



## IV475 - August 2014

### IV475 - August 2014 PDF

31 August 2014, by **robm**

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## Ceasefire in Gaza: a political and military defeat for the Israeli state

30 August 2014, by **NPA - Nouveau Parti Anticapitaliste**

The fishing area has been partly extended, the various materials necessary for reconstruction should be brought to the blockaded area, the question of the port of the airport of Gaza should be rediscussed within one month, etc.

Even if these measures are far from sufficient to make it possible for Gaza's population to lead a dignified life, and even if the Israeli state is not renowned for respecting its

commitments of its commitments and agreements, the NPA is pleased with this political and military defeat of Israel, which did not achieve its goals in Gaza, coming up against the resistance of the population and its organizations, which refused to capitulate in spite of the unbearable violence of the military aggression.

The fight for the complete lifting of the blockade continues, and the NPA will continue to take part in solidarity initiatives with the Palestinians and their fight to for obtain their

legitimate national rights. The pressure on the Israeli state must be stepped up to transform this political and military defeat into victory for the Palestinians, in particular by the development of the Boycott Divestment Sanction campaigns, the only way to make israel pay the price of its criminal policy.

*Montreuil*

29 August 2014

## "The alternative would be a Bank of the

# South, not the BRICS Bank”

27 August 2014, by **Éric Toussaint**

**Q: The emergent countries known as BRICS announced that they want to create an alternative to the World Bank (WB). Is this good news for development?**

Éric Toussaint: Any alternative to the WB would be great news indeed, but I do not at all believe that this is the case here. The five BRICS countries are emerging capitalist economies trying to preserve their interests, just as the big traditional powers do with their control of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the WB. By promising not to set conditionalities such as Structural Adjustment Plans, the New Development Bank (NDB) stands apart with its loans and its democratic principle: one country, one vote (but to what extent will it be followed?). As an alternative, it's not enough. It would just be a lesser evil.

**Q: To summarize, we are going to swap a WB subservient to Washington with a NDB serving Chinese imperialism?**

Éric Toussaint: We can speak about sub-imperialism taking our cue from the Brazilian economist Rui Mauro Marini, in the sense that these countries, Brazil and China in particular, are investing heavily in developing countries for pushing their political or economic self-interest, not for the development of the recipients of the funds. What differentiates them from real imperialists, such as the United States, is that they have not yet resorted to military means, with the exception of Russia.

**Q: In your opinion, what would be a real alternative to the WB?**

Éric Toussaint: The announcement of the creation of the Bank of the South (BoS) in 2007 was a hopeful sign. When it was created, I participated in the drafting of Ecuador's stand and subsequently in the committee formed with ministers from the seven

founding countries, at the request of President Rafael Correa. Ecuador and Venezuela had a clear vision of an establishment which would boost employment and facilitate continental integration as well as involve very concrete projects, such as a pharmaceutical industry for generic products, or the reconnection of South American countries by railways, with local production of rolling stock, which would have meant less pollution along with industrial and technological breakthroughs. The Sucre was to be a common and alternative currency. It further involved the idea that countries with maximum foreign reserves should transfer resources to others. It was an integration project, which considered people's interests and could easily have expanded to Central America and the Caribbean, especially as it aimed at transparency - Public Accounts, external audits - and democracy. As an alternative to the WB, this should have set an example, and therefore, had to be ambitious. For example, judicial immunity was out of the question for the BoS officials, unlike their WB counterparts.

Unfortunately, the Bank of the South has not taken off. Seven years down the line since it was established, the bank has not yet granted any loan! The Venezuelan government has announced that it would be operational before the end of 2014. Let us keep a close watch.

**Q: Will the BRICS Bank have better luck?**

Éric Toussaint: Will they manage to agree on joint projects? One may wonder if these five countries do not join forces merely to show the traditional powers that they can do it. In fact, in my opinion, these five countries have very few common interests.

**Q: Do they have the financial basis**

**to sustain such a bank?**

Éric Toussaint: Obviously yes! China alone has more than \$ 3,000 billion in foreign exchange reserves and it does not know what to do with it. It's an enormous amount, almost twice the total external public debt of developing countries. A good chunk of that money has been invested in the United States Treasury bills. China is the largest creditor to the United States. Similarly, Brazil and Russia also have very large foreign exchange reserves. Only South Africa will find it difficult to put the \$ 10 billion as capital for starting the establishment (which is in addition to the \$ 5 billion required for the reserve fund. editor's note)

Q: As for Brazil's investment in the NDB, isn't it the last nail in the coffin of the BoS?

Éric Toussaint: The BoS is already in a bad state... but, with or without Brazil, South America still has the financial assets to start this project. I think that Brazil is mainly responsible for the current impasse. This country has its own development bank, BNDES (the National Bank of Economic and Social Development) with huge investments abroad. In South America, its stature is equivalent to that of the Inter-American Development Bank and WB loans for the region! Brazil prioritizes the BNDES and only participates in the BoS in order to stall a potential rival.

**Q: Don't this failure and the present financial difficulties of Argentina and Venezuela indicate that the dream of Latin American independence is out of reach?**

Éric Toussaint: When Hugo Chávez proposed the BoS, the project sounded absolutely reasonable! May be it was wrong to assume that Brazil had to be counted in the deal at any cost. Nevertheless, most of the countries on

the continent have proven that they can steer clear of neoliberal consensus. New structures, such as the ALBA (Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our America), are now functional. Ecuador, Bolivia and Venezuela have decided to withdraw from the WB group's International Centre for Settlement of Investment Disputes (ICSID). Also, major foreign companies, exploiting natural resources in these countries, have to pay more taxes now. This is still insufficient when it comes to the

actual potential of these countries and the challenges ahead, but we still have time. There should be a strong reaction in the next two years. Some government officials are driving in this direction.

If not, I am afraid South America will face serious financial difficulties. A situation similar to that of the 1982 debt crisis is looming large.

**Q: Are there early warning signs?**

Éric Toussaint: Yes, the United States

is going to raise interest rates which were lowered drastically during the crisis of 2007-2008. This will make debt refinancing costlier, just when a declining global demand for raw materials is threatening the revenue of South American states. I am afraid these countries will only realize within the next two or three years what a terrific opportunity they missed during the past decade-an opportunity to develop alternative financial instruments against the decisions of Northern countries.

# Ebola, Poverty and Racism

27 August 2014, by **Thadeus Pato**

## The problem

The Ebola Virus is not a new discovery. It is named after the river Ebola in Congo, on whose banks it was discovered in 1976. This first epidemic there caused about 300 fatalities. Since then there were repeated outbreaks of the disease in different African countries, the last biggest ones 2007 in Uganda and again in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

The Ebola virus basically is not very problematic from an epidemiological point of view. Transmission works exclusively through the contact with the body fluids of the infected persons or animals - in contrary to the influenza virus for instance, which can also be transmitted though air - so it is relatively easy, to protect oneself.

Additionally the virus is very sensitive to environmental influences, it dies immediately outside body fluids, and cannot penetrate skin which doesn't have lesions, but enters exclusively through the mucous membranes (i.e. mouth, nose, eyes) or through open wounds. If this virus was as contagious as the influenza virus is, we had to count with hundreds of thousands of cases already.

But the virus nevertheless is dangerous, because the mortality of

the infected population is very high - depending of the genotype of the virus between 50 and 80% - and because so far a reliable remedy or a vaccination are not available.

Actually the virus, a so-called RNA-virus, is not "made" for human beings. No germ, virus or parasite kills such a high percentage of its host and so quickly - it likes to multiply, not to die out. The original hosts of the viral agent are most probably certain species of bats - the transmission to human beings and certain wild animals like antelopes or monkeys is basically a kind of "accident".

The protection against a transmission between people, as we have mentioned, is basically quite simple. This is one of the reasons, why the past epidemics had been limited and contained quite fast.

## Epidemic and sociopolitical situation

Why did the Ebola virus did spread so rapidly across West Africa, after the outbreaks of the disease in the past have been relatively limited? There are number of reasons, which

have not much to do with the virus itself, but a lot with the situation in the respective countries. Generally one can say, that epidemics are spreading in poor (and densely populated) countries much easier and faster. Liberia is in the HDI (Human Development Index) on number 174, Sierra Leone on 177, Guinea on 178, and Nigeria, where the situation still is (more or less) under control, on 153.

Firstly, medical infrastructure is not very reliable. In Sierra Leone after the civil war between 1991 and 2002 the medical system was almost completely destroyed and in some parts of the country simply doesn't exist. The situation in Liberia is similar.

Secondly, certain suggestions of preventive measures fall on deaf ears in the population - and not without reason. If one wants to impede the consumption of so-called bush meat ie of wild animals including bats, which are a major means of transmission of the virus, education and recommendations won't have any effect, as long as the people do not have affordable alternatives to feed themselves. This is the case especially in remote areas.

Thirdly the level of education plays a very important role in the fight against

any epidemic. And this level is very low in all of the affected areas. That promotes all sorts of myths, in the best case senseless ones, in the worst dangerous ones.

In Nigeria for example in the beginning of August, after the first cases (imported from Liberia to Lagos) occurred, a recommendation was spread through social media, to bathe in salt water and to drink it as a measure of protection against Ebola. In spite of immediate official denials lots of people believed it and did so. The result was numerous hospital admissions because of severe diarrhoea and at least one death.

The case of the Nigerian minister of health, Prof. Chukwu, proves that even responsible officials are affected by all kinds of wrong information: He announced publicly on August 15, that Nigeria would import a “new drug” against Ebola. It turned out, that this was simply so-called “Nano Silver” (in the Nigerian press written “Nano Silva”), a substance, which is presently used as surface coating for washing machines and as additive in clothes, for instance socks, to kill bacteria, but is completely useless respecting the treatment of a systemic viral disease.

Fourthly – and this is to be seen in context of the previous point – a big part of the population simply does not trust the announcements of the authorities, and there are good reasons for that, as we have just proved.

Fifthly the necessary measures to fight the further spread of the disease (i.e. isolation, quarantine, restrictions of mobility) are not or not sufficiently implementable for various reasons. Besides the lack of infrastructure, the

(already mentioned) desperate condition of the health facilities and the common mistrust, widespread corruption is playing a key role, especially in Nigeria: Border restrictions put in place to prevent the spread of the virus can be bypassed by bribery.

And sixthly the mortality rate amongst people with a particular disease is generally higher in poor countries. The question whether somebody can survive Ebola depends not only on the virus, but crucially on the state of someone’s immune system, that is on the power of resistance of the individual. If you imagine, that the average life expectancy for instance in Sierra Leone is between 48 and 49 years, and the infant mortality rate 159 out of 1000 births, it becomes clear, that the virus is particularly lethal amongst such a weakened and undernourished population.

