the U.S.

**That explains why Iran and its allies in the Axis oppose not just other antagonistic powers, but also popular struggles for democracy and equality.**

It was so unconvincing as a deterrent that on October 26, Israel launched three more waves of strikes against Iran's air defense systems, around energy sites, and missile manufacturing facilities. Tel Aviv had also wanted to bomb Iranian nuclear and oil sites but was restrained by the U.S. Several Arab countries, with which Israel maintains direct or indirect relations, also refused to let Israeli bombers and missiles fly over their territory. Nonetheless, the attacks revealed Iran's vulnerability.

Its regional allies were similarly exposed both in their weakness and their restraint in response to Israel's genocidal war. While Hezbollah did launch strikes into northern Israel, these were again limited and largely symbolic. And Israel called its bluff. It responded with a brutal state terrorist attack by detonating rigged pagers carried by Hezbollah's cadres, killing untold numbers of civilians in the process. It also launched a brutal war into southern Lebanon, decimating Hezbollah as a military force and collectively punishing its supporters in the Shia population. As a result, Hezbollah has been significantly weakened.

On top of that, Iran lost its other key ally, Assad's regime in Syria when forces toppled his regime almost without a fight. Assad was never an ally of the Palestinian liberation struggle. His regime had kept peace on its borders with Israel and, in his counter-revolutionary war in Syria, he attacked Palestinians in the Yarmouk refugee camp and elsewhere. That's why large sections of the Palestinians celebrated the fall of the Syrian regime.

With Assad's fall, however, Iran lost its Syrian base for logistical coordination, arms production, and arms shipments throughout the region, especially to Hezbollah. All of this has significantly weakened Tehran, both internally and regionally. That is why Iran has an interest in destabilizing Syria after the fall of the regime by fomenting sectarian tensions through its remaining networks in the country. It does not want a stable Syria, especially one with which its regional rivals can strike an alliance.

The only one of Iran's allies that remains relatively intact is the Houthis in Yemen. Before the ceasefire, Israel repeatedly bombed Houthi forces in an attempt to weaken it and Iran's Axis. In December 2024, Tel Aviv stepped up its campaign of strikes on ports in Hodeida, al-Salif, and Ras Isa controlled by the Houthis in order to

undercut their economic base, which is derived from port taxes, customs duties, and oil shipments, reduce their military capabilities, and block Iranian weapon shipments.

Israel also wanted to interrupt Houthi attacks on merchant ships in support of Hamas and the Palestinians. These had disrupted shipping in the Bab el-Mandeb passage between the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden, a passage through which up to 15 percent of global maritime trade passes.

As a direct result, Egypt lost considerable revenue when international shipping was diverted away from the Suez Canal to other routes. Israel's southern port of Eilat was also paralyzed. In response to this threat to global capitalism, the U.S., Britain, and Israel launched missile strikes and bombing campaigns against Houthi targets.

While Iran promised to retaliate against Israel, it did little in the end, again wanting to avoid any direct war with Israel and the U.S. All this demonstrates that Iran's main geopolitical objective is not to liberate Palestinians, but to use them as leverage, especially in its relations with the United States.

Similarly, Iran's passivity in response to Israel's war against Lebanon and its assassination of Hezbollah's key political and military leaders has further demonstrated that its first priority is to protect its own geopolitical interests and the survival of its regime. That includes reaching a *modus vivendi* with the U.S. itself. Indeed, President Massoud Pezeshkian and Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei's main goal is to cut some kind of deal with Washington, get it to lift the crippling sanctions on its economy, and normalize relations with the United States.

### **Iran, Russia, and pursuit of multipolarity**

At the same time, Iran's weakened position has driven it deeper into the arms of Russia in an attempt to safe-

guard its regime. It recently inked a 20-year "Comprehensive Strategic Partnership Agreement" with Moscow pledging cooperation on trade, military projects, science, education, culture, and more. The agreement includes a clause promising that neither country would permit its territory to be used for any action that would threaten the safety of the other, nor provide any help to any party attacking either country.

The agreement entails cooperation against Ukraine, efforts to evade Western sanctions, and collaboration on the North-South Transport Corridor, Moscow's initiative to facilitate trade between Russia and Asia. Even before this agreement, Iran had already been selling drones to Russia to attack Ukraine while Russia had been selling Iran advanced SU-35 fighter jets.

**Iran's main geopolitical objective is not to liberate Palestinians, but to use them as leverage, especially in its relations with the United States.**

The fall of Assad and Trump's return to the U.S. presidency certainly accelerated the finalizing of the partnership agreement. But it was mostly the result of rising challenges of both countries faced over the past few years. As noted, Tehran has suffered a tremendous setback in the Middle East, while Moscow's failure to achieve outright victory in its imperialist war against Ukraine has undermined its geopolitical standing. And both states are suffering the consequences of unprecedented Western sanctions.

Each country is desperate to find a way out of their predicament. Their agreement is part of that effort. It promises "to contribute to an objective process of shaping a new just and sus-

tainable multipolar world order." This language of "multipolarity" is a cornerstone of Russian, Chinese, and Iranian geopolitical strategy. It is used to justify their own capitalist economy, imperialist or sub-imperialist policies, and reactionary social programs.

Unfortunately, some figures and movements on the left have adopted their rhetoric, promoting a vision of a multipolar system in opposition to what they see as a unipolar world dominated by the U.S. In reality, the emergence of more great and regional powers and a multipolar world of capitalist states is not an alternative to unipolarity, but a new and frankly more dangerous stage of global imperialism. While Washington's unrivaled rule was horrific, growing inter-imperial conflict between the U.S., China, Russia, and regional powers like Iran risks world war. Remember the last multipolar world order detonated World War One and World War Two as contending imperialist states battled for hegemony over global capitalism.

In addition, great powers like China and Russia that advocate multipolarity offer no alternative for the Global South nor working class and oppressed people throughout the world. They are capitalist states whose economic policies reinforce old patterns of underdevelopment; they deindustrialize developing countries, trap them into extracting and exporting raw materials to China, and then consuming imported finished products mainly from China. While the ruling classes of these developing countries may benefit from that arrangement, the working class and oppressed suffer unemployment, precarity, and environmental devastation.

More generally, China, Russia, and the rest of the so-called BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa, and others) alliance in no way challenge the Global North's hegemony over institutions like the IMF and World Bank, nor their neoliberal framework. In fact, the



BRICS states are actually seeking what they see as their rightful place at the world capitalist table.

The expansion of the BRICS proves that it is not an alternative. In January 2024, its new members invited to join include Argentina, Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates (UAE). No one in their right mind can claim for instance that Argentina's state, ruled by the deranged devotee of Ayn Rand and Donald Trump, Javier Milei, offers a solution to the Global South, its workers, and oppressed. In reality, the BRICS states do not challenge the global capitalist system but contend for their slice of the pie within it.

Therefore, it is a disastrous mistake for any section of the left to side with one camp of imperialist and capitalist states against another. That does nothing to advance anti-imperialism let alone the struggles of workers and the oppressed in any state. Our political orientation should not be guided by a zero-sum choice between unipolarity versus multipolarity. In every situation, we must side with the exploited and oppressed and their struggle for liberation, not their exploiters and oppressors.

Those on the left who mimic Russia, China, and Iran's call for a multipolar order align themselves with capitalist states, their ruling classes, and authoritarian regimes, betraying solidarity with the struggles of popular classes within them. Siding with those struggles does not and should not entail support for U.S. imperialism and its allies. Our solidarity must not be with either camp of capitalist states but with workers and the oppressed. Of course, each camp of states will try to turn those struggles to their advantage. But that danger cannot become an alibi to withhold solidarity with legitimate struggles for emancipation.

If internationalism—the hallmark of being on the left—is to mean anything today it must entail support of popular classes in all countries as an

absolute duty, regardless of which camp they are in. Such struggles are the only way to challenge and replace repressive and authoritarian policies. That is true in the U.S. as well as in China or any other country.

We must oppose any regime's cynical slander of legitimate protest as the result of foreign interference or challenge to their sovereignty. That is the politics of right-wing nationalism, not socialist internationalism.

### **Against imperialism and sub-imperialism, for emancipation from below**

Such an approach is essential, especially with the reconfiguration of regional power in the Middle East and the return of Trump to power in the U.S. Iran and its Axis has been dramatically set back. The U.S., Israel, and their allies are now emboldened. Iran's position in future negotiations with Trump is weakened, and its economy continues to deteriorate under sanctions and its own capitalist crisis.

**No one on the left should support the U.S. state and its Western allies; they remain the biggest opponent of progressive social change in the world.**

Faced with this predicament, Tehran will likely reconsider its regional strategy. It could conclude that its best option may be to acquire nuclear weapons to strengthen its deterrence capacity and improve its position in future negotiations with the United States.

The left, especially in the U.S. and Europe, must oppose any further beligerence by Israel and the U.S. against Iran or any other regional power. We must also oppose their economic war

on Iran through sanctions, which disproportionately impact the country's working classes. No one on the left should support the U.S. state and its Western allies; they remain the biggest opponent of progressive social change in the world.

However, we should not fall for the politics of "my enemy's enemy is my friend" and support Washington's main imperial rival, China, nor lesser enemies like Russia. They are no less predatory and avaricious imperialist states, as Beijing's record in Xinjiang and Hong Kong attests, as does Moscow's similarly brutal one in Syria and Ukraine. Nor should anyone on the left support the authoritarian, neoliberal, and patriarchal Iranian regime and its reactionary and repressive policies against its own people and those in other countries such as Syria.

The Islamic Republic of Iran is an enemy of the working classes in Iran and the region and is not fighting for their people's emancipation. The same is true of Iran's allies like Hezbollah in the region, which have all played a counter-revolutionary role in their respective countries. And, as their record during Israel's genocidal war on Gaza proves, neither Iran nor any other force in the so-called "Axis of Resistance" have genuinely rallied to fight for the liberation of Palestine. Iran in particular has only opportunistically used the Palestinian cause as leverage to achieve its wider objectives in the region.

In the current situation, it is likely in the short term that U.S. imperialism will benefit from the weakening of Iran and its regional network. At the same time, the crisis of capitalism in the region remains unresolved, inequality continues to grow, and with that, grievances among workers and the oppressed mount by the day. All this will continue to produce explosive struggles as they have over the last decade-and-a-half. So, as we oppose U.S. and other imperial-

isms and regional powers, our solidarity must be with popular struggles that widen the democratic space for popular classes to self-organize and constitute a counter-power to their own ruling classes and their imperial sponsors.

### **What way forward for Palestinian liberation?**

Only such a strategy has the chance of transforming the region's existing order in a progressive and democratic manner. It is also the cornerstone of an alternative strategy for Palestinian liberation to the failed one of reliance on Iran's Axis.

As the last year has proved, Israel depends not just on the U.S., its imperial sponsor, to defend its colonial rule, but also on all the surrounding states. These have all either normalized relations with Israel, reached *de facto* agreements of mutual recognition, or offered at best self-serving, inconsistent, and unreliable opposition.

Moreover, Washington's rivals, China and Russia, have proved themselves unreliable. They invest in Israel, only offer symbolic criticism, and agree with U.S. imperialism's proposed but never implemented two-state solution, a fake solution that if it were ever enacted would at best ratify Israeli conquest and apartheid. As a result, Palestinians cannot look to any of the regional states or any imperialist power as reliable allies in their liberation struggle.

But Palestinians on their own cannot win liberation. Israel is a major economic and military power far superior to the Palestinians. And, unlike apartheid South Africa, which depended on and exploited Black workers, Israel does not rely on Palestinian labor. It does not play a key role in its capital accumulation process.

In fact, Israel's historic aim as a settler colonial project has been to replace Palestinian labor with Jewish labor. Therefore, Palestinian workers on their own do have the power to overthrow the apartheid regime as Black South African workers did.

So, who are the Palestinians' natural, reliable allies in the struggle for liberation? The region's popular classes. Given their own history of colonial rule, the overwhelming majority identify with the struggle of the Palestinians. Moreover, Israel's ethnic cleansing of Palestine has driven its people into all the surrounding states as refugees, cementing ties between the region's people. Finally, the masses in the Middle East and North Africa oppose their own governments' either collaboration with or fake resistance to Israel.

**Our solidarity must not be with either camp of capitalist states but with workers and the oppressed.**

Thus, the region's popular classes are collectively oppressed by the state system, their interests in challenging that system are tied together, and they possess tremendous power to shut their economies down including the oil industry—a power that can undermine the entire world economy. These facts foster regional solidarity from below based on tremendous power capable of winning collective liberation against the regional state system. This is more than just potential.

Over the last century, the dialectical relationship between Palestinian liberation and regional popular struggle has been repeatedly demonstrated. When Palestinians resist, their fight has triggered regional struggles, and those struggles have fed back into the one in occupied Palestine. The power and potential of this regional strategy have been demonstrated on several occasions. In the 1960s and 1970s, the Palestinian movement sparked a rise in class struggle throughout the region. In 2000 the Second Intifada ushered in a new era of resistance, inspiring a wave

of organizing that finally exploded in 2011 with revolutions from Tunisia to Egypt to Syria.

Similarly, inspired by these revolutionary uprisings a few months later, tens-of-thousands of refugees organized protests in May 2011 at the closest point to the borders of Palestine in Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, the West Bank, and the Gaza Strip to commemorate the Nakba and demand the right of return. Hundreds of Palestinian refugees residing in Syria were able to penetrate the Golan Heights barriers and enter Palestine, waving Palestinian flags and the keys to their Palestinian homes. Predictably, Israeli forces violently repressed these demonstrations, killing ten near the Syrian border, another ten in Southern Lebanon, and one in Gaza.