## Racism

If we consider the way the so-called international community is dealing with the present Ebola-epidemic, one can’t resist the impression that racism is playing a central part. Affected foreigners are not treated like the local population – the latter have to stay in the local, underequipped facilities and is not evacuated to special units in North America or Europe. The recently released experimental therapies are only available in limited quantities and therefore is to ask the question of distributive justice – if they really work.

Anyway the pharmaceutical industry took a chance. It had a unique possibility, to bypass the usually necessary long testing procedures before the release of a new drug, and

to start large-scale experiment on human beings; immediately starting the machinery of production. Whether this will be helpful in combatting the virus is questionable. First, practically all (working) antiviral drugs have a considerable potential for side-effects, and secondly, it would not be the first time (remember the scandal around so-called swine-flu), that such a strategy causes more damage than benefit. But in any case it will be good for profits!

The same applies to the development of a vaccine, which until now was happening very slowly – given that the main target group is not very solvent at all. But now the international guild of professional helpers from the Red Cross and the World Health Organisation (who have their own interests which are not only humanitarian) raised the alarm, donations are rising rapidly.

This does not mean that it would be better to do nothing. But the present emergency measures, the legions of helpers and epidemiologists who are now dealing with the problem, will not change anything about the above mentioned reasons for these kinds of disasters. And therefore before and after the epidemic many more people will die as result of the consequences of simple, treatable diseases, malnourishment and lack of hygiene, than of Ebola.

Notabene: Ignorance, hunger and malnourishment have a decisive disadvantage compared to a virus disease: They are not contagious and so they cannot be imported by plane to Europe or North America.

Otherwise they would be fought as fast and consequently like it is done presently with the Ebola virus.....

*Lagos/Nigeria August 2014*

## Year Four of the revolution - results and prospects



**26 August 2014, by Fathi Chamkhi**

**1. To bring down the dictatorship is one thing, to overthrow the regime is another**

## **Strengths and limits of the Tunisian revolutionary movement**

After having for 23 years endured the neo-colonial dictatorship of world capitalism, the Tunisian people finally revolted. Starting from the centre of Tunisia, the revolutionary insurrection quickly spread to the remainder of the country, in particular the capital, Tunis. It took only 29 days to bring down the dictator.

The revolution had set as its central objective that of overthrowing the regime. But the latter resisted the popular attack well, in spite of the loss of its chief. The revolutionary movement, primarily spontaneous and lacking political experience, did not know how to integrate its actions and its various political initiatives in a perspective of a break with the dominant order. It finally let itself be "tamed" by the right-wing political parties. The trade union movement and, especially, the left, bear a heavy responsibility for this initial failure.

## **The trade union movement, under bureaucratic**

**control. One step ahead, two steps back**

The leadership of the powerful trade union, the UGTT, was, during the first two weeks of the revolutionary insurrection, openly hostile to this movement. As in 2008, at the time of the long revolt of the mining basin. The massive involvement of trade unionists in the revolutionary movement and the pressure which they exerted on the leadership of the UGTT, the increase in the number of the victims and, especially, the obvious incapacity of the regime to extinguish the blazing inferno, finally pushed it into the camp of the revolution. On January 11, it decided on a series of revolving regional general strikes. The area of Tunis was programmed for January 14. The leadership of the UGTT was far from suspecting that this day would be the last in the long reign of Ben Ali. The rallying of this leadership to the revolution allowed a speedy outcome to the confrontation with the dictatorship and, especially, limited the cost in human lives.

## **The left, weakness and divisions**

In spite of its strong anchoring in the Tunisian labour movement, whose origins go back to the beginning of the 20th century, its fight against all forms of colonialism and its involvement in the revolutionary movement, the Tunisian left could not play a decisive political role after the fall of Ben Ali. Which allowed the regime in power and the imperialist force to call upon the services of the old political leaders, then the Islamists, to contain the revolutionary wave and to stabilize the regime once again. Extreme division and the absence of clear political prospects explain the failures of the left, at a decisive moment of the class struggle

in Tunisia.

## **Diversion of the party-state and the local big bourgeoisie**

It was difficult to imagine a revolutionary insurrection in Tunisia in 2010 and still less the fall of Ben Ali. Of course social conditions were catastrophic, corruption general and the criminal control of the families of the palace of a layer of the economy almost total. However, the signs of an imminent social eruption were difficult to detect. On December 17, 2010, a dramatic event abruptly changed things. The protest of the parents of the victim of this drama, before the seat of the governor, marked the beginning of a movement of questioning of the system, which ended up igniting the whole of the country.

The regime did not expect such a general social revolt. The police force and the army were quickly overwhelmed by the extent of the movement, but also by its strong determination.

On January 14, towards the beginning of the afternoon, the principal avenue of the capital was occupied by an immense crowd. Tens of thousands of demonstrators massed spontaneously before the building which was the symbol of the dictatorship, the Ministry of the Interior. They chanted anti-dictatorship slogans for hour, before being violently dispersed by riot squads.

Ben Ali was finally abandoned by the local big bourgeoisie and imperialism. His party, which some weeks earlier had hundreds of thousands of members, disappeared into thin air. Ben Ali had only one option, to flee abroad, an option he took without hesitation!

## **The imperialist forces to the aid of the Tunisian regime**

Beyond the weaknesses of the revolutionary movement, the errors of the left and the hesitations of the trade-union leadership, the Tunisian regime owes its survival in particular to the intervention and the multiform support of the imperialist forces. The local big bourgeoisie was in total disarray. The G8 meeting in Deauville at the end of May 2011, which discussed the "Arab spring", was only the visible part of imperialism's reaction and operations faced with the revolutionary insurrections which called into question the imperialist order in the Arab region.

Imperialist interference in Tunisia was reinforced. This is shown by the influence exerted by the embassies of the dominant states on the local political parties, and the quasi-total control of economic and social policy by the international financial institutions (IFI) and the European Commission.

## **2. The Islamists as provisional guardians of the regime**

### **Ennahdha tested by power, in the face of popular demands**

The revolutionary insurrection and the fall of the dictator created ideal objective conditions to begin a progressive transformation of Tunisian society. It was important for the popular classes to know which political force could do it? Many among these classes were attracted by the Islamist party Ennahdha, which enabled it to obtain a relative majority in the Constituent Assembly at the

elections of October 23, 2011, with approximately 37% of votes cast; that is, 89 seats out of a total of 217. But for control, it needed more. It made a governmental alliance with two other parties, which totalled 49 seats, thus forming the Troika. Ennahdha, but also the parties which governed with it, were charged, in a democratic manner, with making this transformation.

However, the Troika, with the Islamists in command, preferred to be used as a relay for neo-colonialist plans and demands: by continuing the repayment of the debt of the dictatorship, by signing the complete and extended Free Trade Agreement, a veritable neo-colonialist treaty demanded by the European Union and by signing, with the IMF, a new plan, which increased budgetary austerity and neoliberal capitalist reorganization. In short, it continued, under radically different social conditions, the same policies which had led Tunisia to insurrection. The result was an extension and deepening of the crisis.

The Troika was trapped by its betrayal of the promises of social justice, a fight against corruption and demand that the criminals of the old regime are brought to justice. The Islamists and their allies knew that it was impossible to please both the torturers and their victims. But, their class nature, their political interests and their ideology could only push them into being the new servants of neo-colonialism. This experience showed, in an irrefutable way, the inability of political Islam to satisfy the social, democratic and national demands raised at the time of the revolutionary insurrection.

After a first chaotic period of government, the Islamists threw in the sponge, initially on February 6, 2013, following the assassination of Belaid, one of the leaders of the Front Populaire (FP). Then, definitively, on January 9, 2014, under the combined pressure of the street, the political parties of the opposition and the foreign powers. They put an end to 767 days of government of Tunisia by the Troika. A so-called "technocratic" government devoted to "national consensus" took over.

## **The Front Populaire: a difficult union of the forces of left and the Arab nationalists**

The left and the Arab nationalists underwent a crushing defeat with the elections of 2011. Drawing the balance sheet from this failure, they formed, on October 7, 2012, the FP for the achievement of the objectives of the revolution. In spite of ideological divergences and a past of conflict, the principal constituents of the FP succeeded in preserving their unity, and even consolidating it ; the FP is from now on a political party in construction.

The Front is not homogeneous, far from it. It contains all the tendencies of the left and the Arab nationalist movement. For certain tendencies, these names no longer mean that much. The only catalyst of this composite political body is a very tense social reality, conflictual and deprived of a clear alternative vision.

The FP wants to be a force of progress, even a revolutionary force. Its tens of thousands of members are well anchored in the social, trade-union and revolutionary movement.

On the other hand, the leadership of the FP does not fully grasp the extent of its capital of confidence among the popular classes. Where it is necessary to act firmly, it still hesitates, doubts and imposes self-limitations. In politics there cannot be certainty on the results of a combat which one enters. But taking the initiative, striking first, often contributes to determining the outcome of the battle. The FP is currently the third biggest political force. It is preparing to take part in the next legislative and presidential elections, which will begin at the end of October 2014, under its own banner.

## **Nida Tounès: recomposition of the neoliberal right**

The Rassemblement constitutionnel démocratique (RCD), the party of the former dictator, was dissolved on March 9, 2011. Since then, the attempts at regroupment of its former members have multiplied. Nida Tounès has been by far the most successful party, not only in terms of numbers, but also in attracting cadres from the democratic and trade-union movement.

Nida Tounès is the most popular party in Tunisia, according to the opinion polls, ahead of Ennahdha. Like the FP, Nida Tounès has decided to contest the next elections alone. Several signs indicate that they will agree with Ennahdha to govern together after the elections. Their agreement is total concerning the maintenance of the neoliberal capitalist orientation and social and economic policy. On the other hand, they diverge concerning the secularization of society and, more particularly, the rights of Tunisian women.

### **3. The “technocratic” government**

### **Failure and disorientation of Islamists in power**

The arrival of the Islamists in power, under the concrete conditions of Tunisia after January 14, was inevitable. That cost Tunisia very dear. However, sometimes misfortune is good! This unhappy experience made it possible for the toiling classes to test the ability of the Islamists to meet their legitimate social demands. The bankruptcy of the Islamists in power was total. That will certainly make it possible for Tunisian society to finally exorcise its demons!