In the summer of 2019, the Palestinians of Lebanon staged massive protests for weeks in refugee camps against the Labor Ministry's decision to treat them as foreigners, an act they saw as a form of discrimination and racism against them. Their resistance helped inspire the broader Lebanese uprising of October 2019.

This history demonstrates the potential for a regional revolutionary strategy. The united revolt has the power to transform the entire Middle East and North Africa, toppling regimes, expelling imperialist powers, and ending both these forces' support for the State of Israel, weakening it in the process. Far-right minister Avigdor Lieberman recognized the danger that regional popular uprisings posed to Israel in 2011 when he said the Egyptian revolution that toppled Hosni Mubarak and opened the door to a period of democratic opening in the country was a greater threat to Israel than Iran.

This regional revolutionary strategy must be complemented in the capitalist metropolises by working-class solidarity against their imperialist rulers. This is not an act of charity but in the interests

# Hossam Shabat's Last Article

BY SHARIF ABDEL KOUDDOUS

of those classes, whose tax dollars are diverted from desperately needed social and economic programs into support for Israel and whose lives are routinely wasted in imperial wars and interventions to buttress Israel and the region's existing state order.

But such solidarity will not happen automatically; the left must cultivate it politically and agitate for it in practice. The left's most important task is to win unions, progressive groups, and movements to support the campaign for Boycott Divestment and Sanctions against Israel to end imperialist political, economic, and military support for Tel Aviv. Such anti-imperialist struggle and solidarity can weaken the imperialist powers, Israel, and all the other despotic regimes in the region, opening space for mass popular resistance from below.

This regional and international revolutionary strategy is the alternative to reliance on Iran's so-called Axis of Resistance. That has failed. Now we need to build a genuine axis of resistance from below: the popular classes in Palestine and the region backed up by anti-imperialist solidarity in all the great power states rooted in popular struggles of working people against their ruling classes. Only through such a strategy can we build the counterpower to liberate Palestine, the region, and our world from the clutches of imperialism and the global capitalist system behind it.

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—*Tempest*, March 2, 2025

[https://tempestmag.org/2025/03/so-called-axis-of-resistance/?utm\\_source=rss&utm\\_medium=rss&utm\\_](https://tempestmag.org/2025/03/so-called-axis-of-resistance/?utm_source=rss&utm_medium=rss&utm_)

March 24, 2025—Hossam Shabat is dead. I am beyond rage and despair as I write these words. The Israeli military bombed his car this morning as he was traveling in Beit Lahia. Videos fill my screen of his body lying on the street, carried to the hospital, grieved by his colleagues and loved ones. These are the kinds of tragic scenes Hossam himself would so often document for the world. He was an exemplary journalist: brave, tireless, and dedicated to telling the story of Palestinians in Gaza.

Hossam was one of a handful of reporters who remained in northern Gaza through Israel's genocidal war. His ability to cover one of the most brutal military campaigns in recent history was almost beyond comprehension. He bore witness to untold death and suffering on an almost daily basis for seventeen months. He was displaced over twenty times. He was often hungry. He buried many of his journalist colleagues. In November, he was wounded in an Israeli airstrike. I still can't believe I am referring to him in the past tense. Israel obliterates the present.

When I contacted Hossam in November to ask him to write for *Drop Site News*, he was enthusiastic. "Greetings habibi [dear one]. May God keep you. I am very happy to have this opportunity," he wrote. "There are so many ideas, scenes, stories."

His first dispatch for *Drop Site* was a searing account of a vicious mass expulsion campaign by the Israeli military in Beit Lahia that forced thousands of Palestinian families to flee one of the last remaining shelters in the besieged town:

"Some of the wounded fell on the road with no hope of getting treatment. 'I was walking with my sister in the street,' said Rahaf, 16. She and her sister were the sole survivors in

their family of an earlier airstrike that killed 70 people. 'Suddenly my sister fell due to the bombing. I saw blood pouring from her, but I couldn't do anything. I left her in the street, and no one pulled her out. I was screaming, but no one heard me.'"

His writing was lyrical and arresting. I struggled to translate and edit his pieces—to do them justice, to convey his emotive use of Arabic into something relatable in English. In the typical editorial see-saw back and forth of finalizing a piece, I would often return to him with clarifications and questions, asking him for additional details and direct quotes. He was always quick to respond despite his extraordinary circumstances.

In January, Hossam filed a piece about the three days between when the "ceasefire" deal was announced and when it was scheduled to be implemented, a period when Israel escalated its bombing campaign across Gaza:

"They targeted the al-Falah school; they bombed an entire residential block in Jabaliya; they killed families, like the Alloush family, whose bodies have not yet been recovered and still lie under and over the rubble. The children I saw that night appeared happy, but they were



Hossam Shabat. Source: X.

no longer living, their faces frozen in a mix of smiles and blood.”

In early December, when writing a preamble to one of his articles, I asked him to confirm his age. “Hahaha. I’m young. 24,” he wrote. Then moments later he clarified: “Actually, I haven’t turned 24 yet. I’m 23.” I told him he was young in age only, but in experience he was old (it sounds better in Arabic). “I’m really tired,” he responded. “I swear I have no strength left. I can’t find a place to sleep. I’ve been displaced 20 times.” He continued: “Did you know that I am the only one in my family who lives alone in the north?” Last month, during the “cease-fire,” he was reunited with his mother for the first time in 492 days.

In October, the Israeli military placed Hossam and five other Palestinian journalists on a hit list. At the time, he said it felt like he was “hunted.” He called on people to speak out using the hashtag #ProtectTheJournalists: “I plead everyone to share the reality about Journalists in order to spread awareness about the real plans of the Israeli occupation to target journalists in order to impose a media blackout. Spread the hashtag and talk about us!”

In December, after the Israeli military killed five journalists in an airstrike on their vehicle, I messaged to check in on him.

“Our job is only to die,” he responded. “I hate the whole world. No one is doing anything. I swear I’ve come to hate this job.” About his surviving colleagues he wrote, “We’ve started saying to each other: ‘Ok, whose turn is it?’ ...Our families consider us already martyred.”

When Israel resumed its scorched earth bombing last week, I messaged again to check in on him. He responded with one word: “Death.”

Throughout it all, Hossam would message with ideas for stories, or just to relay what was happening in the north. In his messages and voice notes, he often somehow still managed to be

warm and funny—a kind of rebellion against the death all around him.

After the “ceasefire” went into effect, he returned to his hometown of Beit Hanoun on the northeastern edge of Gaza. Hardly a structure was left standing, but he was determined to stay and document the destruction.

He messaged me late Sunday night, just hours before he was killed. He had been forced to leave his hometown of Beit Hanoun on the day of Israel’s renewed assault last week and was forcibly displaced yet again—this time to Jabaliya. We had agreed on him writing a piece about the attack last week and what he had witnessed.

“Habibi,” he wrote. “I miss you.” I asked him what the situation was like in Jabaliya. “Difficult,” he said.

He sent his piece, and I read through it, sent my follow-up questions. He only answered one before going offline. I messaged him again as soon as I woke up this morning. I didn’t yet know that he had been killed.

What you are about to read is Hossam’s last article. I translated it through tears.

—Sharif Abdel Kouddous

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## Report from the Frontline of Israel’s War of Annihilation

STORY BY HOSSAM SHABAT

Beit Hanoun, Gaza—The night was dark and cautiously quiet. Everyone fell into an anxious sleep. But the tranquility was quickly shattered by deafening screams. As the bombs rained down, the wails of neighbors announced the first moments of the resumption of Israel’s military campaign. Beit Hanoun was plunged into panic and terror. Cries of distress rose amid the screech of the shells in a scene that reflected the magnitude of the

disaster engulfing the city. This was only the beginning. The massacre of entire families quickly followed. Columns of smoke rose everywhere. The bombing did not cease for a moment, drowning everything in a relentless hail of fire and suffering.

The Israeli attack is continuing. The occupation is practicing its brutality with unprecedented bombardment leaving behind horrific scenes of destruction and bloodshed. According to the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, the number of martyrs over the past six days has topped 700, reflecting the degree of such immense human suffering. OCHA also reports how Gaza is suffering from a severe shortage of medicines and medical aid, exacerbating an already dire situation.

In the first six days of this renewed military operation, northern Gaza witnessed four bloody massacres. The most notable was the Mubarak family massacre, which took place as the family was gathering in mourning to offer their condolences to Dr. Salim Mubarak. In an instant, their collective grieving was turned into a sea of blood and body parts. The entire family was killed: Dr. Salim, his wife, his children, his parents. No one survived. One eyewitness summed it up plainly: “They were all killed.” The victims were not on a battlefield but in a house of mourning. It was a crime in every sense of the word.

This massacre was not the only one—it was followed by successive attacks on other families, including the Abu Nasr family, then the Abu Halim family—bringing to mind the vicious bombardment in the very beginning of the war after October 7. The aggression is ongoing, relentless, targeting innocent civilians indiscriminately, leaving behind only destruction and death.

When I arrived on the scene, I wasn’t ready for the horror before my eyes. The streets were filled with the

dead. Under every stone lay a martyr. Dozens were crying for help from underneath the rubble of their homes but there was no one to respond. Screams filled the air while everyone stood helpless. My tears didn't stop. The scenes were more than any human being could bear. The ambulances were filled with corpses, their bodies and limbs piled on top and intertwined with one another. We could no longer distinguish between children and men, between the injured and the dead.

At Al-Andalus hospital the scene was even more painful. The hospital was filled with martyrs. Mothers bid silent farewells to their children. Medical staff worked in horrific conditions, trying to treat the injured with only the most basic means available. It was an impossible situation with massive numbers of dead and wounded being brought in at a terrifying rate.

Israel's aggression continues. Massacre after massacre, leaving only the screams of mothers in its wake and the dreams of children that have turned to ash. There is no justification for this. Everything is being crushed: the lives of innocent people, their dignity, and their hopes for a better future.

*\*Translation by Sharif Abdel Kouddous*

*—Drop Site News, March 24, 2025*

[https://www.dropsitenews.com/p/hossam-shabat-journalist-killed-gaza-last-article?utm\\_source=post-email](https://www.dropsitenews.com/p/hossam-shabat-journalist-killed-gaza-last-article?utm_source=post-email)

## Sudanese Starve as Soup Kitchens Close

BY MAT NASHED

The United States' decision to suspend foreign aid is exacerbating a catastrophic hunger crisis in Sudan, where millions risk dying from malnutrition-related illnesses.

Since assuming office in January, U.S. President Donald Trump's administration has put on leave or fired the vast majority of employees at the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) and paused almost all of the global projects it funds.

Last year, USAID contributed 44 percent to Sudan's \$1.8 billion humanitarian response, according to the United Nations.

A portion of this sum went to supporting Emergency Response Rooms (ERRs), which are neighborhood relief groups that support hundreds of "community kitchens" across the country.

"About 80 percent of the 1,460 community kitchens across Sudan were shut down [when USAID paused all funding]," said Hajooj Kuka, the spokesperson for the ERRs in Khartoum state.

### Filling the gap

Since a power struggle between the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF) erupted into civil war in April

2023, communal kitchens have kept hundreds-of-thousands of people alive in regions where UN agencies and global relief organizations are unable to reach due to the willful obstruction of aid by the warring parties, according to local and foreign relief workers.

Despite the efforts of ERR volunteers, more than 600,000 people in Sudan are coping with famine levels of hunger and some eight million are on the verge of slipping into famine, according to the global hunger monitor, the UN Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC).

The pause in USAID funding now risks compounding the hunger crisis.

According to Iyad Agha, the humanitarian coordinator for international non-governmental organizations in Sudan, some organizations obtained waivers from the U.S. government to continue administering life-saving services.

However, many of these services were eventually terminated after a subsequent review by the U.S. determined that they were not necessary to sustain life. Days later, the Trump administration reversed some terminations and permitted some services to resume.



A volunteer distributes food to people in Omdurman, Sudan, September 3, 2023.

Agha said Washington's decisions appear to be "completely random."

"NGOs (Non-Governmental Organizations) are paralyzed and don't know how to proceed amidst the chaos and confusion and the affected people [who need aid in Sudan] are the most impacted by all of this chaos," he told *Al Jazeera*.

"The problem is that if some other donors want to step in [for the absence of USAID] there is [a large gap] to fulfil," Agha added.

ERRs have taken matters into their own hands to find alternative funding.

Kuka said that community kitchens have solicited funding from the Sudanese diaspora and smaller charitable organizations in order to keep providing meals to beleaguered civilians during the holy month of Ramadan, which began earlier in March.

Their efforts have helped hundreds of community kitchens to reopen across the country, yet 63 percent remain shuttered since the U.S. government paused most foreign aid, said Kuka.

"There is only so much we can do. There simply isn't enough food for people," he told *Al Jazeera*.

"But we have started an online drive for people to donate and during Ramadan, people tend to donate more during this time," he added.

### **Impediments and looting**

Both sides in Sudan's civil war are responsible for generating the hunger crisis, say local and foreign relief workers.

One issue cited by some relief workers is that UN agencies recognize the Sudanese army as the *de facto* government.