One of the urgent tasks of the progressive social and political forces in Tunisia must consist, starting from experience, in contributing to the crystallization of the class consciousness of the Tunisian toiling masses. Concretely, it is necessary for them to fight so that the next elections are the opportunity to repair the serious errors of the past, and not a new attempt to restore the power of the dictatorship. That means having an electoral program which rests on two planks: political on the one hand, and economic and social on the other, with immediate and operative measures to reverse the current tendency.

### **The “national dialogue” of a “technocratic” government**

The Troika was docile with respect to the injunctions of the imperialists. But to sign free trade agreements and accept plans for austerity and neoliberal reorganization are one thing, to apply them is another. Also, faced with the catastrophic effects of these measures, the Islamists started to worry about the degradation of their image, and the political cost that implied, while the international financial institutions and the European Commission continued to demand them ever more quickly.

### **Mission of the “technocratic” government: to deepen capitalist austerity and neoliberal reorganization**

The capitalist forces finally decided to dismiss the Troika from power. Among the economic means used to achieve this goal was the financial embargo they started to apply as from June 2013. It ended only with the coming to

power of the new government, in January 2014.

This emerged, seemingly, from the “national dialogue” which had been started, one month after the assassination of Brahmi, another important leader of the FP, on July 25, 2013, and the popular movement which followed this, to demand the resignation of the Islamists from power and the dissolution of all the authorities resulting from the elections of 2011. This government is supposed not to have links of interests with the political parties. It is also supposed to be the emanation of the national dialogue. Nothing could be less true!

It was concocted in the corridors of the foreign chancelleries, with the collaboration of the local big bourgeoisie whose interests are closely related to the interests of the transnational firms.

The majority of the members of the current government are executives in such transnationals, and the IFI. Their mission, to which they attend with devotion, consists in accelerating the execution of the agreements signed with the IFI and the European Commission.

### **4. What immediate prospects for the revolutionary process?**

### **The coming legislative and presidential elections (October- December 2014)**

Before leaving power, the Troika had the Constituent Assembly vote through a budget which deepens the austerity policy. But, a few days after this vote, popular opposition obliged the Troika to cancel part of the new tax measures which affected the incomes and purchasing power of the popular and middle classes. The extent of the movement also forced

the leader of Ennahdha and head of the government, Larayedh, to resign.

The departure of the Islamists from power was greeted with great relief in the country. The new government enjoyed a favourable public opinion. Moreover, it enjoyed broad political support. It also had the support of the two large professional workers' and employers' organizations. Officially, it must meet the conditions necessary for the holding of the elections, supposed to mark the end of the democratic transition in Tunisia.

The technocratic government has built on this to make significant advances in terms of neoliberal structural reforms. However, it is advancing with caution with regard to the budgetary austerity measures. It was constrained to organize a "national economic dialogue" in order to guarantee a political cover for the program of austerity. But this dialogue did not succeed, in particular because of the reserves of the UGTT and the opposition of the FP to the raising of prices of basic needs products.

That forced the government to maintain the subsidies on basic commodities, while at the same time increasing the price of fuel, electricity

and gas significantly. Lastly, the supplementary draft budget for 2014, which it has just presented to the Constituent Assembly, includes new tax measures and compulsory deductions on wages.

## **The straight line of the revolutionary process**

Social tension has risen again because of these measures. At the same time, the political parties are plunged in negotiations and the search for alliances for the next elections. Only the UGTT remains vigilant in relation to the policy of the government. It was opposed to the raising of fuel prices, and it also demanded negotiations on wages.

The popular classes feel again abandoned by the political parties, too concerned at the present time by the elections which approach quickly. The government seems to tread water on the very significant questions affecting basic needs products, while

accelerating reforms in the areas of banking, the environment and finance, the investment code, taxation laws, and liberalization of agriculture, services and public contracts.

## **By way of a conclusion**

The popular classes and youth succeeded, thanks to their revolutionary insurrection, in breaking their chains. But almost four years after the end of the dictatorship their living conditions are degraded. No improvement in employment or purchasing power is expected. The near future will depend on the result of the elections. The worst will be the return of the Islamists to government, the ideal will be an electoral victory of the FP.

Finally, the restoration of the old system is not very probable in the coming months. On the contrary, a new revolutionary victory is very possible. All will depend on the ability of the revolutionary movement to overcome its organizational weaknesses and equip itself with a programme capable of convincing the toiling classes.

# **Join the Climate Justice, Gender and Food Sovereignty Caravan 2014**

## **25 August 2014**

â€¢ Exchange of views, workshops, mobilisations, discussions, rallies, processions, visits

â€¢ Opportunity to eat meals with real peasants, landless and indigenous families and to stay with real peasants and indigenous families in remote villages

â€¢ Tour local areas, talk with farmers and meet many people from South Asia and from around the globe

Do you want to join us?

## **Why join us?**

â€¢ Climate change is disproportionately affecting low-lying, vulnerable countries like Bangladesh and India.

â€¢ The people of South Asia are already experiencing crop failure, devastating cyclones and unseasonal flooding (amongst many other climate change impacts), leading to deaths and malnutrition.

â€¢ This is an opportunity to learn, share, participate, increase solidarity networks and strengthen local movements.

â€¢ You can take the rich experiences and stories back into your own campaigning.

â€¢ Not only all of this, the cost for participants from enriched (developed/Northern) countries covers the costs of one South Asian participant.



â€¢ It will be fun!

â€¢ Opportunity to stay with real peasants and indigenous families in remote villages

â€¢ Opportunity to eat some meal in real peasants, landless and indigenous families

â€¢ We, the peasants of Bangladesh, India, and Nepal are cordially inviting you!

## What will I contribute?

â€¢ Having international people participating in the caravan strengthens the message and will help to raise the profile of the caravan

â€¢ Local people are interested to meet you and hear about your life

â€¢ Experience sharing - you can take the knowledge back to your own countries and help to raise the awareness of climate justice, gender equality and food sovereignty in your local communities

â€¢ Learn firsthand of the experiences of peasants in countries that are most affected by climate change

â€¢ Help someone from South Asia join the caravan too (your registration fee pays for one person from South Asia to join the caravan)

### You can also help with:

â€¢ Workshop facilitation and organisation

â€¢ Translation

â€¢ Social media - blogging, facebooking, tweeting

### Cost

Cost for participants from enriched (developed/Northern) countries (includes the cost for one South Asian participant also): US \$ 1500

We are targeting 160 people to travel on the caravan. There will be people attending from each country who will attend the tour only within their own country, but the tour will continue to

have 160 people at all times.

We have 40 slots for developed countries delegates/individuals.

Registration is open until October, however we encourage you to book early to ensure your place and to help us organise.

### Dateline for registration:

1st October 2014.

Registration fee: US \$500. It will be deducted from the total cost.

### Optional:

One day pre-caravan cross-cultural training, basic Bengali lesson, and individual locally appropriate clothes shopping/tailoring assistance - approximately US \$70 (depends on type of accommodation & clothing that you choose).

### Optional:

Receiving you in person at the airport and organising the transfers (both ways) US \$25

### What's included?

â€¢ All accommodation - basic: with local peasants, indigenous people or in school halls (foam mattress, mosquito net, linen, pillow and blanket provided, but it wouldn't hurt to bring a camping mattress).

â€¢ All meals (Rice, roti, fish, dahl & vegetables are generally eaten for all three meals - vegetarians easily accommodated). Hygienic food, pure drinking water/ mineral water.

â€¢ All transport costs in Bangladesh, India and Nepal during the caravan.

â€¢ All climate caravan activities.

â€¢ All the above for a South Asian activist as well as for yourself! Solidarity in action!

â€¢ Medical facility will be available where necessary (Provided that cost for medicine to be paid by his/her who needs)

Flights are not included. You will need to organise your own transport to the departure location: Dhaka,

Bangladesh; and from the final destination point: Kathmandu, Nepal.

You will need to organise your own visas for Bangladesh and India prior to arriving for the caravan. No visa is required for Nepal.

## Caravan Objectives and Expected Results

The caravan aims to address the key issues of climate change, gender and food sovereignty and their interrelationships. There is an ongoing and urgent need to inform and mobilise vulnerable peasant populations in order to respond to the threats of climate change, and to further develop international solidarity networks concerning climate change and food sovereignty such as those nurtured within La Via Campesina of which all three movements are participants.

The Caravan will be hosted by the Bangladesh Krishok Federation, Bangladesh Kisan Sabha (in Bangladesh), the Bharatiya Kisan Union, KRRS, SICCFM, IMSE, NHF (in India), and the All Nepal Peasant Federation and All Nepal Women's Association (in Nepal).

The purpose of the caravan will be to deepen and extend networks of grassroots movements in South Asia and build international solidarity around specific campaigns concerning issues of climate change, gender and food sovereignty. The caravan will also include a gender perspective on these issues throughout its duration, exploring the nexus between climate change, gender and food sovereignty from the perspective of climate justice. There will be participation from grassroots movements from Bangladesh, India, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, as well as activists from other countries.

The focus of the caravan will be on (i) movement to movement communication, learning, and the sharing of experiences, skills and strategies, for example concerning traditional and indigenous

knowledges; (ii) farmer to farmer training workshops on sustainable farming practices; agro-ecology etc. (iii) popular education of communities about the effects of climate change; (iv) holding gender trainings and workshops; and (v) conducting rallies.

## Tour Route

### Caravan Activities

Bangladesh: 4 locations in 4 districts

☛ Dhaka

The Caravan will commence in Dhaka.

☛ Sirajganj

☛ Puthia - District: Natore

Puthia is sub-district of northern Natore district. Natore is famous for Cholon bil (the biggest inland water-body) in Bangladesh. We will exchange our views with Cholon bil peasants, landless and fisherfolk at the late afternoon. There will be also few workshops in the morning.

☛ Mirpur - District: Kushtia

India: 3 locations in 3 districts

☛ Singur - District: Hooghly, West Bengal

Singur is in Hooghly district in West Bengal, India. Singur was in the world media in 2006 when farmers of Singur built a strong movement against the Tata Nano car factory. After the successful movement Tata left Singur. There will be a seminar in the afternoon and also a village visit and discussion with local leaders of Singur farmer's movement.

☛ Nandigram - District: Purba Medinipur, West Bengal

Nandigram is in southern West Bengal district of Purba Medinipur, India. Nandigram is also a famous place of peasant movement. In 2007 Nandigram people fought together against Special Economic Zone (SEZ). We will attend workshops in Nandigram. We will also exchange of views with the local farmer leaders who were active in the Nandigram movement.

☛ Tatrati - District: Ramgarh, Jharkhand

Nepal: 3 locations

☛ Damak - District: Jhapa

Damak is a small hilly town in Jhapa district of south-eastern Nepal. A peasant seminar will be organised there. We will also meet tea workers in Damak.

☛ Jamakpur - District: Dhanusa

☛ Kathmandu

## Rationale

Communities around the world are threatened by economic and environmental crisis as the impacts of neoliberal capitalism and climate change increasingly impact the lives and livelihoods of the poor, peasants, agricultural workers, landless, women and indigenous peoples. The global economic system accumulates profits by dispossessing others, and this requires the constant exploitation of key resources such as land, water, fossil fuels, forests, and seeds. In particular, the global food economy is contributing to both economic and environmental crises: as subsistence, indigenous and traditional ways of farming are replaced by corporate controlled agribusiness that requires massive use of fossil fuels and agrochemicals, deforestation, and the displacement of farmers from the land. Climate change exacerbates such conflicts over resources both within and between countries, and has serious impacts on food production and yields because of increased frequency and severity of droughts, floods, and unpredictable rainfall. Indeed, climate change has already been responsible for 300,000 deaths a year, has displaced 31 million people worldwide (e.g. through floods) and is affecting 300 million people across the planet.

The South Asian region is highly sensitive to the consequences of climate change. It is known to be the most disaster prone region in the world whilst supporting a huge population of more than 1.3 billion. This is critical as climate predictions for the future highlight increase in frequency and intensity of extreme weather events like droughts and floods (IPCC 2001); with a huge

population that is likely to be exposed and affected in the region. In South Asia alone, 2.5 billion people will be affected with water stress and scarcity by the year 2050 before changes in climatic conditions have been considered.

The effects of climate change are being particularly felt by the poor, peasants, indigenous people, children and women. Peasant women already have to negotiate the inequalities associated with patriarchal societies such as 'dual labour' (working in agriculture as well as looking after the household, though cooking, childcare etc); restrictions on mobility; lack of participation in decision-making etc. The effects of climate change then exacerbate these inequalities. Climate change is deepening the food crisis for women and their families. Women are the majority of the world's small-scale farmers and produce most of the world's food. For example, because of their role in farming, women depend upon local natural resources: land, water, forests etc. These are the very resources that get impacted by climate change and extreme weather events.

In response to these threats to their livelihoods, peasant farmer's movements in Asia, Latin America and Africa - in their networks such as La Via Campesina, have occupied land, defended peasant livelihoods and created alternative, sustainable approaches to agriculture, enshrined in the concept of food sovereignty. Food sovereignty implies peasant control over territory, biodiversity, seeds and the means of food production as well as environmental sustainability and the use of traditional farmer's knowledge. Food sovereignty is one of the most important practices that enable peasant communities to both mitigate, and adapt to, the effects of climate change because peasant farming is more resilient to extreme climatic events than industrial agriculture.

Through programmes such as farmer-to-farmer exchanges initiated by La Via Campesina and caravans such as the 2011 Climate Change, Food Sovereignty and Gender caravan in Bangladesh (supported by La Via Campesina, Grassroots International,

the Rosa Luxembourg Foundation and Misereor and different individuals), peasant farmers from different communities around the world have been able to come together to share skills, information and experiences concerning the economic and environmental crises that they face. However, there is an urgent need for both continued education concerning climate change amongst peasant populations, and the mobilization of peasant communities around key issues such as access to land and food sovereignty.

Following on from the success of the 2011 Climate Caravan in Bangladesh, peasant farmer movements from the South Asia region (the Bangladesh Krishok Federation, Bangladesh Kisan Sabha, the India-based the Bharatiya Kisan Union, the All Nepal Peasant Federation and All Nepal Women's Association are proposing a caravan that will incorporate Bangladesh, India and Nepal.

## Frequent Asked Questions

Questions you may have are included below. If you have any questions that have not covered please contact us on: [pathaklal@yahoo.com](mailto:pathaklal@yahoo.com), [friendsofbangladesh@hushmail.com](mailto:friendsofbangladesh@hushmail.com)

### **Will there be translators available?**

Translator will be available for English speakers to Bangla, Hindi and Nepali. The main language of the Caravan will be English. If there are any participants speaking other languages like Spanish, she/he should bring her/his own translator. Voluntary translators would be appreciated.

### **What information on booking flights to Bangladesh?**

Information on flight booking is available online.

This is the participants' own responsibility.

### **Do I need a visa to enter the countries?**

You will require a visa for entry to Bangladesh and India. You do not need a visa to enter Nepal. Tourist visas are usually easy to get for Bangladesh and India.

For your Bangladeshi visa you can find more information here: <http://www.virtualbangladesh.com/faq/pass.html>

If you are in Australia you can find more information for your Indian visa here: <http://www.vfs-in-au.net/>

### **I cannot attend the entire caravan. Can I join it part of the way through?**

People can join part of the way, and fees may be able to be reduced accordingly. But participation in the whole event is advisable.

### **Can I stay on after the caravan is finished?**

The caravan will be finishing in Kathmandu. People are most welcome to stay in Nepal or to return to Bangladesh to see the occupation movement in areas that are not covered in the Caravan, for example the Southern area the country. If you're interested there is always plenty for people to help out with! Also it is a great opportunity to travel personally and travel further through India, Nepal, Bangladesh and Bhutan.

### **I have a low-income and have difficulties with the cost involved - is there a chance of reduction?**

The price goes to helping South Asian peoples attend the caravan, as well as

all the organisation for trip. However, in cases of special financial need the cost may be able to be reduced. Contact us in this case.

### **What should I bring?**

Final logistical arrangements will be confirmed closer to the date. But participants can bring: personal medical supplies including any medications which may not be available in Bangladesh, India or Nepal, mosquito preventive lotion, light warm cloths, torch, toiletries, sleeping bag, travel mattress, health insurance, camera, etc.

### **I cannot attend the tour but would like to make a donation to help?**

We would prefer if you can come, but if you cannot, a donation will help local people to attend the caravan and is greatly appreciated. Please contact us if this is the case.

Contact Info:

Email: [gip@dhaka.net](mailto:gip@dhaka.net),  
[pathaklal@yahoo.com](mailto:pathaklal@yahoo.com),  
[friendsofbangladesh@hushmail.com](mailto:friendsofbangladesh@hushmail.com)

Phone: +88 02 9559980

Post: Ismail Mansion, 9/H Motijheel, Room No-405, Dhaka-1000, Bangladesh  
Website: [www.krishok.org](http://www.krishok.org)

Our Australian friends:  
[www.friendsofbkf.wordpress.com](http://www.friendsofbkf.wordpress.com)  
<https://www.facebook.com/pages/Friends-of-Bangladesh/203249469842531>  
Caravan organisers

Bangladesh Krishok Federation

Bangladesh Kishani Sabha

Bharatiya Kisan Union Karnataka  
Rajya Ryotha Sangha (KRRS)

South Indian Coordination Committee  
of Farmers Movements (SICCFM)

## World War I and Its Century

25 August 2014, by **Allen Ruff**

In Hobsbawm's account, that short century ended with the reunification of Germany and the breakup of the Soviet "East Bloc" in 1989-90. The "Great War" of 1914-1918, he argued, was the defining event of the century.

With the dismemberment of Yugoslavia underway in the early 1990s as he wrote, Hobsbawm observed that the inter-communal strife reignited in the "Balkan tinderbox" represented the "old chickens of Versailles once again coming home to roost" — meaning that the repercussions of the punitive peace imposed outside Paris in 1919 were reverberating over 70 years later. Were he alive today, he certainly would note how some of the wounds of that "war to end all wars" continue to fester.

The first generalized "total war" among industrialized imperial powers, WWI took millions of lives — estimates of total casualties, military and civilian, go as high as 40 million — injured far more and caused inestimable destruction. Soldiers choked to death or were crippled for life by mustard gas.

The war brought an end to centuries of dynastic rule by Kaiser, Czar, Emperor and Sultan in Central and Eastern Europe and the Middle East; set the stage for the eventual demise of the British Empire; and further relegated France to secondary power status. It finished off the crumbling "sick man of Europe," the Ottoman Empire at Constantinople which had once ruled much of southeast Europe, western Asia and North Africa. It furthered Japan's aspiration to become East Asia's dominant imperial power.

## Imperial Rivalry at the Core

The war's devastation created the conditions for Russia's revolutions in February and October 1917, and the resultant first attempt to "construct

the socialist order" as Lenin boldly proclaimed to the Congress of Soviets. Simultaneously it foreshadowed the coming of a new imperial order as the United States, already established as a powerhouse of productivity, transformed from being a debtor to a creditor nation set on its course to eventually replace Britain as capitalism's reigning superpower.

If the spark that ignited it all was almost accidental — the assassination at Sarajevo of the heir to the Austrian throne, the Archduke Franz Ferdinand, shot by an ultra-nationalist Bosnian Serb in late June, 1914 — the root causes of the war clearly went far deeper.

Primary was inter-imperialist rivalry, understood by Marxists as including, but also going beyond, a set of specific factors — the capitalist drive for markets, raw materials, cheap labor, outlets for static investment, or a solution to periodic overproduction crises.

That first global conflagration in some sense was indeed the result of uneven and combined capitalist development on an international scale. Both sides contained the most advanced capitalist societies. Foremost on the Entente or Allied side were Great Britain as well as France and Japan, later joined by the United States. Leading the Central Powers was a unified Germany, by 1914 the strongest, most advanced economy on the European continent.

The respective war coalitions also included semi-industrial old order regimes already penetrated by French, German and British capital. Russia joined the Allied side while Austria-Hungary and Turkey, already in imperial decline, aligned with Germany. Once underway, the war also provided opportunities, real and illusory, for lesser "sub-imperial" powers such as Italy, Serbia, Bulgaria and Rumania to assert their national identities and irredentist territorial ambitions.

At the war's conclusion, in pursuit of punitive reparations the victors at Versailles in 1919 would force Germany to concede sole responsibility for the war, an imposition that led to the rise of the Nazis and Adolph Hitler. But there was plenty of "war guilt" to go around.

Ruling circles in pre-war Germany were certainly eager to expand the country's Weltpolitik "place in the sun." Already the Continent's major military power second only to the United States in manufacturing might, Germany set out to challenge Britain, which was no longer "the workshop of the world" but still the reigning financial, commercial and insurance center of world capitalism.

Understanding that the key to Britain's supremacy lay in its ability to "rule the waves," not just Germany but the United States and Japan had already set to building their own navies as a way to project global power and prestige. Long underway, a major power scramble to take and hold formal and informal colonies, "spheres of influence" and previously partitioned or coveted territories also fueled a related "land arms race" and war plan contingencies among the contenders.