This policy has empowered the army to approve or deny aid shipments coming across the borders from neighboring countries such as Chad and South Sudan, which the army does not control. Critics previously told *Al Jazeera* that humanitarians should work with the relevant authorities in each area of Sudan in order to reach as many needy people as possible.

In addition, UN agencies that treat the army as the *de facto* government are required to base all humanitarian operations out of Port Sudan, which makes it logistically difficult to reach faraway regions such as the Nuba Mountains in South Kordofan and the sprawling region of Darfur.

"The army's procedures are very cumbersome. It's a mountain of paperwork," explained a foreign aid worker who requested anonymity for fear that their organization could lose aid access.

"We have to deal with the different authorities: military intelligence, the Humanitarian Aid Commission, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the General Intelligence Services and National Intelligence Services.

"Basically, for any [aid to move], we need to get a stamp from all of those agencies," the aid worker told *Al Jazeera*.

Analysts and relief workers also accuse the SAF of prohibiting aid to regions under RSF control. But army spokesperson Nabil Abdullah has repeatedly denied this accusation and criticized the RSF for starving civilians.

Hind al-Atif, the spokesperson for the ERR in Sharq el-Nile, a sprawling neighborhood in Khartoum, accused the RSF of exacerbating the hunger crisis.

She said that the group looted all the main markets in Khartoum ahead of Ramadan and that many civilians are hesitant to leave their neighborhoods to look for food out of fear that they could be attacked at RSF checkpoints.

"People are scared to flee because the RSF often robs people of their money and phones," she told *Al Jazeera*.

*Al Jazeera* contacted the RSF's press office for comment on allegations that its fighters are robbing civilians at gunpoint and looting markets, but the group did not respond before publication.

### **Insecurity and starvation**

As fighting escalates between the RSF and Sudanese army, local relief groups and aid agencies are finding it increasingly difficult to reach beleaguered civilians.

In the Zamzam displacement camp, where more than 500,000 people are sheltering in North Darfur and struggling to survive a famine, the World Food Program (WFP) was forced to suspend aid operations when the RSF shelled the camp on February 10 and 11.

WFP was providing food vouchers to about 60,000 people in Zamzam through a local organization.

"Our partners on the ground were forced to evacuate. They were forced to run for their lives and that's why we had to pause assistance," said Lenzi Kinzli, the agency's spokesperson.

The battle for Khartoum is also causing major displacement throughout Sharq el-Nile, pushing the few remaining communal kitchens to try and feed thousands of new arrivals.

As people grow more desperate, Kuka says that many are trying to search for fish in the Nile or grow vegetables in their gardens, yet the quantity of food most people manage to eat is hardly enough.

He noted that ERRs are reaching out to the European Union, as well as UN agencies, to try and fill the gap left behind by USAID. If nobody steps up, Kuka warned that hundreds-of-thousands of people will starve and die from malnutrition-related diseases.

"We are speaking about 1.8 million people who benefit from these kitchens. What does it mean if they can no longer get food?" asked Kuka.

"People are already on edge. We [as ERRs] are just trying our best to stop more regions in Sudan from slipping into complete famine. But if this [food shortage] continues, then there will be more and more pockets of famine across the country."

—*Al Jazeera*, March 5, 2025

<https://www.aljazeera.com/features/2025/3/5/sudanese-starve-as-soup-kitchens-close-down-and-warning-parties-block-aid>

# Serbia's Largest Anti-Government Rally Ever

BY GUY DE LAUNEY

Hundreds-of-thousands of people descended on Serbia's capital on Saturday to protest the deaths of 15 people in a railway station collapse.

While the government put attendance at 107,000 across Belgrade, an independent monitor said 325,000—if not more—had gathered, making it Serbia's largest protest ever.

The Novi Sad collapse last November has galvanized anger towards the government and President Aleksandar Vucic. Demonstrators blame corruption and corner-cutting for the loss of life.

They believe the disaster reflects more than a decade of governing by the Progressive Party of Vucic—who closely associated himself with the station's recent renovation.

Despite multiple resignations—and Vucic's insistence that he is going nowhere—the protests have only continued to grow.

"We just want a country that works," law student Jana Vasic told the *BBC* in the growing crowd in Belgrade.

"We want institutions that do their jobs properly. We don't care what party is in power. But we need a country that works, not one where you don't get justice for more than four months."

Republic Square—just one of the four meeting points around Serbia's capital for the "15th for 15" protest—was full to overflowing on Saturday.

Some took refuge on the plinth of Prince Mihajlo's statue—the traditional spot for Belgraders to meet, the equivalent of Eros in London's Piccadilly.

Others queued up along the road in front of the National Museum, stretching all the way back to Students' Square.

The other meeting points were every bit as crowded ahead of the planned rendezvous in front of the National Assembly.

The Public Meeting Archive said 275,000-325,000 had attended the protest—"with the possibility that the number was even higher."

"Due to the extraordinary size, dynamic nature and structure of the assembly, as well as the unclear situation in some parts of the city... a more precise assessment is not possible," it added.

Serbian media reports 22 people were arrested and 56 others injured.

While the protests over the Novi Sad collapse began with students, they have been joined by taxi drivers, farmers and lawyers.

Ahead of the big protest, motorbike riders pulled up outside the National Assembly, facing off against the tractors surrounding a camp of pro-government counter-protesters.

Then a parade of military veterans received a rousing welcome. They said they would make a citizen's arrest on anyone who attacked the students.

The students have been calling for full transparency and accountability over the collapse of a concrete and glass canopy at the station in Serbia's

second city, which was renovated and only reopened—by Vucic—in 2022.

They want the government to publish all the documentation relating to the renovation project and say they are not satisfied with the papers the authorities have released so far.

They also want those responsible for the disaster to be charged and convicted. Prosecutors have indicted at least 16 people, including former construction minister Goran Vesic.

But the charges have yet to go to trial. And the students insist they will continue with their protests until the authorities meet all their demands.

"We're making progress," a student representing Belgrade University's philosophy faculty told the *BBC*. "But at this point none of our demands have been met completely."

"A couple of politicians have resigned from their offices," noted another. "But they weren't fired. We're yet to see anything but empty promises."

Prime Minister Milos Vučević announced his resignation at the end of January. But that has yet to be rati-



A specialized non-government organization estimates between 275,000 and 325,000 attended the rally, making it the largest in Belgrade's history.

fied by the National Assembly and he remains in his post.

But the real power in Serbia lies with Vucic, who insists that he is going nowhere.

“I don’t give in to blackmail,” he told a media conference on the eve of the big protest. “I won’t allow the street to pave a horrible future for this country.”

Addressing the nation on Saturday, Vucic praised the police, adding that he was proud that “we managed to preserve the peace.”

He said that he “understood” the protesters’ message, and that “we will have to change ourselves.”

Vucic has described the student protests as “well-intentioned.” But he

had less-flattering words for opposition parties, labelling them members of a “criminal cartel.” He accused them of attempting to force the formation of a “fraudulent interim government.”

Borko Stefanovic does not deny that the opposition parties are looking for the establishment of a “government of experts.”

The deputy president of the Party of Freedom and Justice describes it as the “only rational way out” of the political crisis, which would establish the conditions for fresh elections.

Like other opposition leaders, Stefanovic says that free elections are not currently possible due to the Progressive Party’s domination of the media and state institutions.

But this is not one of the students’ demands. They are simply calling for the truth behind the Novi Sad disaster to be established.

As law professor Miodrag Jovanovic puts it “they are asking for the things I’ve been lecturing about—the rule of law, respect for the constitution, and the responsibility and accountability of public officials.”

Whatever happens during the “15th for 15” protest, it seems unlikely that the students will relent until they receive some satisfactory answers.

—BBC, March 15, 2025

<https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/cx2g8v32q30o>

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## Zionism is Manifest Destiny

### A legacy of ethnic cleansing

BY ALEXANDER SHELBY

Ethnic cleansing is as American as apple pie and justified through the doctrine of Manifest Destiny, which emerged in the 19th century and promoted the belief that Americans were divinely ordained to expand westward. This expansion led to the forced displacement, extermination, and cultural erasure of countless Native American tribes. An estimated two to 18 million Native Americans lived in North America before European contact. By 1890, the U.S. Census officially recorded 248,253 Native Americans.

The displacement of the Native Americans was systematic and brutal. The Indian Removal Act of 1830, enforced by President Andrew Jackson, led to the Trail of Tears, the forced relocation of Native American tribes from their ancestral lands in the Southeastern United States to Oklahoma. This uprooted the Indigenous peoples, leading to the deaths of thousands due to harsh conditions, starvation, disease, and exposure to make room for American settlers. The government

facilitated this through policies that legitimized land seizures, forced relocations, and even massacres, all in the name of progress and Manifest Destiny.

President Donald Trump echoed this 19th-century expansionist rhetoric, first at his inauguration when he declared a “Manifest Destiny to Mars” and the seizure of Greenland and Canada, and then later when he proposed taking Gaza and turning it into the “Riviera of the Middle East.” His statement underscored the persistent mentality that expansion and domination remain central to his administration. Trump’s worldview, which revives 19th-century imperialism and Manifest Destiny, is similar in many ways to Zionism.

### Zionism is Manifest Destiny

The Zionists, similar to the United States in the 19th-century, used their own Manifest Destiny to dispossess and claim Palestinian land. During the Palestine Mandate, Zionists, with the help of Great Britain, migrated to Palestine from Europe to take Palestine and make it “as Jewish as England is

English.” The Zionist movement, although many were secularists or atheists, sought to establish a Jewish homeland because this was the land that God had promised the Jews. The Zionists claimed God’s hand or Manifest Destiny led them to the Holy Land. This ultimately justified the mass displacement of the Indigenous Palestinian population.

In 1948, during the Nakba (or “catastrophe”), approximately 750,000 Palestinians were expelled from their homes as part of an organized plan known as Plan D. Entire villages were depopulated, and the new Israeli state systematically erased traces of Palestinian presence. Yet, this was only the beginning. In 1967, during the Six-Day War, Israel attempted another wave of ethnic cleansing. While some Palestinians were expelled to Jordan, others remained in what became the occupied territory of the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Similar to the United States, the state of Israel was established over the bones and blood of the Palestinian population.



Unlike the outright annexation seen in Manifest Destiny, Israel took a different approach post-1967—managing, rather than fully integrating, the Palestinian population. This created a system of military occupation that has lasted for decades, leaving millions of Palestinians in a state of stateless purgatory with no political or economic hope. As Israeli settlements expanded into Palestinian lands, tensions grew, culminating in heightened nationalism and resistance throughout the late 20th century.

### Consequences of a 19th-century mindset

Today, Israel continues its Zionist efforts to reshape the demographic landscape of the region. The recent escalation in Gaza has drawn international attention, with Israeli officials—backed by the United States—making statements that suggest an ethnic cleansing of Gaza. As history has shown, the displacement of Palestinians from Gaza could easily set the stage for a similar fate in the West Bank.

Trump himself exemplified this 19th-century mindset when asked about U.S. support for Israeli actions in Gaza. When asked about buying Gaza at a meeting with King Abdullah II of Jordan on February 11, 2025, Trump stated that, “We are not going to buy anything. We are going to have it, and we’re going to keep it.” This echoes an era when might make right, a period of imperialistic conquest now being revived in modern geopolitics. Such rhetoric and policies threaten to normalize ethnic cleansing once again, providing a dangerous precedent for other nations to follow.

If Israel succeeds in forcibly displacing Gaza’s population, the repercussions will extend far beyond the Middle East. Gaza’s example could embolden others to pursue similar policies. India, Myanmar, and China, all of which have faced accusations of ethnic cleansing, may feel further justified in continuing

their actions under the guise of national security or territorial integrity.

This return to 19th-century world order—where Manifest Destiny supplants international law—threatens global stability. The ethnic cleansing of Palestinians will trigger the collapse of Egypt and Jordan, leading to more war and more international instability. In such a scenario, the Palestinians will attack Israel from the new Palestinian territories in Egypt and Jordan and Israel, claiming self-defense will justify attacking those countries to seize more territory under the banner of security, extending Israel’s borders from the Nile to the Euphrates because God promised the land to Israel. This has long been a part of the Greater Israel ideology and part of Israel’s Manifest Destiny.

### Palestine and the lessons of history

History has repeatedly shown that ethnic cleansing does not bring lasting peace; it sows the seeds of hate and future conflict. The forced displacement

of Indigenous peoples, whether in North America or Palestine, has led to generational resistance. The Palestinians, like the Native Americans before them, will not abandon their claims to their homeland. As the world watches the situation in Gaza unfold, it must ask itself whether it is willing to allow the mistakes of the past to be repeated in the 21st century. The United States and Israel may believe that Manifest Destiny gives them a right to other people’s land, but history teaches that oppression breeds resistance and that native populations do not simply disappear. They fight back by whatever means, leading to further instability and conflict in the years to come.