Importantly, imperial ambitions were propelled not just by economic imperatives but by strikingly symmetric nationalist ideologies — inflated notions of national superiority, "destiny" and god-ordained "mission."

The age was rife with "scientific" racism — ideas regarding racial hierarchies of peoples and variants of Social Darwinism, that false doctrine (which Darwin himself never proclaimed) of the "survival of the fittest in the struggle for existence," projected onto entire nations.

Each of the major belligerents had its own military establishment or "military caste" promoted, always in the name of "defense," by imperial strategists, industrial "lobbies,"

conservative political parties, a jingoist press and a masculinist mystique of militarism wedded to “manly virtues.”

The idea of war as a legitimate vehicle of statecraft and a purifying force vital for the health of the nation was disseminated through the schools and universities, popular culture and pulpit at a time when vast numbers still believed in the divine right of their royal rulers.

At one level, the war came as an attempt to settle old nationalist scores — like those of France in regard to resource rich provinces of Alsace and Lorraine, seized by the Prussians in 1871. At another, it became but one defining round in a longer succession of multi-powered contests for control of Eastern Europe, the Middle East, Africa, the Caucasus, and the Black and Caspian Sea regions — areas still coveted today for their geo-strategic importance, hydrocarbon wealth and other “vital” resources.

In some ways, the war also arose out of attempts by all the belligerents to resolve internal class antagonisms and social upheavals, at their base the result of capitalist transformations and increasingly severe cyclical crises. It’s not that the various ruling classes uniformly looked upon war as a pathway to national unity and social peace. But there certainly were those who conceived of imperial expansion as a remedy for class turmoil at home.

In addition, numbers of politically influential industrial and financial firms, unrestrained by national boundaries, played a hand in destabilizing long-established structures and norms of inter-imperial relations. As Hobsbawm put it:

“...The characteristic feature of capitalist accumulation was precisely that it had no limit. The “natural frontiers” of Standard Oil, the Deutsche Bank or DeBeers Diamond Corporation were at the ends of the universe, or rather at the limits of their capacity to expand.” (Age of Empire, 318)

The war came on the heels of two preceding Balkan wars and inter-imperial disputes in North Africa and

elsewhere, which led to the formation of the power alignments of 1914. It also came in the wake of earlier conflicts and social upheavals that altered the perceptions and realities of power in Europe.

Most notably, Russia’s 1905 defeat at the hands of Japan and the resultant “rehearsal” for the Russian Revolution had emboldened Viennese ruling circles to assert Austrian regional power at the expense of Russia’s “South Slav” Serbian cousins — a key source of Balkan tensions.

## Total War, Total Horror

Caught up in nationalist fervor and believing they would be “home before Christmas,” young middle-class men by the droves — from France, Germany, England, Austria-Hungary and elsewhere — readily rushed to enlist in August. Others, especially from the working classes, showed less enthusiasm, while in Russia and elsewhere, the mobilized cannon fodder was largely comprised of ill-equipped peasant conscripts.

By November 1914, as devastating land battles raged to the east, stalemated armies in eastern France had already entrenched, dug in for what became over four years of indecisive mutual slaughter.

The War exacted an increasingly horrendous toll, mainly among the popular classes. Certainly underestimated, the gross statistics convey some sense. Some 65 million men were mobilized to fight. Of those, some 6.8 million died from combat-related deaths while maybe another 3 million died from disease. Another 7.7 million went missing, presumed dead while approximately 8 million were left permanently disabled.

Interspersed by a succession of horrific but indecisive battles, the war on the Western Front became a living hell, what the German soldaten would come to call the “Blut Mühle,” (blood mill) and British “Tommies,” the “great sausage machine.”

One victorless mutual slaughter alone,

the First Battle of the Somme of July-November, 1916 resulted in an estimated 1.2 million casualties, dead and wounded. During the engagement’s first day, the Brits alone suffered some 60,000 casualties, a third of them dead, and the first of over 400,000 total. The Germans suffered some 500,000 casualties, killed and wounded.

Often overlooked, total numbers of casualties, military and civilian, in the East — Austria-Hungary, Russia, the Balkans and Ottoman lands — were even greater.

## War State Capitalism

How does one begin to grasp the nature of that first truly internationalized “total war”? John H. Morrow, one of the best recent historians of the Great War, encapsulates it:

“The war engendered mass indiscriminate slaughter. The various fronts constituted the slaughter house; the military commanders, the butchers; and the civilian governments, whether authoritarian or democratic, the mobilizers of the fodder and the implements for the slaughter. The industrialists and masters of science and technology supplied and created implements of destruction in astounding quantity; intellectuals, the press, the cinema, and the arts prepared their subjects psychologically for the butchery. The eligible male population became the fodder; the rest of adult males, women and youth, the labor to manufacture the implements to kill them; and the children, potential participants in future wars to socialize through patriotic instruction. The war enmeshed entire societies.” (The Great War — An Imperial History, 72)

All belligerents resorted to some form of war state capitalism, where ownership of the means and forces of production remained in private hands but the state purchased war materiel paid for primarily through loans, credits and inflation, the costs of which were passed on to the popular



classes during and after. With the economy on war footing, distribution was coordinated in varying degree either by the military or civilian-headed planning bodies, or both.

Militarized state capitalism harnessed all available technical, engineering and scientific expertise for the war. As a result and precursor of worse to come, state-subsidized research and development induced a rapid succession of technological advances in the era's weapons of mass destruction — improved machine guns, long range artillery and firearms, the introduction of flamethrowers and tanks, war planes, the submarine and poison gas.

If imperialism by the early 20th century represented the most advanced stage of capitalism, then war state capitalism bred the highest stage of catastrophe.

Initially, war demands provided labor with new leverage, at least for those in war-related skilled and semi-skilled trades in Britain, France and Germany. In the United States, war production helped pull Black workers in "The Great Migration" to the northern industrial centers.

As the mass mayhem continued, millions of experienced industrial workers fell subject to the draft. Their places in the war plants were taken by unskilled, among them women, youth and older workers, war zone refugees, colonial conscripts and war prisoners.

All endured increasing rates of exploitation as the owners of increasingly militarized factories retooled and accelerated the adaptation of American-style mass production techniques, what Antonio Gramsci dubbed "Fordism."

The war at home also imposed new disciplines on the population at large. All the belligerents legislated or decreed "homeland security" measures that criminalized dissent. Domestic surveillance and censorship proliferated — sound familiar? — as the state not only expanded its agencies and mechanisms of control and repression, but enlisted informants and patriotic groups to report "suspicious behavior" and

impose conformity.

## Attrition and its Costs

As another part of their "total war," the British and French utilized troops and conscript labor from their colonies, men of color from across Africa, India, Indochina and the Caribbean, in their war for "civilization."

At times used by French and British commanders on the Western Front as expendable assault troops so that white soldiers would not be "wasted," such colonials in turn experienced levels of racism, segregation and discrimination at the rear, whether they were fighters shipped by the hundreds of thousands from French colonial Africa or an estimated 1.2 million Indian combatants and *corvée* labor who served the British in every theater of operations.

Colonial troops also paid the price as the French and British moved to seize German holdings across Africa. Britain also sacrificed men from what were then its "White Dominions" — Canada, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa.

With neither side able to win a decisive "breakthrough" battle, the total war became one of attrition aimed at eroding the enemy's capacity and will to fight. As such, the war on all fronts often obliterated distinctions between combatants and non-combatants as civilians came to be targeted, if not directly then by the deprivations and hardships that resulted.

Early on, the British admiralty imposed a blockade of Germany's North Sea ports, in part to hem in the German war fleet, but more so to halt the import of any war-related materiel, including foodstuffs. The Germans responded with submarine warfare on British merchantmen, but the ability of the western Entente to draw from the immense resources — in finances, raw materials, agricultural products and person power from all their possessions and the United States — ultimately provided the

material advantage.

The blockade's attritional effect deepened as large numbers of rural males and draft animals, especially horses, were conscripted. Their absence contributed to dramatic declines in overall agricultural production, especially grain, throughout Central and East Europe. What remained available was prioritized for the armies busy laying waste to whole farming regions East and West.

With food supplies diminished in the industrial cities crucial to war production, rationing was imposed. Black markets flourished as price inflation by 1916-1917 eroded the purchasing power of the popular classes.

In the War's third year, weekly per capita consumption of basic foodstuffs plummeted across Germany. As a result, the mortality rate for women and small children went to 50%; deaths attributed to tuberculosis increase by over 70%. The birth rate declined by 50% and the German Health Office attributed some 730,000 deaths to the "Hunger Blockade." And conditions in Austria, especially in Vienna, were far worse.

Malnutrition became widespread and starvation not unusual while contagious diseases, typhus and cholera, mowed down the vulnerable across Eastern Europe — over three million in Russia and additional millions in Rumania, Poland, Serbia and Asia Minor.

As many as five million people in the Ottoman Empire, 25% of the population, perished. The overwhelming majority were civilians, killed by disease or starvation; among them were millions of Armenian, Assyrian and Greek victims of Turkish ethnic cleansing.

## Revolutionary Consequences

As conditions continued to deteriorate, threats of conscription or imprisonment could no longer deter strikes and mass demonstrations,

increasingly led by hard pressed and underpaid working class women, often lone family providers forced to spend additional hours each day in search of food.

A nationwide mass strike that started in Berlin in late January 1918 involved over a million people demanding not just food, but peace and political change – the precursor of things to come. Such home front unrest came to parallel sizable mutinies by war weary soldiers, described as the mass strikes of industrialized warfare

One of these in April 1917, informed by word of Russia's February Revolution, a collective refusal to continue further murderous senseless offensives involved troops in 44 divisions, half the French army, and demands for "an end to the butchery," "justice," and "peace."

Historians argue that the arrival of large numbers of fresh U.S. troops and materiel on the Western front proved decisive in Germany's defeat. But the linchpin Central Power was already exhausted. The actual refusal of soldiers on all fronts to endure the slaughter, and tandem civilian strikes for bread and peace across Europe, clearly played their historic role. This was especially important in what occurred as the armies in Russia and Germany collapsed from within and the war weary "voted with their feet" in 1917-1918.

The War's unimaginable hardships and mass mayhem ushered in the Russian Revolution of February, 1917. With Russian absolutism dead and a Provisional Government in place willing to continue the war, Allied rhetoric changed as Woodrow Wilson redefined the purpose of the war to "make the world safe for democracy." Then came the Bolshevik seizure of power in October, 1917.

Already faced with an enormity of revolutionary challenges and determined to save the young revolution, the Bolsheviks in March, 1918 concluded a costly separate peace with Germany at Brest-Litovsk. While the dispossession of Russia's ruling class sent messages of revolutionary hope to oppressed peoples worldwide, that agreement in

tandem with the revolution's expropriation and nationalization of private property simultaneously evoked the eternal enmity of war-time Russia's capitalist allies.

The October Revolution immediately and ever after made counterrevolution the paramount goal of ruling classes everywhere as a key Allied goal immediately became the war to make their world safe from the Bolshevik "bacilli."

Inspired by the Revolution's promise, but also propelled by both the horrific conditions and the historic conjuncture of possibilities, class conflict ignited across the globe in 1918-1919. To a large extent spontaneous risings catalyzed by the War's devastation, all were beaten back by the forces of reaction. Most disastrously, that was the fate of the German revolution of 1918-23. (That story is obviously too complex to detail here. For some background see Charlie Post's review essay on the writings of Paul Levi, <http://www.solidarity-us.org/site/node/4075>.)

Certainly, the world would have been a different place if the German Revolution and working class upheavals in Italy, Hungary and elsewhere had succeeded in providing some breathing room for the Russian revolution. In their place, however, came counterrevolution and the seeds of Italian Fascism and German Nazism, the latter nurtured by the resentment and protracted social, political and economic crises assured by the vindictive conditions imposed at Versailles.

Meanwhile, the Allies' armed intervention in the Russian civil war of 1918-20, aided early on by covert U.S. funding, gave the lie to Woodrow Wilson's wartime rhetoric of self-determination and made Soviet concerns with hostile "encirclement" an issue that still resonates in post-Cold War U.S.-Russian relations.

Meanwhile, new nations rose or old ones revived out of the rubble in Eastern Europe, among them Poland, Lithuania, Finland and inherently unstable Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia. An estimated 30

million people wound up on the wrong side of newly drawn frontiers, a source of friction for decades to come.

The victors, France and especially Britain worked to reorder imperial holdings and redraw the map, not just of Europe but in the Middle East, Africa and beyond.

Denying the Arab peoples the nationhood they had been led to expect for their wartime efforts, they divvied up the Ottoman Middle East. Defining the boundaries of what would become today's Syria and Iraq, Lebanon and the eventual "mandates" of Palestine and Trans Jordan, they gave no regard to the ethnic, confessional or communal concern that remain at issue today.

The seeds of the region's key antagonism had already been planted with the wartime Balfour Declaration, the British promise to facilitate "the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people," provided that "...nothing shall be done which may prejudice the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine..."

The War's lessons informed ongoing struggles to end European colonialism as troops from India, Africa, southeast Asia and the Caribbean returned home to demand rights and "self-determination." Among those who came way from Paris schooled by the gulf between liberal democratic rhetoric and imperial realities were a young Vietnamese militant Ho Chi Minh and members of the Pan African Congress of South Africa, ignored at Versailles.

Entente ally Japan, rebuffed by Britain and France in its attempts to include a clause condemning racial discrimination in the League of Nations Covenant, abruptly left Versailles. Having seized Germany's Chinese concessions during the war, it soon would look to expand imperial interests on the mainland. Italy, denied the territory promised for joining the Entente, also left the conference, and soon turned to Mussolini to "right the wrongs" of Versailles.

The United States, ascendant in the

wake of the war, turned to economic measures that assured future global financial instabilities. Very briefly put, in the mid-1920s it provided loans to Germany in an effort to stabilize the postwar economic crisis convulsing the young Weimar Republic. Berlin used the money to pay reparations owed France and Britain. Those

payments were then used by the latter to pay down massive wartime U.S. loans.

With interest accruing all along the way, relative stability and confidence was restored as gold moved across the Atlantic and direct investment flowed into Germany. That "Dawes Plan"

worked" that is, until 1929 when the U.S. stock market crash forced banks to call in their loans, countries defaulted, and international credit dried up.

The rest is history, as they say.

[July/August 2014, ATC 171](#)

# Colonialism and the Working Class in Canada

24 August 2014, by **David Camfield**

As Mittelstedt notes, this is happening because of the recent upsurge of protest and resistance by indigenous people. This includes [Idle No More](#), campaigns around [murdered and missing women](#), confrontations with companies that hope to make big profits from [fracking, pipeline construction, mining](#) and other activities on the traditional territories of indigenous peoples, and conflicts with governments that want to dismantle anything they see as barriers to corporate profit, including environmental regulations and indigenous rights (see the damning report on "[The Situation of Indigenous Peoples in Canada](#)" released by Special Rapporteur on the rights of indigenous peoples, James Anaya in May of this year).

Indigenous solidarity activism raises many questions for participants. One of them is this: what's the relationship between the struggle against colonialism (to be precise, settler-colonialism, the kind of oppression that indigenous people have experienced since Europeans took control of Northern North America and many settled permanently in the newly-acquired territory) and other social struggles?

Chief among these other struggles are efforts by people who work for wages to defend their jobs, pay, benefits and working conditions against attacks from employers and governments, or to improve them. There are also efforts to defend welfare, health care

and other social programs, as well as fights around housing, public transit, immigration status and more. These specific fights are part of the larger struggle of the working class against the capitalist ruling class - the class struggle.

Efforts to stop logging, mining, drilling and pipeline construction immediately bring up the relationship between anti-colonialism and the working class. Workers in those industries are often pitted against indigenous peoples trying to defend their land.

More broadly, people who want to transform the relationship between Canada and indigenous peoples in order to dismantle colonialism face the question of whether it's possible to win significant support for this kind of radical change in the non-indigenous working class. Or is this impossible because non-indigenous workers benefit from colonialism?

It's pretty obvious that the capitalist class benefits enormously from colonialism. Canadian capitalism was made possible by [driving indigenous peoples off most of their land](#). Capitalism in the Canadian state is colonial capitalism. It wouldn't survive without access to indigenous people's lands.

Corporate profits and power would be dealt a huge blow by the kinds of changes needed to put an end to colonialism. These are summarized by Taiaiake Alfred in his book [Wasáse](#) as

"the return of unceded lands, reforms to state constitutions to reflect the principle of indigenous nationhood and to bring into effect a nation-to-nation relationship between indigenous peoples and Settler society, and restitution."

## Workers and colonial privilege

Before looking at the working class and colonialism, we need to be clear who we're talking about. Although in Canada the term "working class" is usually understood to refer only to "blue collar" workers or low-income people, this is too narrow. The issue isn't how much money you make, or the kind of work you do. Class is about your place in society's system for producing goods and services. The working class is made up of everyone who has to try to sell their ability to work in exchange for a wage (except for high-ranking employees with a lot of management authority) or depend on someone who does, because they don't own a business (large or small) and can't survive just by living off the land. In capitalist societies around the world, the entire working class is exploited - it produces wealth in the form of commodities worth far more than it receives back in wages and benefits. [1]

So the working class is broader than most people realize. It includes everyone from high-paid computer programmers to low-paid cleaners and

unpaid caregivers. Most members of the working class also experience at least one kind of oppression, such as sexism, racism, heterosexism and colonialism. Forms of oppression, along with differences in pay, workplace authority and status, create many lines of division within the working class. [2]

So does the over 95% of the working class that isn't indigenous benefit from colonialism? Even those who experience racism do definitely have advantages relative to the conditions of indigenous people (just as all members of dominant groups do in relation to members of oppressed groups). These advantages can be called colonial privilege. People don't freely choose privilege - it comes from belonging to a dominant group whether you want it or not.

Colonial privilege includes lives that are likely to be longer and healthier. Non-indigenous people generally earn more money and have lower chances of living in poverty (especially dire poverty) or in wretched housing. Some own houses or cottages on land stolen from indigenous people.

Colonial privilege also includes all sorts of preferential treatment given to non-indigenous people in Canada, including people of colour. As new immigrants often learn, one way to be more accepted as a "real Canadian" is to repeat common slurs against indigenous people - "they're lazy," "they're asking for too much." These slurs fuel very real discriminatory practices against indigenous people by employers, police and others.

But colonial privilege is contradictory for the non-indigenous working class. It makes life easier in some ways. At the same time, it's harmful because it encourages non-indigenous working-class people to bond with the ruling class - the capitalists that are exploiting them, trying to take away past gains and threatening everyone's future with economic activity that's fuelling climate change. It pits non-indigenous people against indigenous people.

This plays into the divide-and-conquer strategy that rulers love. People who get worked up when indigenous

people demand justice and who blame indigenous people for problems in their lives aren't likely to notice what capitalists and the governments that cater to them are up to. So colonial privilege - like all privilege conferred on working-class people who belong to dominant groups (men, white people, straights...) - is poison bait.

This means that privilege is contradictory for non-indigenous working-class people, not a straightforward benefit the way it is for the ruling class and most of the middle class (self-employed professionals, middle managers and the like). When this reality is exposed, openings are created for convincing non-indigenous workers to support the struggle against colonialism.

## Openings and barriers

If that's so, why isn't there more support for anti-colonialism in the non-indigenous working class in Canada? First, we shouldn't forget that there is support, even if it's usually passive and untapped. For example, many of the thousands of non-indigenous people who took part in the [Vancouver march for reconciliation](#) in September 2013 were working-class people. So are some of the people who have recently felt the need to educate themselves about indigenous peoples by doing things like reading Tom King's best-seller [The Inconvenient Indian](#). Whatever the limits of the call for reconciliation, which falls far short of what's needed to end the oppression of indigenous peoples, many non-indigenous people support it because they feel that terrible injustices have been done and change is needed. There are openings here for politics that aim to uproot colonialism altogether.

Of course, there's no denying that few non-indigenous people have a clear understanding that Canada is a colonial-settler state and that colonialism can and must be abolished. That's because the way most people make sense of Canada and the situation of indigenous peoples in it is influenced by the ideology of settler-colonialism. Its

assumptions shape how history is taught and how the mainstream media presents society.

Settler-colonial ideology comes in different versions, from the vicious right-wing "Native people were ignorant savages and Europeans were justified in taking the land" all the way to the left-wing "indigenous people face racism, but Canada is no longer colonial because indigenous people have won rights." What they all deny or obscure is the fact that Canadian society was built by Europeans taking land from indigenous peoples and displacing them, and that colonialism persists today in Canada and Quebec. [3]

This powerful truth is threatening to those who rule within the Canadian state. They have every reason to hide or deny it. People who want radical social change have no good reason to do so (though the realities of colonial privilege sometimes make non-indigenous radicals slow to realize this).