—Mondoweiss, March 5, 2025

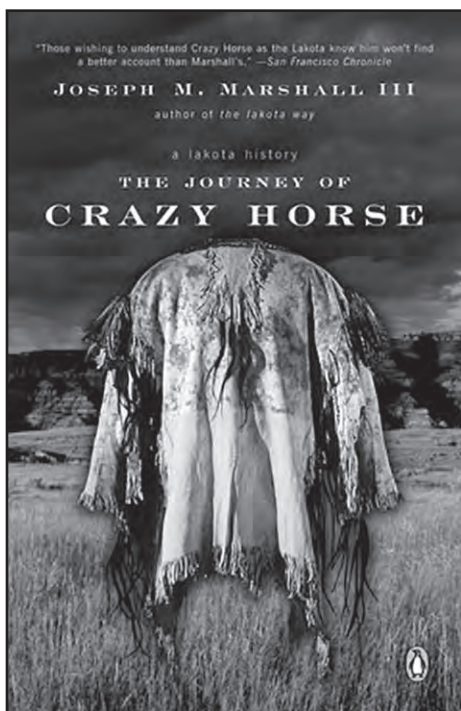
<https://mondoweiss.net/2025/03/manifest-destiny-and-zionism-a-legacy-of-ethnic->



Screenshot from a video showing Israeli soldiers saluting the Israeli flag while singing the Israeli national anthem on a beach in Gaza in November 2023.

## Crazy Horse and Anti-Colonial Resistance

By NICK ESTES



*This is the first of several posts about Tasunka Witko, reflecting on Joseph Marshall III's book, The Journey of Crazy Horse: A Lakota History. It is the most exemplary biography of Tasunka Witko. The narrative is presented from the perspective of the Lakota people and is derived from the oral histories of Lakota elders.*

In recent months, I have focused on reexamining Lakota texts and influential figures who have significantly impacted my perspective. A recent podcast interview with Palestinian author Susan Abulhawa prompted me to revisit one of the most mythologized and often misunderstood leaders of Lakota resistance, Tasunka Witko—commonly referred to as “His Horse Is Crazy” or simply “Crazy Horse.”

The killing of Palestinian resistance leader Yahya Sinwar, as noted by Susan, bore similarities to historical figures like the Lakota war leader Tasunka

Witko, known as Crazy Horse to his enemies. She reflected on how Sinwar endured days without food, continuously engaging in combat until his demise, which occurred after he launched grenades at enemy soldiers. In an act of ultimate defiance, he also threw a stick at a surveillance drone that recorded his final moments before a tank shell blew up the building, taking him with it.

Sinwar's last days were marked by hardship; he did not seek refuge in a tunnel or remain surrounded by captives, as suggested by his adversaries. Instead, he faced his enemies directly, sometimes yards away. This sharply contrasts with the leaders of the opposing forces, who sought to eliminate him, as they have entrenched themselves in underground bunkers, shielded by the protective reach of the United States.

**Assassinations are meant to serve as lessons for those choosing the path of resistance.**

Susan mentioned that Crazy Horse also fasted, receiving spiritual guidance and a vision that contributed to the success of his battlefield exploits. He led his men not from the safety of the rear but by engaging the enemy, favoring his war club in close combat. However, their deaths differ: Sinwar was killed by an unknown enemy, while Crazy Horse fell to a fellow Lakota after he had previously surrendered.

What Sinwar and Crazy Horse hold most in common is their spirit of resis-

tance as anti-colonial fighters, equally villainized and mystified by the forces that sought their annihilation. Their stature as myths reveals more about their colonizer than about their humanity. The culture of genocide makes a double move. While it demonizes the people it seeks to destroy as primitive savages, it also attributes superhuman powers to them.

The portrayals of brutality and depictions of merciless violence obscure the motives for resistance, thereby attempting to frame genocide as self-defense and a rational response to an irrational opponent. Anti-colonial resistance gets framed as led by “fundamentalists,” “hostiles,” “extremists,” or “terrorists”—that is, in other words, people who react and respond to their conditions in irrational or extreme ways beyond the bounds of what is considered “civilized.” This purposefully obscures the material and objective conditions of resistance. At the same time, the colonizer projects invulnerability and superiority. Starving Lakotas and Palestinians, without the weaponry and material wealth of their opponents, still represent an existential threat. Why? Because they continue to draw breath. Their heartbeats are constant reminders of the precarity of the settler project.

This analogy may resonate more with some in the context of Palestine. However, if Lakota people are not still viewed as a threat, why do we see such high levels of repression within our communities? There is evident political repression against Water Protectors. A slew of anti-protest and critical infrastructure laws have progressed through state legislatures, criminalizing Indigenous dissent in the aftermath of the 2016 Standing Rock move-

ment against the Dakota Access Pipeline. Natali Sergovia, the executive director of the Water Protector Legal Collective, referred to the recent lawsuit against Greenpeace as a “proxy war” against Indigenous sovereignty. The less evident is the continued criminalization and punishment of ostensibly “non-political” acts.

It’s not just the high rates of incarceration among and police violence against Lakotas—and American Indian people, in general—but also the extremely low life expectancy. For example, 58 is the median life expectancy of American Indians from my home state, South Dakota, more than two decades shorter than that of white people. Such a severe disparity in other parts of the world might justify calls for “regime change” or “humanitarian intervention.” In our system, the overseers of such immiseration, like former South Dakota Governor Kristi Noem, are promoted to the highest levels of government, as head of the Department of Homeland Security. We can link these deaths to the conditions colonialism still imposes despite having moved away from industrial extermination and slaughter yet profoundly connected to the current regime of repression against pro-Palestinian students and university faculty and the intensified war against migrants.

This structural elimination of Lakota people today is directly linked to the same war waged against Crazy Horse during his day. This war has expanded with the U.S. empire and its homicidal alliance with Zionism.

Crazy Horse may not have pursued the warrior’s path had the United States not invaded his homelands. He might have followed his father’s path as a spiritual leader and healer. Yet, there is something material and profound about the supposed supernatural powers received from his vision that guided his path as a resistance leader. In that dream, enemy bullets and arrows

rained down Crazy Horse but were unable to harm him while he charged mounted on a horse. But the hands of his own people rose from behind him, grabbing and pulling him down.

The dream apparently granted him immunity from the weapons of his enemies but not from those of his own people. In today’s parlance, we might see Crazy Horse’s dream as envisioning the counterinsurgency campaign against the Lakotas. U.S. military leaders and Indian agents fomented and exploited divisions within Lakota society after imposing conditions of starvation, scarcity, and deprivation. Colonization wasn’t just an external enterprise that had to be forced upon recalcitrant Lakotas; it was internalized, turning relatives against each other.

**Starving Lakotas and Palestinians, without the weaponry and material wealth of their opponents, still represent an existential threat. Why? Because they continue to draw breath. Their heartbeats are constant reminders of the precarity of the settler project.**

Yahya Sinwar’s enemies used the images of his final moments to diminish his stature. It had the opposite effect. Equally iconic were the images of him smiling defiantly while sitting in an upholstered chair atop the rubble of his home, which had been bombed by Zionists, as well as his final moments spent in the chair, hurling a stick in a last act of resistance. A similar case

could be made about the killing of Crazy Horse. He was one of the few Lakota leaders who never signed a treaty. (Tatanka Iyotake, Sitting Bull, had also never signed a treaty and was also killed at the hands of his own people.)

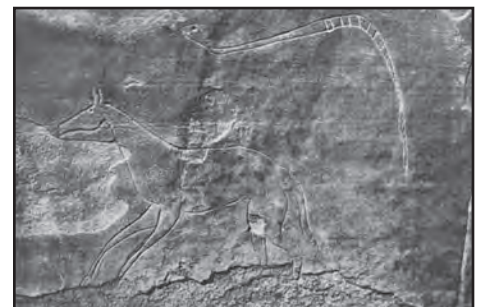
Assassinations are meant to serve as lessons for those choosing the path of resistance. They are meant to make mortal ideas that are immortal and cannot be killed. The killing of Crazy Horse may not have inspired armed resistance right away. His life, nonetheless, has served as a model of total resistance and embodying the virtues of *Lakot Wicoun*, the Lakota way of life, that inspired generations of Lakotas and allies since. It is no coincidence that “In the Spirit of Crazy Horse” became the rallying cry of the American Indian Movement when it took up arms in defense of Lakota homelands and declared independence from the United States in 1973.

Crazy Horse’s body was destroyed, but his spirit lives on.

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—CounterPunch, April 23, 2025

<https://www.counterpunch.org/2025/04/23/crazy-horse-and-anti-colonial-resistance/>



## “Detention Alley”

Inside the ICE centers where foreign students and undocumented migrants languish

BY OLIVER LAUGHLAND

Behind the reinforced doors of courtroom number two, at a remote detention center in central Louisiana, Lu Xianying sat alone before an immigration judge unable to communicate.

Dressed in a blue jumpsuit that drooped from his slight frame, he waited as court staff called three different translation services, unable to find an interpreter proficient in his native Gan Chinese.

Like almost all of the 17 detainees appearing before Judge Kandra Robbins during removal proceedings on Tuesday morning, Lu had no attorney because there is no automatic right to legal representation in U.S. immigration proceedings. He sat silently, evidently confused. A substitute interpreter was eventually found, and began translating the judge’s questions into Mandarin.

“I am afraid to return to China,” he told the court, as he described how he

had already filed an asylum application after crossing the border into Texas in March 2024. Lu said he was worried a lawyer had stolen his money and not submitted his asylum claim. Lu, who had only recently been detained, struggled to understand, as the judge asked him to list his country of return should he be deported.

“Right now my order is to be removed?” He asked. “Or should I go to court?”

The judge explained that he was present in court, and provided him another asylum application form. His next hearing was scheduled for April.

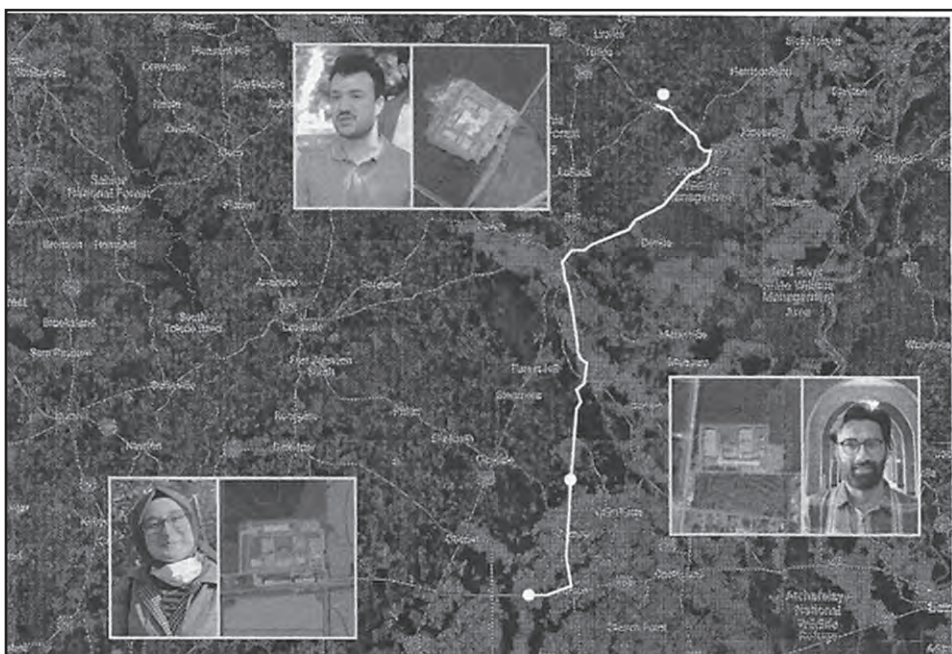
The LaSalle immigration court, inside a sprawling Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) detention center in rural Jena, Louisiana, has been thrust into the spotlight in recent weeks after the former Columbia grad-

uate student Mahmoud Khalil was transferred here earlier this month. His case has drawn international attention as the Trump administration attempts to deport the pro-Palestinian activist under rarely used executive provisions of U.S. immigration law. The government is fighting vigorously to keep Khalil’s case in Louisiana, and he is due to appear again at the LaSalle court for removal proceedings on April 8, 2025.

But it has also renewed focus on the network of remote immigration detention centers that stretch between Texas, Louisiana and Mississippi, known as “Detention Alley”—where 14 of the country’s 20 largest detention centers are clustered. And now where other students have since been sent after being arrested thousands of miles away.

Badar Khan Suri, a research student at Georgetown University, was arrested in Virginia last week and sent to a detention center in Alexandria, Louisiana, and then on to another site, Prairieland in eastern Texas. This week, Rumeysa Ozturk, a doctoral student at Tufts University, was arrested in Massachusetts and sent to the South Louisiana ICE processing center in the swamplands of Evangeline parish.

These distant detention facilities and court systems have long been associated with rights violations, poor medical treatment and due process concerns, which advocates argue are only likely to intensify during the Trump administration’s immigration crackdown and promise to carry out mass deportations that has already led to a surge in the detention population. But rarely do cases within these centers attract much public attention or individual scrutiny.



Mahmoud Khalil, Badar Khan Suri and Rumeysa Ozturk are academics now jailed in facilities along ‘Detention Alley’ in the US south. Composite: The Guardian.

“Most of the folks in detention in Louisiana aren’t the ones making the news,” said Andrew Perry, an immigrant rights attorney at the ACLU of Louisiana. “But they are experiencing similar, if not the same, treatment as those who are.”

To observe a snapshot of the more than 1,100 other detainees confined at the facility also holding Khalil, the *Guardian* travelled to Jena and witnessed a full day inside the LaSalle court, which is rarely visited by journalists. Dozens lined up for their short appearances before a judge and were sworn in *en masse*. Some expressed severe health concerns, others frustration over a lack of legal representation. Many had been transferred to the center from states hundreds of miles away.

Earlier in the morning Wilfredo Espinoza, a migrant from Honduras, appeared before Judge Robbins for a procedural update on his asylum case that was due for a full hearing in May. Espinoza, who coughed throughout his appearance and had a small bandage on his face, had no lawyer and informed the court he wished to abandon his asylum application “because of my health.” The circumstances of his detention and timing and location of his arrest by ICE were not made clear in court.

He suffered from hypertension and fatty liver disease, he said through a Spanish translator. “I’ve had three issues with my heart here,” he said. “I don’t want to be here anymore. I can’t be locked up for this long. I want to leave.”

The judge asked him repeatedly if he was entering his decision of his own free will. “Yes,” he said. “I just want to leave here as quickly as possible.”

The judge ordered his removal from the U.S.

Substantiated allegations of medical neglect have plagued the Jena facility for years. In 2018, the civil rights division of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) examined the circumstances of four fatalities at the facility,

which is operated by the Geo Group, a private corrections company. All four deaths occurred between January 2016 and March 2017 and the DHS identified a pattern of delay in medical care, citing “failure of nursing staff to report abnormal vital signs.”

At the South Louisiana ICE processing center, an all-female facility that is also operated by the Geo Group and where Ozturk is now being held, the ACLU of Louisiana recently filed a complaint to the DHS’s civil rights division alleging an array of rights violations. These included inadequate access to medical care, with the complaint stating: “Guards left detained people suffering from severe conditions like external bleeding, tremors, and sprained limbs unattended to, refusing them access to diagnostic care.”

The complaint was filed in December 2024, before the Trump administration moved to gut the DHS’s civil rights division earlier this month.

A spokesperson for the Geo Group said the company “strongly disagrees with the allegations that have been made regarding services we provide at Geo-contracted ICE processing centers” including the facility in Jena.

“In all instances, our contracted services are monitored by the federal government to ensure strict compliance with applicable federal standards,” the spokesperson said, pointing to ICE’s performance-based national detention standards that the company’s contracts are governed by.

The spokesperson added: “These allegations are part of a longstanding, politically motivated, and radical campaign to abolish ICE and end federal immigration detention by attacking the federal government’s immigration facility contracts.”

The DHS did not respond to multiple requests for comment.

Louisiana experienced a surge in immigration detention during the first

Trump administration. At the end of 2016, the state had capacity for a little more than 2,000 immigrant detainees, which more than doubled within two years. A wave of new ICE detention centers opened in remote, rural locations often at facilities previously used as private prisons. The state now holds the second largest number of detained immigrants, behind only Texas. Almost 7,000 people were held as of February 2025 at nine facilities in Louisiana, all operated by private companies.

“It is this warehousing of immigrants in rural, isolated, ‘out of sight, out of mind’ locations,” said Homero López, the legal director of Immigration Services and Legal Advocacy in Louisiana and a former appellate immigration judge. “It’s difficult on attorneys, on family members, on community support systems to even get to folks. And therefore, it’s a lot easier on government to present their case. They can just bulldoze people through the process.”

At the LaSalle court this week, the *Guardian* observed detainees transferred from states as far away as Arizona, Florida and Tennessee. In an afternoon hearing, where 15 detainees made an application for bond, which would release them from custody and transfer their case to a court closer to home, only two were granted.

Cases heard from detention are far less likely to result in relief. At LaSalle, 78.6 percent of asylum cases are rejected, compared with the national average of 57.7 percent, according to the Trac immigration data project. In Judge Robbins’s court, 52 percent of asylum applicants appear without an attorney.

In the afternoon session, the court heard from Fernando Altamarino, a Mexican national, who was transferred to Jena from Panama City, Florida, more than 500 miles away. Altamarino had no criminal record, like almost 50 percent of immigrants currently detained by ICE. He had been arrested

by agents about a month ago, after he received a traffic ticket following a minor car accident.

He tried to resolve the matter at his local courthouse and was instead detained by immigration authorities. Via his lawyer, the court heard his application for release. A letter from a leader in his local church described his role as a stalwart member of the congregation and “a man who truly embodies faith.”

But a prosecutor for the DHS, who opposed all but one bond application that afternoon, argued that Altamarino, who had lived in the country for more than a decade, presented a flight risk due to his “very limited to non-existent family ties to the U.S.”

The judge concurred, as Altamarino sat upright and listened through a translator. Despite acknowledging he was “not a danger to community,” she sided with the government and denied bond.

Altamarino thanked the judge as he left the room, under watch of a guard. The heavy door closed behind him as he headed back into the void of America’s vast detention system.

—*The Guardian*, March 29, 2025

<https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2025/mar/29/ice-detention-centers-immigration-asylum>

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## Mahmoud Khalil and the Rise of State Terror

BY HENRY A. GIROUX

### Introduction

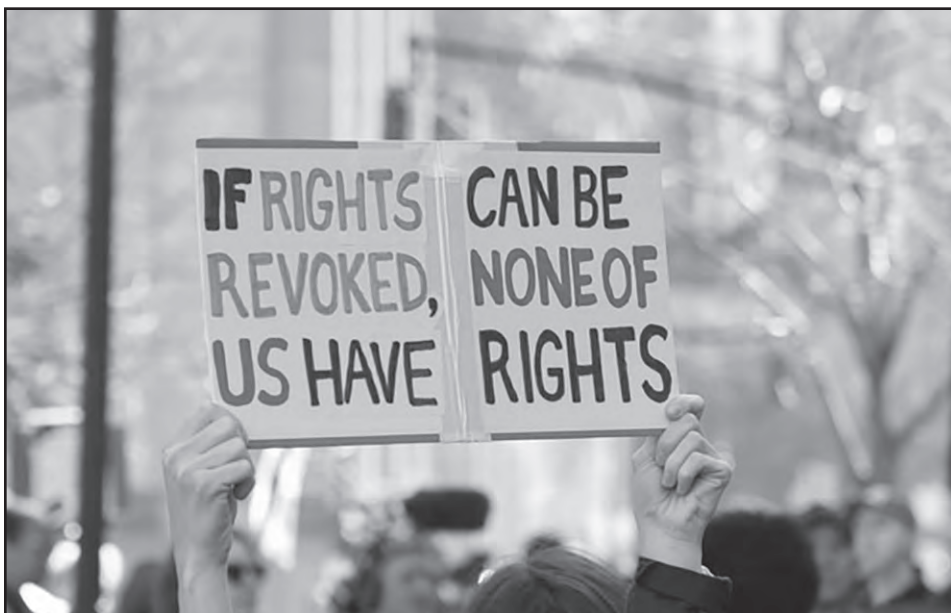
The abduction of Mahmoud Khalil is not an isolated event—it is a chilling testament to the authoritarian turn in the United States, where dissent is met not with debate but with brute force, and the machinery of state terror moves with ruthless precision. In his own words, Khalil, a Columbia University graduate, an activist for Palestinian freedom, and a permanent U.S. resident, was seized by ICE agents without warning—handcuffed, dragged from his apartment lobby, shoved into an unmarked black car, and disappeared. In minutes, his rights were violated and

his body made vulnerable and disposable. Khalil instantly became another casualty in the Trump administration’s escalating war against those who refuse to kneel before its politics of white supremacy, settler-colonial violence, ominous threats, and unchecked lawlessness. His disappearance is both a precedent and a warning—a stark reminder that in regimes built on repression, silence is coerced, and resistance is a crime.

What happened to Khalil echoes through history, from the Gestapo’s pursuit of political dissidents to the “Dirty Wars” of Latin America, where

students, intellectuals, and activists were labeled as terrorists and made to vanish without a trace. The equating of dissent with terrorism is a central feature of authoritarian regimes. The end point of which is the torture chamber, prisons, concentration camps, and the death of any vestige of human rights, civil liberties, and democracy. Today, those same logics of power are being reanimated under the guise of national security, as Trump’s government systematically dismantles the right to protest, the sanctity of citizenship, and the democratic ideals that once stood as a bulwark against tyranny.

To understand Khalil’s abduction is to confront the broader assault on dissent in an era where the state wields the power to disappear those who refuse to conform or be complicit. The illegal abduction of Khalil is not only about the attack on free speech, but also about the gutting of historical memory, civic literacy, and the institutions that provide a culture of *critique* that creates informed citizens. The state terrorism on display in Khalil’s case is not just about one student, one protest, or one administration—it is about the fate of democracy itself. The question now is not whether we recognize these warning signs, but whether we act before it is too late.



## The nightmare returns

Trump's return to the White House has unleashed a full-scale assault on civil liberties, democratic institutions, and the very possibility of holding power accountable. No longer constrained by those who once sought to temper his worst impulses, Trump now governs with open contempt for the rule of law, emboldened by a movement that thrives on cruelty, grievance, and unrelenting violence. His language has always been a weapon—honed by fear, sharpened by menace, and wielded to incite violence against immigrants, Black Americans, and anyone who dares to challenge his rule.

For years, the mainstream press dismissed Trump's rhetoric as nothing more than bluster—an act designed for entertainment or spectacularized provocation rather than a genuine call to power. His declaration of wanting to be a “dictator for a day” and a subsequent quote, “He who saves his Country does not violate any Law,” were met with little more than a shrug, treated with barely a flicker of concern. Many assumed his fascist threats were nothing but empty theatrics, comforted by the belief that handlers and legal restraints would keep him in check. But that illusion has now been shattered.

As his second presidency unfolds, the machinery of authoritarianism is no longer emerging—it is fully operational. The punishing state now stands boldly, criminalizing dissent, weaponizing the justice system, dismantling public and higher education, abducting individuals, embracing corruption, and executing mass deportations with a cold, calculating efficiency that evokes some of America's darkest historical chapters. This legacy echoes in the Palmer Raids<sup>1</sup> of 1919-1920, when thousands of leftists, anarchists, and immigrants were arrested without cause, often enduring brutal treatment. The Red Scare, especially during the McCarthy era of the 1950s, marked another grim chapter, as government-

sanctioned witch hunts destroyed lives and careers on the flimsiest of accusations. In the wake of the Vietnam War, opposition to the conflict was labeled un-American, culminating in the tragic deaths of students at Kent State. More recently, the Bush administration's War on Terror after 9/11 extended this grim tradition, with mass surveillance, indefinite detention, and the widespread abuse of prisoners at Guantanamo Bay—all justified in the name of national security.

### **The equating of dissent with terrorism is a central feature of authoritarian regimes.**

From the Palmer Raids and McCarthyism to the abuses of the Bush era, these events form a brutal continuum, each rooted in the criminalization of dissent and the targeting of marginalized communities. They expose the long-standing tradition of the state using its powers of repression to quash opposition and enforce ideological orthodoxy. Trump has not only laid bare this dark legacy of state violence and the war on dissent, he has also modernized it, appropriating tactics honed during the “Dirty Wars” in Argentina, the deadly repression of students under Pinochet in Chile, and the Gestapo-like methods employed by Nazi Germany in service of racial cleansing and the politics of disposability. In doing so, he has reinvigorated a dangerous historical playbook, turning it into a weapon against those who dare to resist and those who support the notion of universal citizenship.

### **History matters**

History—and the dangerous memories it carries—matters because it exposes the lingering shadows of authoritarianism, offering warnings essential to recognizing and resisting its

return in new forms. As Paul Gilroy reminds us, “Those horrors are always much closer to us than we like to imagine. Preventing their recurrence requires keeping them in mind.” Fascism today is not a replica of the past, but its mobilizing passions remain dangerously familiar. Primo Levi's<sup>2</sup> prescient warning echoes in our time: “Every age has its own fascism, and we see the warning signs wherever the concentration of power denies citizens the possibility and the means of expressing and acting on their own free will.”

Under Trump, the treatment of dissenters does not mirror exactly what we saw under Hitler, Pinochet, or the Argentine dictatorship, but it bears what Martin Wolf<sup>3</sup> has called “authoritarianism with fascist characteristics.” As history teaches, repression begins with language before it becomes law, and law before it becomes violence. The Nazis labeled dissenters as terrorists, with Heinrich Himmler making clear that students who defied the Reich had no place in its vision, likening them to pests that needed to be eradicated. Pinochet branded universities as breeding grounds for terrorists, justifying mass arrests, torture, and executions. Argentina's military regime abducted students hurled them from planes and murdered over 30,000. Trump's administration has not committed such atrocities, but the rhetoric and policies are in place. The machinery is being built, and history warns us: once the conditions are set, the horrors we thought belonged to the past can return in forms we failed to imagine.

It is crucial to emphasize that the abduction and state persecution of Khalil and other students fighting for Palestinian freedom, along with their defense of the university as a democratic public good, is not merely an assault on free speech and academic freedom—it is a direct embodiment of what G.M. Tamas<sup>4</sup> identifies as the core feature of fascism: “hostility to universal citizenship.” As part of his grab

for uncontested power, Trump views citizenship as only something he can grant rather than a constitutional right. Tamas views this rightly as central feature of what he calls post-fascism.

This reveals something even more insidious and deadly: Trump's relentless tirades against communists, trans people, immigrants, Black people, Jews, and LGBTQ individuals are not just acts of ideological aggression—they are attempts to strip these groups of their very humanity. As Tamas notes, framing them “as non-citizens,” Trump casts them as non-human, relegating them to a status beneath recognition and rights. This dehumanization is the very linchpin of fascism, paving the way for the violence that inevitably follows—violence framed as justified, even necessary. The barbaric actions of ICE and other elements of the punishing state, function as “a racial police force”—engaged in often illegal, sensationalized arrests and abductions of students, and grotesque chain gang marches of immigrants—carry a dark racial undertone. The defense of these actions are laced with the poison of racist police brutality and emboldened vigilantism, poisoning communities and revealing the deep, dangerous roots of racialized violence that is spreading to every corner of American society.