But the radical left in Canada is [small](#), [fragmented](#) and disproportionately made up of people with a high level of formal education. It is also still influenced by Canadian nationalism (less so than in the past, fortunately), which gets in the way of a full reckoning with colonialism. These weaknesses mean that the radical left's ability to help more non-indigenous working-class people put the pieces together and recognize colonialism for what it is remains limited.

Another very important reason for the low level of support for anti-colonial politics is that the level of working-class struggle in Canada has been low for some time. When not many people are organizing collectively to confront bosses or governments, fewer people will question the status quo in any way. This means people are less likely to come through their own experiences to the conclusion that the social order is unjust and should be changed - a conclusion which would make them more open to anti-colonial politics.

It's also worth mentioning that the indigenous groups with the greatest



ability to reach non-indigenous people with political ideas are institutions like the Assembly of First Nations (AFN) that represent officials who head up the band councils set up by the Indian Act. The politics that dominate in these organizations are all about [reforming colonialism in Canada, not uprooting it](#). Non-indigenous people who look to the heads of such organizations for guidance will only rarely hear an uncompromising critique of colonialism.

Although there is far too little support for anti-colonial politics among non-indigenous people, there is now a real opening to change this for the better. More non-indigenous people are listening to the voices of indigenous resurgence.

This means that there are greater opportunities for non-indigenous workers to discover that their interests converge with those of indigenous people. During the Idle No More actions in late 2012 and early 2013, many were inspired by indigenous people's defence of nature and indigenous rights against a federal government they loathed too. Many are sympathetic to ongoing indigenous opposition to tar sands development, fracking and other profit-driven activities that fuel climate change. The leading role of indigenous people in opposing these grim realities of our times creates possibilities for more non-indigenous people to start to question colonialism.

It would be much easier to realize those possibilities if there were a sizeable political organization capable of uniting people opposed to austerity, ecological destruction and colonialism, who today are very fragmented, as a force for real change (at best all the

NDP leadership does is mildly criticize the very worst aspects of neoliberal colonial capitalism, whose fundamentals it accepts). But people can still take advantage of opportunities even though such a badly-needed political instrument is missing. One tiny example: at the height of Idle No More actions, union and community activists organized an anti-colonial lunchroom teach-in inside a Canada Post facility in Winnipeg.

These possibilities don't mean that many more non-indigenous people will finally reject colonialism. We can't predict the future. But there is an opportunity for positive shifts. Indigenous resistance and the fact that colonialism isn't in the long-term interests of the non-indigenous working class make it possible.

The stronger the struggle of indigenous people against colonialism becomes, the more likely it is that more non-indigenous people will recognize the justice of this struggle. The more that non-indigenous workers mobilize against capital, the more likely it is that they will be able to understand that hostility to the aspirations of indigenous people for liberation plays into the hands of those who rule Canada.

## Some political conclusions

We can draw several conclusions from this. One is that it's a mistake for foes of colonialism to write off non-indigenous people who "don't get it." This assumes that only a tiny enlightened elite will ever reject colonialism - an arrogant attitude that

makes it harder to start a dialogue with people who are beginning to think differently about how indigenous people are treated and what should be done about it. Another is that non-indigenous anti-colonial activists should reflect on how we can be most effective at reaching out to such people.

A third conclusion is that people who want to help forge positive convergences and avoid ruling-class "divide and conquer" tactics need anti-colonial politics that are also working-class politics. This means, for example, combining uncompromising support for indigenous peoples' right to determine their own future with support for a just transition to different jobs for workers who are affected by anti-colonial reforms, similar to the just transition approach called for by the climate justice movement.

Much as capital should be made to pay for the transition to a society that no longer pumps out greenhouse gases, the costs of uprooting colonialism should be paid overwhelmingly by the tiny minority that rules Canada, not by non-indigenous workers. Yes, some workers would have to change jobs. Some would probably have to move, and some would lose their cottages. But it's corporations and the rich who should really be made to pay. Building solidarity with indigenous movements will help to expose the nature of the common enemy and chart the path to radical change. [\[4\]](#)

*This article is dedicated to the memory of [Dave Brophy](#).*

[New Socialist](#)

*August 10, 2014*

# Racism Refusing to Go Away

24 August 2014, by [Malik Miah](#)

"Liberals today mostly view racism not as an active, distinct evil but as a relative of white poverty and

inequality. They ignore the long tradition of this country actively punishing black success " and the

elevation of that punishment, in the mid-20th century, to federal policy. President Lyndon Johnson may have



noted in his historic civil-rights speech at Howard University in 1965 that “Negro poverty is not white poverty.” But his advisers and their successors were, and still are, loath to craft any policy that recognizes the difference.

“After his speech, Johnson convened a group of civil-rights leaders, including the esteemed A. Philip Randolph and Bayard Rustin, to address the “ancient brutality.” In a strategy paper, they agreed with the president that “Negro poverty is a special, and particularly destructive, form of American poverty.” But when it came to specifically addressing the “particularly destructive,” Rustin’s group demurred, preferring to advance programs that addressed “all the poor, black and white.” Ta-Nehisi Coates, “The Case for Reparations,” *The Atlantic*, May 21, 2014. Coates, a senior editor and blogger at *The Atlantic*, grew up in Baltimore, Maryland, in a Black working-class family.

“(P)olicy decisions dealing with welfare, work, and war during Jim Crow’s last hurrah in the 1930s and 1940s excluded, or differentially treated, the vast majority of African Americans. It also traces how inequality, in fact, increased at the insistence of southern representatives in Congress, while their other congressional colleagues were complicit. As a result of the legislation they passed, blacks became even more significantly disadvantaged when a modern American middle class was fashioned during and after the Second World War. Public policy, including affirmative action, has insufficiently taken this troubling legacy into account.” — from a penetrating analysis in *When Affirmative Action Was White: An Untold History of Racial Inequality In Twentieth-Century America* by Ira Katznelson (first published in 2006, W.W. Norton). Katznelson is a professor of Political Science and History at Columbia University.

“The fact that some African Americans have experienced great success in recent years does not mean that something akin to a racial caste system no longer exists. No caste system in the United States has ever

governed all black people; there have always been “free blacks” and black success stories, even during slavery and Jim Crow. The superlative nature of individual black achievement today in formerly white domains is a good indicator that the old Jim Crow is dead, but does not necessarily mean the end of racial caste. If history is any guide, it may have simply taken a different form.” — from Michelle Alexander’s *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness* (Revised Edition, 2012, The New Press) Alexander is a civil rights lawyer and professor of law at Stanford Law School.

The issue of race and racism has been at the center of American culture, politics and capital development since European colonialists first set foot on land they claimed as theirs.

As these quotes show, the group at the center of U.S. formation and history has been and remains the former slaves from Africa. There is no such thing as “American history” separate from and independent of the largest unitary ethnic/racial group, African Americans.

U.S. history since the 1960s is a reflection of what Sotomayor calls “centuries of racial discrimination.” White supremacists don’t see it that way. Modern conservatives don’t either. Their view is that all special efforts to help former slaves (actually “reverse discrimination”) are ludicrous since the Constitution is “colorblind.”

They claim to stand on the shoulders of Martin Luther King who advocated an end to legal segregation and a race-neutral interpretation of the Constitution. The fact that King and others fought to end white racism, which is why they advocated colorblind law to end legal segregation, is conveniently missed by those who benefit from historic white privileges.

(Chief Justice John Roberts cynically responded to those who support affirmative steps to end historic discrimination, saying “The way to stop discrimination on the basis of race is to stop discriminating on the basis of race.”)

## The Counterrevolution

In fact, the counterrevolution against full equality for African Americans began soon after president Johnson signed the Civil Rights, Voting Rights and Housing Acts into law in 1964, 1965 and 1968 respectively. Johnson also initiated executive orders for affirmative action programs in government hiring to take on institutional discrimination. Rightwing pundits at the time said these decisions would destroy “America.”

The U.S. Constitution that conservatives say must be read as it was written (“originalism”) excluded people of color as citizens. There was no need for immigration laws then, and it was understood that slaves and Native peoples were not citizens. (Native peoples were denied U.S. citizenship until 1924.)

As Coates documents, African Americans in the South after the Civil War were considered “outside of the law” by whites. African Americans had their land, if they owned any, taken from them without fear of legal repercussions. Whites could abuse and rape women, and lynch those who resisted.

The Great Migration, from World War One through the 1950s, was due to the apartheid-like system in the southern states. Blacks then found out that once “up North,” where Jim Crow no longer ruled, their “outside” status continued.

African Americans were locked into ghettos and denied loans to purchase homes in “white neighborhoods.” The real estate industry urged whites to move out when Blacks moved into their areas — profiting from depressed property values as they left, then gouging Black families with higher fees and rent.

The great myth pushed by many liberals is that the New Deal laws benefited all races. As Coates and Katznelson document, that was not the case. Affirmative action for whites (sometimes called “white skin privileges” that gave them legal and

de facto advantages) explains why the poorest white worker can view Blacks, even of the middle class, as inferior.

## History is Important

The racist origins of the Constitution and its three branches of government are important to understand. The institutional discrimination that exists cannot be rooted out without studying this history and its impact on current reality. It's the point that Justice Sotomayor tried to convince the majority of the Supreme Court to see and failed.

The untold history reveals is why racism continues to be the underlying issue of American politics even after the election of the first, and highly educated, African American as president in 2008, and despite many Blacks getting high positions in corporate America.

These exceptions, as Alexander explains in *The New Jim Crow*, camouflage the reality for the vast majority of African American, Latino and Native peoples.

As Coates explains in his Atlantic essay:

"The early American economy was built on slave labor. The Capitol and the White House were built by slaves. President James K. Polk traded slaves from the Oval Office. The laments about 'black pathology,' the criticism of black family structures by pundits and intellectuals, ring hollow in a country whose existence was predicated on the torture of black fathers, on the rape of black mothers, on the sale of black children. An honest assessment of America's relationship to the black family reveals the country to be not its nurturer but its destroyer.

"And this destruction did not end with slavery. Discriminatory laws joined the equal burden of citizenship to unequal distribution of its bounty. These laws reached their apex in the mid-20th century, when the federal government through housing policies engineered the wealth gap, which

remains with us to this day. When we think of white supremacy, we picture COLORED ONLY signs, but we should picture pirate flags."

The relentless conservative drive to turn back the clock on racial (and class) relations requires a true reading of American history. African American leaders too who have "made it" into the middle and upper class refuse to lead a fight back to broad-based discrimination because they believe they can survive a white backlash.