### **Domestic terrorism as the organizing principle of politics**

For Trump and his morally vacuous sycophants, war has become the negation of democracy, if not politics itself. With its focus on the elimination of dissidents, critics, and those considered disloyal and disposable, the militarization of all aspects of society moves from the margins of society “the very heart of governance. As Theodore Adorno<sup>5</sup> and others have illuminated, Trump's actions echo long-established patterns of domination, crystallizing into a chilling celebration of hierarchy, power, cruelty, and the cult of masculinity, all underscored by a profound disdain for those deemed weak. In his alignment

with authoritarian figures, Trump not only venerates dictators but also threatens to unravel alliances forged over generations, launching trade wars and territorial aggression in his wake. His regime is not merely lawless—it is a deliberate and systematic dismantling of democratic norms, reshaping the United States into a fascist order where power is consolidated, the billionaire class is enriched, and opposition is silenced through fear, repression, and the chaos he himself stirs. This is not governance, but a descent into a state of perpetual turmoil, designed to secure control at any cost.

**Branding dissenters and anybody who is critical of the Trump administration as terrorists is a hallmark of fascism—not just a weapon against free speech, but a means of erasing their humanity.**

This brand of authoritarian governance is most evident in its assault on higher and public education, waging a relentless campaign to ban books on gender, Black history, and courses addressing transgender issues and pressing social injustices. But it doesn't stop there. As Jason Stanley<sup>6</sup> notes, Trump's plan to dismantle the Department of Education is a brazen attempt to strip funding from Title I, a program that provides essential federal support for students in underfunded urban and rural schools, special education programs for disabled students, and a host of other vital educational initiatives. Weaponizing a fabricated charge of antisemitism, Trump has also threatened to withdraw federal funding from 60 colleges as a means of coercing universities into submission.

In doing so, he has targeted faculty, students, and entire academic programs deemed incompatible with a white nationalist, Christian fundamentalist vision of education. This is not just an attack; it is an attempt to remake education as a tool of ideological indoctrination and authoritarian control. Disturbingly, a growing number of universities are capitulating to these demands, with Columbia University among those enabling them. Unfortunately, too many university presidents and academics remain silent, “refusing to make a firm public defense of democracy”—rendering themselves complicit in an educational model that bears an alarming resemblance to the historical precedents of Nazi Germany and the current reality of Orbán's Hungary<sup>7</sup>.

Clearly the gravity of this moment demands more than the usual analyses of corruption and political overreach. What we are witnessing is not just the dismemberment of constitutional protections or the expansion of a violent state—it is domestic terrorism orchestrated from the highest levels of government. This is not simply the erosion of rights but the calculated deployment of fear, a homegrown machinery of repression that transforms governance into an instrument of terror. It is a malignant legality, waging war on the American public under the guise of law and order, where power no longer merely punishes but seeks to invoke a living death on those it marks as enemies. The arrest of Khalil and others—both Jews and non-Jews—who stood in solidarity with Palestinian freedom, has been smeared as antisemitic violence. This framing blurs the line between state repression and the broader attack on critical thought itself. Under the Trump regime, thinking is viewed as a form of moral cowardice and as Umberto Eco<sup>8</sup> insightfully observed in his *critique* of fascism, critical thinking is also smeared as a form of emasculation.



## **The politics of annihilation and disappearance**

This is a politics of annihilation—one that does not always kill outright but keeps entire populations in a state of unrelenting precarity, caught between survival and disappearance. As Judith Butler<sup>9</sup> warns, this is the logic of governance that “produces precarity, sustaining populations on the edge of death, sometimes killing its members, and sometimes not.” It is a form of slow violence, where existence itself is made tenuous, where immigrants, dissidents, the poor, and the racialized are left in a state of permanent vulnerability, their lives dictated not by the rule of law but by the whims of power.

Trump’s ceaseless torrent of lies, his relentless branding of dissidents as “terrorists,” “ Hamas supporters,” and “enemies from within,” along with his call for brutal retribution and the imprisoning of his foes—journalists, judges, politicians, and prosecutors—forms an insidious architecture of terror and lawlessness. This system is designed to silence, disappear, and annihilate those who resist. We must pause and reflect when Attorney General Bondi claims that a judge supports terrorism merely because he ruled against the Alien Enemy Act’s use for mass deportations. Or when, under the guise of a restraining government order, Dr. Rasha Alawieh—an esteemed Lebanese kidney transplant specialist and Brown University professor who holds a valid H-1B visa—was illegally deported. However, it is crucial to consider the racialized and religious context of this action. Dr. Alawieh, as a Muslim Arab woman, is being targeted not for any criminal wrongdoing, but more than likely because of her identity.

The persecution of Khalil is not an isolated injustice but part of a broader, systemic pattern of state-sanctioned repression—one in which individuals of Muslim or Arab descent are disproportionately targeted, not for any crimes they have committed, but for

who they are. As Jeffrey St. Clair<sup>10</sup> aptly observes, Khalil is now facing deportation despite never having been charged with a crime. In reality, his only “offense” is daring to exercise his right to free speech—denouncing, with moral clarity, what countless international organizations and human rights groups have recognized as Israel’s genocidal war against Palestinians.

This is precisely why authoritarian white nationalists like Donald Trump, Marco Rubio, and Stephen Miller have seized upon Khalil, transforming him into a high-profile political prisoner. Their attack on him is inseparable from their broader war on dissent, on youth resistance, and on the right to condemn state-sanctioned atrocities. Khalil’s crime in their eyes is not violence, nor extremism, nor any violation of law—it is his refusal to be silent in the face of the illegal and morally depraved slaughter of innocent women and children in Gaza by Netanyahu and his far-right government.

**It is the nightmare of a capitalism that has reached its terminal point, now ruling through terror, force, a reactionary culture, and a machinery of death.**

What unnerves Trump and his enforcers is that Khalil, like so many other young people, refuses to bow before their authoritarian rule. His activism stands in direct defiance of the ideology they seek to impose—an ideology that demands obedience, that criminalizes resistance, that seeks to erase the very possibility of solidarity between oppressed peoples. Nowhere is this clearer than in the Trump administration’s willingness to wield the full force of a lawless, punishing

state to crush those who dare hold power accountable.

The government has branded Khalil a threat, falsely accusing him of siding with terrorists, of making Jewish-Americans “feel unsafe,” of aligning with Hamas. Yet, as St. Clair makes clear, Khalil’s statements on Israel are strikingly diplomatic, rooted in a vision of justice that recognizes the inextricable ties between Palestinian and Jewish liberation. St. Clair quotes Khalil to make this point clear.

“As a Palestinian student, I believe that the liberation of the Palestinian people and the Jewish people are intertwined and go hand in hand, and you cannot achieve one without the other.” He described the movement as one “for social justice and freedom and equality for everyone.” Khalil told *CNN* during an interview in 2024: “There is, of course, no place for antisemitism. What we are witnessing is anti-Palestinian sentiment that’s taking different forms and antisemitism, Islamophobia, racism [are] some of these forms.”

Khalil’s case is not just about him. It is about the Trump administration’s broader assault on democracy, on protest, on the very right to resist injustice. He has become a symbol of a state determined to silence its critics, a state that punishes the young for their refusal to submit to its dictates. And in that, he stands as both a warning and an inspiration. Because if Khalil’s persecution tells us anything, it is that the struggle for justice is far from over—and that those in power will wield every instrument of state violence to suppress it.

Yet his fate is not an isolated tragedy; it is a harbinger of a deeper, more insidious transformation—the descent into a lawless regime that openly defies the courts, weaponizes ancient statutes like the Alien Enemies Act of 1798, and erases due process with impunity. Trump’s brazen push to expel hundreds of Venezuelan immigrants, without legal justification, is not an anomaly; it

is a template, a warning shot for a future in which dissent itself is criminalized, where anyone—Palestinian, immigrant, student, protester—can be branded a “terrorist” and exiled from the nation’s conscience. As Norman Ornstein<sup>11</sup>, no radical, warns with chilling precision: This is American Gestapo. But history has shown, time and again, that movements born in truth do not die under repression. They only grow stronger.

### Weaponizing terrorism

Trump’s tendency to label any dissent as terrorism is both absurd and dangerous. His words on the White House lawn, stating that people protesting at Tesla dealerships across the country “should be labeled domestic terrorists” illuminate this perfectly. Branding dissenters and anybody who is critical of the Trump administration as terrorists is a hallmark of fascism—not just a weapon against free speech, but a means of erasing their humanity. It casts them as evil, irredeemable, and a threat to be crushed, legitimizing state violence in the process. The reckless expansion of this charge is the mark of a state that mutilates bodies, justice, democracy, and the very notion of humanity itself.

This politics of deceit, lawlessness, abduction, and disappearance reveals the mechanisms of white supremacy at work by which people of color are rendered disposable. At loss here are not just political and legal rights, but the dispossession of bodies thrust into zones that accelerate the death of the unwanted in what Robert Jay Lifton<sup>12</sup> has described as a “death-saturated age.” The danger here is not simply that Trump and his political officials criminalize opposition and eliminate free speech, but that they are laying the groundwork for horrors of the past, once thought unimaginable in the United States. These include: the widespread use of state-sanctioned violence, mass arrests, disappearances, death

squads, and the slow, methodical erosion of any space where truth, justice, and dissent might still survive.

### Conclusion

To understand Trump’s reign of terror, we must move beyond conventional political analysis. We must historicize it, trace its roots, expose the cultural forces that make it possible, and refuse to look away from the totality of his repression. The normalization of fascist politics in America is not just a function of law or policy—it is a war over meaning, over memory, agency, over the capacity to imagine a different future. What we are witnessing in the current historical moment is the final evolution of neoliberal violence with the appearance of a criminogenic state that criminalizes social problems and dissent, repackaging them as a war on terrorism. Salvation comes with blind loyalty, the normalization of a politics of disposability, erasure, and the bold face emergence of a police state.

**The struggle against a capitalist future will be difficult, but there are no other options as the death march of fascism increasingly encircles the globe.**

State engineered violence, cruelty, and rise of organized terror as the governing principle of the Trump regime is not a mere aberration; it is an intentional distortion of governance—a calculated shift in how the state wields power. This is a moment when state-engineered violence and cruelty are not just actions but guiding principles, tearing at the fabric of justice, and embedding terror into the very essence of what was once an unassailable democracy. This crisis—the systemic violation of civil rights, the suppression

of free speech, and the targeting of political activism—must be understood as part of a historical rupture. It is part of what Nancy Fraser<sup>13</sup> once called “a crisis of the social totality, one in which conscience, ethics, and politics are yoked together in a struggle to retain our collective humanity.”

Khalil’s story is not merely an anomaly—it is a stark warning. His suffering, like that of countless others, illuminates the brutal consequences of a society where those who challenge power, or who refuse to conform to the narrow confines of white Christian nationalism, find themselves not only stripped of citizenship and dignity, but disappear into the black hole of social and political abandonment. In an era overshadowed by rising totalitarian fascism, the very fabric of American society is being redefined by reactionary ideological closures that determine who is deemed worthy of belonging, who is silenced, and who is subjected to state violence. These actions are not random or isolated; they are part of a chilling, systemic effort to expunge history, destroy the capacity for critical thought, criminalize dissent, disappear the bodies and identities of those deemed “other” by race, ethnicity, or religion.

This is the fascist machinery of control in motion—an apparatus designed to reshape the world in the image of those who hold power, leaving in its wake a landscape where justice is no longer governed by the rule of law, but by the dictates of global authoritarianism. It is the nightmare of a capitalism that has reached its terminal point, now ruling through terror, force, a reactionary culture, and a machinery of death. The promises of equality, social mobility, the redistribution of rights, and justice have crumbled, facing a legitimacy crisis and all but dead in their appeal. What remains is a brutal form of gangster capitalism, a technofascism where the ideologues of Trump and Musk boldly and unapologetically proclaim not merely that the

U.S. has become a more recognizably authoritarian state, but that an endpoint has been reached where the U.S. if not the world “can belong only to a few.” This is no longer the promise of democracy, but its death knell.

Trump’s assault on civil rights, his war on free speech, and his crackdown on political activism do not mark the beginning of authoritarianism in America—they are its continuation, its escalation. This playbook is not new. It echoes the brutal tactics of countries such as Saudi Arabia, Israel, and India, where dissent is silenced, resistance is rebranded as terrorism, and critics of the state disappear without consequence. What we are witnessing is the slow but deliberate dismantling of the legal and democratic guardrails that once restrained power.

Arwa Mahdawi’s<sup>14</sup> warning in *The Guardian* is both urgent and undeniable: “We are sliding toward an authoritarian future at alarming speed.” But this is not some distant horizon. Repression is not creeping—it is here. Freedoms are not eroding—they are being stripped away in real time, before our very eyes. And as Mahdawi reminds us, “All of our freedoms are intertwined.”

To defend one is to defend all. The fight for justice cannot be compartmentalized, parceled out to the persecuted few. When one of us is silenced, shackled, imprisoned, deported, or erased, it is not just a student, an activist, or an immigrant who suffers—it is democracy itself that is wounded. The struggle is not solitary; it is shared. The stakes are not theoretical or abstract; they are existential, lived, drenched in a painful assault on the body. Resistance is no longer an idea—it is an imperative. It is the fault line between democracy and tyranny, between freedom and subjugation, between life and death. Silence is complicity. Now is the time to rise. This is not a moment for half-measures or polite appeals—it is a battle that must be waged collectively by workers, educators, students, cultural workers, unions, minorities of color

and class, and all those who refuse to live under the yoke of gangster capitalism and its brutal machinery of exploitation. This is not a plea for reform—it is a call for radical transformation, a decisive break from the obscene inequalities, entrenched power, and suffocating grip of financial elites. The future cannot be a mirror of an authoritarian present; it must be seized, forged in struggle, and built from the ruins of a system that has long served only the powerful. The shadows of fascism are thickening, spreading across the globe. We either resist—or we are consumed. The struggle against a capitalist future will be difficult, but there are no other options as the death march of fascism increasingly encircles the globe.

—CounterPunch, March 21, 2025

<https://www.counterpunch.org/2025/03/21/abducting-bodies-silencing-dissent-mahmoud-khalil-and-the-rise-of-state-terror/>

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1 The Palmer Raids were a series of raids conducted in November 1919 and January 1920 by the United States Department of Justice under the administration of President Woodrow Wilson to capture and arrest suspected socialists, especially anarchists and communists, and deport them from the United States. The raids particularly targeted Italian immigrants and Eastern European Jewish immigrants with alleged leftist ties, with particular focus on Italian anarchists and immigrant leftist labor activists. The raids and arrests occurred under the leadership of Attorney General A. Mitchell Palmer, with 6,000 people arrested across 36 cities.

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Palmer\\_Raids#:~:text=The%20Palmer%20Raids%20were%20a,people%20arrested%20across%2036%20cities.](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Palmer_Raids#:~:text=The%20Palmer%20Raids%20were%20a,people%20arrested%20across%2036%20cities.)

2 Italian-Jewish scientist Primo Levi graduated with honors in chemistry amid the rise of fascism in his home country. He later survived a year at Auschwitz during World War II against all odds. Upon his liberation in 1945, Levi began writing about his experiences and has authored the acclaimed works *If This Is a Man*, *The Truce* and *The Periodic Table*. The cause of his death in 1987, which was officially ruled a suicide, is the subject of some debate.

<https://www.biography.com/authors-writers/primo-levi>

3 Martin Harry Wolf Commander of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire (CBE), born August 16, 1946, in London, is a British journalist who focuses on economics. He is the chief economics commentator at the *Financial Times*. He also writes a weekly column for the French newspaper *Le Monde*.

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Martin\\_Wolf](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Martin_Wolf)

4 Gáspár Miklós Tamás, November 28, 1948 – January 15, 2023), was a Romanian-born Hungarian political philosopher and public intellectual, influenced by Marxism and libertarian socialism.

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gáspár\\_Miklós\\_Tamás](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gáspár_Miklós_Tamás)

5 Theodor W. Adorno born Theodor Ludwig Wiesengrund, September 11, 1903 – August 6, 1969) was a German philosopher, musicologist, and social theorist. He was a leading member of the Frankfurt School of critical theory, whose work has come to be associated with thinkers such as Ernst Bloch, Walter Benjamin, Max Horkheimer, Erich Fromm, and Herbert Marcuse, for whom the works of Sigmund Freud, Karl Marx, and G. W. F. Hegel were essential to a critique of modern society. As a critic of both fascism and what he called the culture industry, his writings—such as *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (1947), *Minima Moralia* (1951), and *Negative Dialectics* (1966)—strongly influenced the European New Left.

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Theodor\\_W.\\_Adorno](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Theodor_W._Adorno)

6 Jason Stanley (born 1969) is an American philosopher who is the Jacob Urowsky Professor of Philosophy at Yale University. He is best known for his contributions to philosophy of language and epistemology, which often draw upon and influence other fields, including linguistics and cognitive science. He has written for popular audiences in *The New York Times*, *The Guardian*, *The Washington Post*, *Rolling Stone*, *The New Republic*, and many other publications in the United States and abroad. In his more recent work, Stanley has brought tools from philosophy of language and epistemology to bear on questions of political philosophy, for example in his 2015 book *How Propaganda Works*, and his 2023 book, *The Politics of Language*.

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jason\\_Stanley](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jason_Stanley)

7 Viktor Mihály Orbán, born May 31, 1963, is a Hungarian lawyer and politician who has been prime minister of Hungary since 2010.

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Viktor\\_Orbán](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Viktor_Orbán)

8 Umberto Eco OMRI (January 5, 1932 – February 19, 2016) was an Italian medievalist, philosopher, semiotician, novelist, cultural critic, and political and social commentator. In English, he is best known for his popular 1980 novel *The Name of the Rose*, a historical mystery combining semiotics in fiction with biblical analysis, medieval studies and literary theory, as well as *Foucault’s Pendulum*, his 1988 novel which touches on similar themes.

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Umberto\\_Eco](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Umberto_Eco)

9 Judith Pamela Butler (born February 24, 1956) is an American feminist philosopher and gender studies scholar whose work has influenced political philosophy, ethics, and the fields of third-wave feminism, queer theory, and literary theory.

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Judith\\_Butler](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Judith_Butler)

10 Jeffrey St. Clair is an investigative journalist, writer, and editor. He has been a co-editor of *CounterPunch* since 1999.

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jeffrey\\_St.\\_Clair](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jeffrey_St._Clair)

11 Norman Jay Ornstein is an American political scientist and an emeritus scholar at the American Enterprise Institute, a Washington, D.C., conservative think tank.

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Norman\\_Ornstein](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Norman_Ornstein)

12 Robert Jay Lifton is an American psychiatrist and author, chiefly known for his studies of the psychological causes and effects of wars and political violence, and for his theory of thought reform. He was an early proponent of the techniques of psychohistory.

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Robert\\_Jay\\_Lifton](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Robert_Jay_Lifton)

13 Nancy Fraser is an American philosopher, critical theorist, feminist, and the Henry A. and Louise Loeb Professor of Political and Social Science and professor of philosophy at The New School in New York City.

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nancy\\_Fraser](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nancy_Fraser)

14 Arwa Mahdawi is a *Guardian* columnist and the author of *Strong Female Lead*.

<https://www.counterpunch.org/2025/03/21/abducting-bodies-silencing-dissent-mahmoud-khalil-and-the-rise-of-state-terror/>

## Mahmoud Khalil Speaks Out From Inside ICE Detention

*Update: Louisiana, Judge Jamee Comans ruled on April 11, 2025, that the government can deport Columbia University graduate Mahmoud Khalil based solely on his advocacy for Palestine. Two major paths remain open to Khalil: one within the immigration court system, and the other in federal district court. Khalil's attorneys continue to argue in federal district court in New Jersey for his release on free speech grounds. In immigration court, Khalil could apply for asylum, appeal the ruling before the Board of Immigration Appeals, and pursue further appeals within the U.S. circuit court—a process that could stretch for months or even years. —Socialist Viewpoint*

Mahmoud Khalil's statement:

My name is Mahmoud Khalil, and I am a political prisoner. I am writing to you from a detention facility in Louisiana where I wake to cold mornings and spend long days bearing witness to the quiet injustices underway against a great many people precluded from the protections of the law.

Who has the right to have rights? It is certainly not the humans crowded into the cells here. It isn't the Senegalese man I met who has been deprived of his liberty for a year, his legal situation

in limbo and his family an ocean away. It isn't the 21-year-old detainee I met, who stepped foot in this country at age nine, only to be deported without so much as a hearing.

Justice escapes the contours of this nation's immigration facilities.

On March 8, I was taken by DHS agents who refused to provide a warrant and accosted my wife and me as we returned from dinner. By now, the footage of that night has been made public. Before I knew what was happening, agents handcuffed and forced me into an unmarked car. At that moment, my only concern was for Noor's safety. I had no idea if she would be taken too, since the agents had threatened to arrest her for not leaving my side. DHS would not tell me anything for hours—I did not know the cause of my arrest or if I was facing immediate deportation. At 26 Federal Plaza, I slept on the cold floor. In the early morning hours, agents transported me to another facility in Elizabeth, New Jersey. There, I slept on the ground and was refused a blanket despite my request.

My arrest was a direct consequence of exercising my right to free speech as I advocated for a free Palestine and an end to the genocide in Gaza, which



Jewish students chain themselves to the gates of Columbia University on April 2, 2025, demanding accountability from the trustees following the arrest of Mahmoud Khalil. Photo: Michael Nigro/Sipa USA.

resumed in full force Monday night. With January's ceasefire now broken, parents in Gaza are once again cradling too-small shrouds, and families are forced to weigh starvation and displacement against bombs. It is our moral imperative to persist in the struggle for their complete freedom.

I was born in a Palestinian refugee camp in Syria to a family which has been displaced from their land since the 1948 Nakba. I spent my youth in proximity to yet distant from my homeland. But being Palestinian is an experience that transcends borders. I see in my circumstances similarities to Israel's use of administrative detention—imprisonment without trial or charge—to strip Palestinians of their rights.

I think of our friend Omar Khatib, who was incarcerated without charge or trial by Israel as he returned home from travel. I think of Gaza hospital director and pediatrician Dr. Hussam Abu Safiya, who was taken captive by the Israeli military on December 27 and remains in an Israeli torture camp today. For Palestinians, imprisonment without due process is commonplace.

I have always believed that my duty is not only to liberate myself from the oppressor, but also to liberate my oppressors from their hatred and fear. My unjust detention is indicative of the anti-Palestinian racism that both the Biden

and Trump administrations have demonstrated over the past 16 months as the U.S. has continued to supply Israel with weapons to kill Palestinians and prevented international intervention. For decades, anti-Palestinian racism has driven efforts to expand U.S. laws and practices that are used to violently repress Palestinians, Arab Americans, and other communities. That is precisely why I am being targeted.

While I await legal decisions that hold the futures of my wife and child in the balance, those who enabled my targeting remain comfortably at Columbia University. Presidents Shafik, Armstrong, and Dean Yarhi-Milo laid the groundwork for the U.S. government to target me by arbitrarily disciplining pro-Palestinian students and allowing viral doxing campaigns—based on racism and disinformation—to go unchecked.

Columbia targeted me for my activism, creating a new authoritarian disciplinary office to bypass due process and silence students criticizing Israel. Columbia surrendered to federal pressure by disclosing student records to Congress and yielding to the Trump administration's latest threats. My arrest, the expulsion or suspension of at least 22 Columbia students—some stripped of their B.A. degrees just weeks before graduation—and the expulsion of SWC (Student Workers of

Columbia) President Grant Miner on the eve of contract negotiations, are clear examples.

If anything, my detention is a testament to the strength of the student movement in shifting public opinion toward Palestinian liberation. Students have long been at the forefront of change—leading the charge against the Vietnam War, standing on the frontlines of the civil rights movement, and driving the struggle against apartheid in South Africa. Today, too, even if the public has yet to fully grasp it, it is students who steer us toward truth and justice.

The Trump administration is targeting me as part of a broader strategy to suppress dissent. Visa-holders, green-card carriers, and citizens alike will all be targeted for their political beliefs. In the weeks ahead, students, advocates, and elected officials must unite to defend the right to protest for Palestine. At stake are not just our voices, but the fundamental civil liberties of all.

Knowing fully that this moment transcends my individual circumstances, I hope nonetheless to be free to witness the birth of my first-born child.

[Note: The baby was born April 21, 2025.]

—*SheerPost*, March 18, 2025

<https://scheerpost.com/2025/03/18/palestinian-political-prisoner-mahmoud-khalil-releases-statement-from->

# Mumia Abu-Jamal Denied by Court Again

BY RACHEL WOLKENSTEIN

## March 26, 2025: Pennsylvania Supreme Court denies Mumia Abu-Jamal permission to appeal

In September 2024 the Pennsylvania Superior Court denied Mumia Abu-Jamal's sixth Pennsylvania petition to reverse his 1982 conviction. A request to the Pennsylvania Supreme Court for permission to appeal was denied on March 26, 2025. [In Pennsylvania, an appeal to the Pennsylvania Supreme Court is not a right; a specific request for "allowance" (permission) is required.] This denial by the Pennsylvania Supreme Court ends Mumia's Pennsylvania court challenge to overturn his conviction.

Judge Lucretia Clemons presided over Mumia's case since December 2021 and, without a hearing, issued a denial on March 31, 2023. This sixth petition was based on corroborative new evidence of prosecutorial misconduct, Brady violations, for undisclosed inducements given to witnesses Cynthia While and Robert Chobert; and new evidence of racial bias in jury selection, a Batson violation.

That sixth petition did not include the substantial evidence already in the record from the evidentiary hearings before the infamous Judge Albert Sabo from 1995-97; or the voluminous new discovered proof of Mumia's innocence and the falsification of evidence against him by the police and prosecution, which was presented to the Pennsylvania and Federal courts in filings from 2001-2003.

None of that new evidence of innocence was considered by the courts—all those filings were dismissed on grounds that they were "not timely filed." Yet, none of the evidence discovered from 1995-2003 was included in the sixth petition to make the required legal argument that new evidence in the sixth petition presented in 2021 was "material" and grounds to reverse Mumia's conviction.

Mumia's arrest, conviction and death sentence were politically motivated and racially biased. The evidence uncovered over the decades following his conviction is proof that Mumia is innocent and framed. Future advocacy and

action, as well as new legal challenges to win Mumia's freedom must be rooted in the understanding that Mumia is innocent and framed with the complicity of the Philadelphia police, prosecution, Pennsylvania courts and the FBI/U.S. Attorney's office.

*Rachel Wolkenstein continues to be legal advocate for Mumia since 1987. She was co-counsel 1995-1999 during the proceedings of his first Post-Conviction Relief Act petition (PCRA) petition; attorney in charge of the evidentiary investigation; arrested in court by Judge Sabo in August 1995 for opposing the denial of a witness subpoena for testimony of jury selection methods that created racially segregated jury pools.*

Write to Mumia at:

Smart Communications/PADOC  
Mumia Abu-Jamal #AM-8335  
SCI Mahanoy  
P.O. Box 33028  
St. Petersburg, FL 33733



## Workers Will Rule When They Work to Rule

BY GREGG SHOTWELL

*Reprinted from the January/February 2006 Socialist Viewpoint.*

One of my favorite movie scenes is from *Norma Rae*<sup>1</sup>. She asked the union organizer if it was true that Jews were different. He said, “Yes.” She inquired, “What makes Jews different?” He replied, “History.”

Our history makes us unique. There are people who don’t want us to know our history. They want us to believe history is about millionaires and kings, not the struggles of working people against millionaires and kings. There is power in knowing our history.

The history of our struggle for justice is old as pharaoh’s tomb. The ancient Hebrew word for strike is *regiah*, the laying down of tools. You don’t think the ancient Jews were trade unionists? The Lord commanded, “Keep holy the Sabbath.” Jews interpreted that to mean “no work.” You can bet your holiday pay that wasn’t management’s idea.

African American slaves were masters of the slow down. The work songs they sang in fields and chain gangs weren’t the meaningless harmonies of happy fools. Songs were designed to instill solidarity, convey messages, and control the pace of the work. Everyone moved in rhythm with the song. The boss couldn’t punish someone for falling behind or working too slow because everyone worked at the same slow methodical pace. Slaves protected the elderly, the injured, the lame, and preserved strength and solidarity with song. Rhythm controlled production. That’s how they worked to rule.

The slogan “work to rule” has a double meaning. Work to rule is a method of slowing production by following every rule to the letter. The aim

is to leverage negotiations. Work to rule is also an invocation for workers to govern collectively, to control the conditions of their labor. Work to rule means power to the people.

### Historical roots of “work to rule”

Work to rule is an in-plant strategy, a method of influencing negotiations without going on strike. Workers follow the boss’s orders but do nothing on their own initiative. They keep their knowledge and experience to themselves,

defer all decisions to the straw boss, and let the pieces fall where they may.

Work to rule has roots to an article by Frank Bohn printed in the IWW (Industrial Workers of the World) newsletter *Solidarity* in 1912. Bohn wrote: “Sabotage means strike and stay in the shop. Striking workers thus are enabled to draw pay and keep out scabs while fighting capitalists.”

Historically, sabotage did not mean destruction of machinery or property.



IWW History Project

The word sabotage was first used officially by French labor organizations in 1897. The French word *sabot* means wooden shoe. The term sabotage originates from the French expression *Travailler a coups de sabots*, meaning to work as one wearing wooden shoes, that is, slow and clumsy. In the 1915 pamphlet, *Sabotage*, Elizabeth Gurley Flynn wrote, Sabotage is not physical violence; sabotage is an internal industrial process. [source: *Rebel Voices: An IWW Anthology*]

**They want us to believe history is about millionaires and kings, not the struggles of working people against millionaires and kings.**

In the 1930's union members occupied factories. The sit-down strikes were illegal, but there is a higher authority than the bossing class. When workers work to rule human rights take precedent over property rights. In the 1930's workers claimed ownership of their jobs and stared down the barrel of a gun to win union recognition.

Why shouldn't we occupy plants? Why should we walk out on the jobs that belong to us? Why should we allow the boss to give our jobs away? Whole communities have been destroyed by ruthless owners. We have a right to defend ourselves. The struggle of the bossing class against the working class is about control of production and corporate manipulation of supply. The name of the game is Monopoly not free enterprise.

Management thinks they control the plant with their clipboards, portable phones, and panties twisted in a knot. But when workers work to rule the bosses find out who really runs the plant, who keeps machines humming,

production flowing, and the money coming in.

Owners have declared an overcapacity in the auto industry. The Big 3 with support of the Federal Reserve saturated the market with zero percent financing. In preparation for negotiations, they built up massive inventories. Unemployment escalated as 2.6 million manufacturing jobs were exported. Conditions are ideal for concessions.

Why should workers contribute to the stockpile? Why should we increase productivity when only the least productive, the CEOs, are rewarded? Why should labor sacrifice? There's a solution to overcapacity: a shorter workweek. There's a solution to concession bargaining: work to rule.

In the 1980's Jerry Tucker, a UAW Servicing Representative in St. Louis organized a work to rule campaign at Moog Industries, an automotive parts supplier. The recession coupled with Reagan's antagonism toward unions incited a relentless drive for concessions. Workers needed a new strategy to combat the tactics of heavy-handed union busters.

Moog was profitable, but the company wanted to take advantage of the trend and demand concessions. They hired one of the most expensive union-busting law firms in St. Louis. The legal vultures expected the union to go out on strike; they were prepared. Instead, union members voted the contract down and decided on an in-plant strategy—work to rule.

They continued to work, but without a contract the gloves were off. Workers have a federally protected right to "concerted union activity." They have a right to seek redress for grievances, but without a contract they do not have a collaborative commitment with management to resolve the conflict. Instead of following an orderly grievance process, workers confronted the boss *en masse*. Chaos ensued.

Whole departments shut down while workers argued in the boss's office. They ran the plant backwards. They didn't damage equipment, but they wreaked havoc with production by following all the Process Control Instructions to a T. Without a contract they were free to engage in a concerted union activity as they saw fit. Everyone refused overtime. It was all for one and one for all. Disciplinary action of an individual crashed into a wall of mass resistance. The in-plant strategy succeeded.

All concessions were rolled back, and all discharged workers were reinstated and made whole. Jerry Tucker helped organize five other UAW work to rule campaigns in the 1980's. They were all successful. In an era when concessions were the norm and union busting was in vogue, work to rule empowered workers with the tools to fight back and win.

The bossing class has perverted the traditional meaning of sabotage into malicious destruction of property. They must have looked into their own souls for the new definition.

**There's a solution to overcapacity: a shorter workweek. There's a solution to concession bargaining: work to rule.**

When bosses order us to pass along substandard quality, it is, by their own definition, sabotage. When Ford designs vehicles that roll over or blow up on impact, it's sabotage. When GM sells out, shuts down, spins off, and thereby guts the city of Flint, it's sabotage. When Delphi builds all its new plants outside the U.S. while closing American factories, it's sabotage. When CEOs layoff thousands of workers and



reward themselves with multimillion-dollar perks, it's sabotage. When the President of the United States commits soldiers to war under false pretenses, bankrupts the treasury with lavish rewards to his cronies, and encourages a trade policy that exports American jobs, it's not patriotism, it's sabotage.

Workers are not saboteurs. Workers want to build, not destroy. Work to rule simply means to rigorously adhere to Process Control Instructions and strive to meet the stated goals of high quality, lean inventory, and just in time delivery in order to compel "cooperation" from the boss. Working to rule is like keeping kosher a strict code of law.

In May 1902 kosher meat prices in New York City jumped 50 percent in one day. Jewish women walked into kosher butcher shops, picked up the meat, and dropped it on the floor. They

didn't loot, they didn't steal, they didn't destroy property. The owners were free to dust off their product and put it back on the shelves. But the meat was no longer kosher, it was *trayf*, unfit to eat. No one would buy it. Prices returned to normal the next day.

Kosher laws like International Organization for Standardization Programs rely on a collaborative commitment. Kosher has no meaning outside a working relationship. Kosher, like "Quality," is not a label, it is a living agreement that promotes the highest standards.

By exporting jobs, laying off workers, and passing along shoddy products, management commits a lethal act of sabotage, violates the ethic of work, and betrays the relationship that upholds quality, production, delivery, and loyalty.

Labor creates wealth, bosses exploit it. Labor builds community, bosses

prey upon it. It's time for labor to let the feces fall where it may, and traitors be exposed where they lie.

There is power in knowing our history. There is power in our fingers, power in our knowledge, power in our skill. From the longshore to the teamsters, from the mine to the mill, from the warehouse to the clerk, there is power in our work.

Workers will rule when they work to rule.

—*Socialist Viewpoint*, January/February 2006

[https://www.socialistviewpoint.org/janfeb\\_06/janfeb\\_06.html](https://www.socialistviewpoint.org/janfeb_06/janfeb_06.html)

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<sup>1</sup> *Norma Ray*, a 1979 movie about a young single mother and textile worker agrees to help unionize her mill despite the problems and dangers involved.

# SOCIALIST VIEWPOINT

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## **Note to Readers:**

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

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

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

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

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

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# Union President Responds to Repression

By GRANT MINER

March 18, 2025—*Student Workers of Columbia president Grant Miner wrote the following response to Columbia University expelling and firing him, which we are republishing. Miner's expulsion and firing comes as Donald Trump, Columbia University, and universities throughout the country escalate repression of the movement for Palestine. Importantly, this statement speaks to the potential of the labor movement and higher education workers to play an important role in resisting these political attacks.* —*Left Voice*

Grant Miner's statement:

Last week, I was expelled from Columbia University for protesting the U.S.-backed genocide in Gaza. As president of Student Workers of Columbia, Columbia's student workers union, I was also fired from my job. The Trump administration is pushing their narrative. Here's the real story.

Thousands of students across the country have been exercising our First Amendment rights to oppose genocide. Standing against genocide is not just a moral imperative—it is an act of anti-racism and solidarity. Columbia's response? Expulsions, suspensions, and retaliation.

The Trump administration claims the student movement for Palestine is antisemitic and violent. They sent the Department Of Justice (DOJ) to crack down on universities, kidnapped Mahmoud Khalil and other students, and are trying to silence us with fear.

I am Jewish, I work in Jewish studies, and I am not alone in opposing the ongoing genocide. The Jewish people know what genocide is. That's why so many of us, alongside people of all backgrounds, are standing up against what's happening in Palestine.

In its proudest moments, the labor movement has stood firmly on the side of the oppressed, and therefore on the side of justice. As president of Student Workers of Columbia, I had an even greater responsibility to stand with my members who were beaten by the police just for protesting.

Columbia has caved to Trump's demands at every turn. They have brought the NYPD onto campus to brutalize students. Now, they've let the Department of Homeland Security terrorize students in their own dorms.

Our union is here to defend student workers, and we won't stand for this blatant repression from Columbia and Trump. Firing and expelling me just before bargaining is a transparent attempt to dodge accountability for endangering students. At the same time, we are facing over \$400 million in politically motivated cuts to vital research, all in the service of suppressing pro-Palestine protest. Both our local and the United Auto Workers will fight to get these cuts reversed and ensure our members can continue their work.

The Trump admin crackdown has already failed. Last week, massive protests took place every single day. We are organizing. We are fighting back. This movement isn't going anywhere. Release Mahmoud Khalil! Reinstate all students and workers. And as always, #FreePalestine

—*Left Voice*, March 18, 2025

<https://www.leftvoice.org/in-its-proudest-moments-the-labor-movement-has-stood-firmly-on-the-side-of-the-oppressed-union-president-responds-to-repression/>

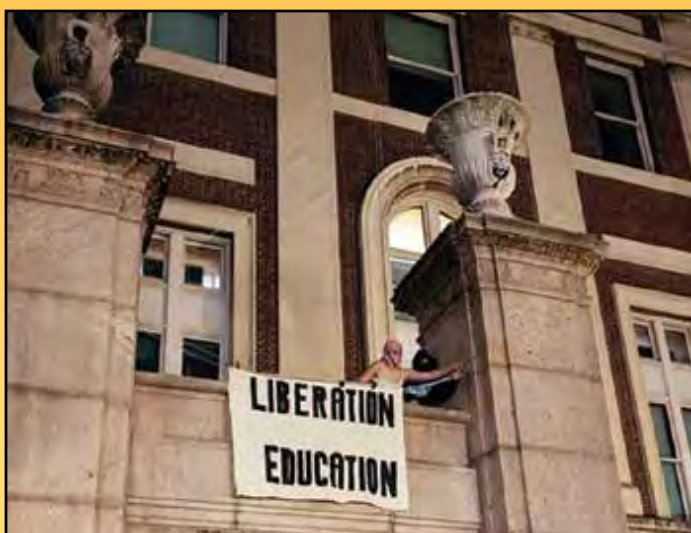


Photo from United Auto Workers.



Rumeysa Ozturk, a 30-year-old doctoral student at Tufts University, is detained by Department of Homeland Security agents on a street in Somerville, Mass. on March 25, 2025. (Screenshot from security camera video.) Read *“They Are Disappearing People* on page 8.

On the Front Cover: Thousands protest the detention of Mahmoud Kahlil, a former Columbia University graduate student even though he has a Green Card and permanent legal status to be in the U.S. Read *Workers vs. Capitalism* on page 4.



Students hang a banner from Hamilton Hall at Columbia University in New York City on April 30, 2024. Read *Campus Cops Use Israeli Spy Tech to Crack Down on Students* on page 21.



Cops in high-tech combat gear patrol the campuses. Read *The Tech-Brologarch Nightmare* on page 25.



## Attention Prison Mail Room:



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