It is delusional to believe that a version of the past cannot recur. (One example in California; since affirmative action in college admissions was banned in 1996 there has been a double digit drop in African American admissions.)

Institutional discrimination must be rooted out, using affirmative action for African Americans not only in hiring and admissions but granting full access to government backed loans/grants for home and land ownership.

For the vast majority of working class and extremely poor Blacks the race issue is their daily life. The fear that one's son or brother could be the next Trayvon Martin or as a Black male you could be sent to prison and denied all your rights is real.

## Failure of Liberals

President Johnson was correct when he said "Negro poverty is not white poverty." Poverty can't be broken without government power, as when federal troops were used in parts of the South to desegregate public schools.

Many whites in the South are taught revisionist Southern history, not U.S. history. They identify with the Confederate flag and myths about the South and its so-called benign past.

For a majority of whites living in the South, the only issue is white superiority of Blacks the way it's been since colonial times. The main reason there were "Dixiecrats," the true name of southern Democrats, is

because President Roosevelt and other liberal northern Democrats agreed to exclude the South from new progressive legislation. After Lyndon Johnson got Congress to adopt the civil rights laws, the change of white Southern party loyalties was inevitable.

The official trade union movement (with few exceptions) also agreed to have Jim Crow locals in the South and refused to take on racism of white workers or fight for the rights for African Americans. Independent pressure campaigns by African Americans were required to desegregate the war industries during World War Two and after the war.

Dixiecrats are now "Dixiecrats," but there is no change in their biased racial outlook. Were the Republicans to stop using the race card, white "Dixiecrats" would look for a new party to protect their narrow white skin-based ideology.

The challenge is to recognize that there will be no slow demographic demise of white racism and white supremacist ideas. Their power, especially on a state level where voting rights and other laws are enacted, must be broken. ("States' rights" were enshrined in the Great Compromise at the founding of the country to allow the South to keep its slavery-based economy.)

The ruling class continues to treat white terrorist violence of the "patriot" anti-government groups and armed thugs who are white differently that it does unarmed Muslims, Blacks and other peoples.

## Repay Stolen Wealth

Is there a case for reparations? Absolutely. What that would mean in the current context is up for negotiations. No doubt the land theft, the mortgage/loan scams beginning with the discriminatory "middleman" contracts sold to Blacks for homes when the FHA wouldn't do so, and the current foreclosure epidemic are just some episodes that justify the need for immediate financial restitution.

The wealth stolen over generations is available. It is in the vaults of the big banks and major U.S. corporations.

Coates calls on Congress to adopt a bill submitted by Detroit's representative John Conyers to study the reparations issue. While not a solution, it can serve as a tool to have the history lesson and debate about institutional racial discrimination. Perhaps that's the greatest benefit, as white society as a whole will never support reparations as long as it remains ignorant or refuses to

confront the real history of the country.

As Coates notes, Germans didn't want to pay reparations to Jewish holocaust survivors either. ("It wasn't us; it was the Nazis." How often have I heard whites tell me "it wasn't us" about slavery and legal and institutional segregation?) Some has been paid: Japanese Americans received modest restitution for wartime expropriations and imprisonment by the U.S. government.

Will the ruling class do so peacefully? In my view, it will require a massive movement, bigger than the civil rights effort, to make winning reparations possible.

The starting point is to recognize that African Americans have been cheated and stolen from as a people. Once that is recognized by society, everything is on the table for discussion and resolution.

[July/August 2014, ATC 171](#)

## Between "Popular Uprising for Democracy" (Canadian government version) and "Fascist Putsch" (Russian version)

24 August 2014, by **David Mandel**

Presidential elections were set for March 2015, and moved up to December 2014 by the abortive agreement signed on February 21, signed by Yanukovich and the parliamentary opposition. Polls predicted defeat for Yanukovich. And despite the corruption that characterized his regime, it tolerated a good measure of political freedom. Among other things, much of the mass media was in the camp of the opposition.

Communist Party of Ukraine Leader Petro Symonenko, 21.01.14

As for the immediate issue, the Agreement of Association with the European Union, polls showed that the population was divided. From that point of view, it is the attempt to impose the Agreement "from the street" that appears as undemocratic. A democratic demand would have been for a free public discussion, followed by a referendum.

### The Provisional

### Government

As for the provisional government that is now in power, although it was ratified by Parliament, this was in fact done in violation of the constitution, which requires a 75 percent vote to impeach a president. No such vote was held. Moreover, at the present moment Olexander Turchinov is combining the post of Speaker of Parliament with that of President of Ukraine, a concentration of vast power that goes well beyond anything allowed for in the constitution. This does not augur well for the fairness of the coming presidential elections.

That said, it is clear that the tens, and at times hundreds, of thousands who filled Maidan Square were moved by the desire to end the pervasive corruption of the political system (and that penetrates most non-state institutions). The protesters want to establish popular control of the government and to orient its policy in the interests of the people.

That movement is characteristic of the present period which has seen a series

of similar popular uprisings "in the Arab countries, but also in the former Soviet territory (Georgia in 2003, Ukraine in 2004, and Kirgizstan 2005). An atomized population is fed up with the political regime. It mobilizes through the social media, but without a clear program. The fruits of the mass mobilization are then reaped by forces that are organized and that have a clear program.

The underlying condition of this phenomenon in Ukraine is the absence of an influential left, which, in its turn, reflects the current weakness of the working class, the traditional base of the left. Workers, as workers, were absent from Maidan (no strike in support of the demonstrations took place), even though most of the protesters were no doubt employees earning very modest salaries.

For the real problem was not Yanukovich, although his regime was indeed corrupt and serving interests hostile to the working class. (As for the bloodletting on Maidan, its real authors are still clouded in mystery. Some observers, most notably the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Estonia

[hostile to Russia], have suggested that it was organized by the Opposition itself.) In that, Yanukovich's regime was really no different from those of his predecessors, including Viktor Yushchenko, hero of the "Orange Revolution," and before him Leonid Kuchma, who wanted to bring Ukraine into NATO, and before him, Leonid Kravchuk, the Communist bureaucrat who spent most of his life fighting Ukrainian nationalism only to become suddenly the father of independent Ukraine.

The real problem is political and economic systems dominated by "oligarchs," who manipulate linguistic and cultural divisions to advance their own interests. And from that point of view, the recent events have changed nothing. Anyone familiar with Ukrainian politics knows that there is a constant circulation of political personalities between government and opposition: the oppositionists of Maidan were yesterday members or allies of the group in power. That, by the way, distinguishes the Ukrainian regime from the Russian. The latter is "bonapartist" in the sense that the executive dominates the oligarchs, even while promoting their overall economic interests. In Ukraine the oligarchs dominate the government.

The mobilized but atomized masses seemed incapable of understanding the real source of the problem and even less of putting forth a real solution (which would be the socialization of the main levers of the economy). Most saw in membership in the European Union "which, of course, was not being offered" a magical solution to corruption and a guarantee of respect for democratic norms.

The lack of a clear analysis and program explains the role that fascist forces were able to play in the events. These forces rejected any compromise with the contested government, presenting themselves as unyielding adversaries, not only of the current leaders, but of the "system" itself. And they call for a "national revolution." This intransigent position attracted demonstrators who were aware of the bitter fruits of the Orange Revolution and who did not understand the real

meaning of the proposed "national revolution."

## Fascists Gain Legitimacy

This brings us to the other interpretation: the "fascist putsch." Even if it does not translate the complexity of the events, it has some grounding in reality. One of the three oppositional parties with whom the European diplomats negotiated the agreement of February 21 was Oleh Tyahnybok, who lead the extreme right-wing Svoboda (Freedom), an anti-Russian, anti-Semitic party that wants Ukraine for ethnic Ukrainians who speak Ukrainian (which would thus exclude a little less than half of the population). Svoboda obtained 12 percent of the vote in the 2012 parliamentary elections, mainly, but not exclusively, in the three western provinces, the main centers of militant nationalism.

Until 2005, when Svoboda underwent a certain makeover, the party bore the name "National-Social" and had as its symbol the "wolfsangel," emblem of certain Nazi SS units. At various moments during the demonstrations, one could see the red-black banner of OUN (Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists) on the stage at Maidan. OUN collaborated with the German occupation in World War II and participated in the mass murder of Poles and Jews. Tyahnybok himself was expelled from the right-wing parliamentary bloc in 2004 for remarks about the "Jewish-Russian mafia" that was controlling Ukraine. Citing the party's racist and xenophobic character, in 2012 the European Parliament appealed to the democratic parties of Ukraine not to associate or form alliances with Svoboda.

Despite that, diplomats from the EU and US saw fit to confer legitimacy on this party, which is now integrated into the official structures of the state. Its members now hold several ministerial portfolios, including that of Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Defense, and Prosecutor General (who is responsible for upholding the constitutions and other laws).

But Svoboda has competition on its right from a much smaller but more violent group: the Right Sector, which is composed of fascist and football thugs and led by Dmytro Yarosh, a long-time fascist activist. In the latter days of Maidan, Right Sector activists, who were armed, contributed to forcing the pace of the situation by taking over public buildings during the negotiations between Yanukovich and the parliamentary opposition. They thus contributed to the blocking of application of the agreement of February 21, negotiated with the aid of European emissaries, which would have created a provisional government of national coalition.

At present, members of the Right Sector hold posts in the Ministry of Internal Affairs, responsible for the police and the internal armed forces. According to some reports, Yarosh has become Assistant Secretary of the Council for National Security and Defense, an organism that advises the President on national-defense strategy. The Secretary of that Council is Andriy Parubiy, a longtime far-right activist. Recently, Prime Minister Arseniy Yatsenyuk dismissed three Assistant Ministers of Defense for their refusal to integrate the Right Sector's armed bands into Ukraine's regular armed forces.

Thus, for the first time since World War II, neo-fascists hold posts in the national government of a European state. And they do this with the blessing of the Western democracies.

Right Sector forces have seized government arsenals in the western regions and are the source of a wave of violence and vandalism that has swept Ukraine, directed at pro-Russian or left-wing organizations, personalities, and symbols. Among others, the headquarters of the Communist Party and the offices of an anti-fascist organization in Kiev were ransacked. There were failed attempts to burn down the Kiev home of the head of the Communist Party and a synagogue in Zaporozhye. In some towns in the west of Ukraine (for example, Rovno) Right Sector thugs appear to be in control of the local government.

In sum, although one cannot speak of

a “fascist putsch,” fascists forces have emerged from the events with increased strength and legitimacy.

## Complex Divisions

It goes without saying that this does not augur well for a country that is so deeply divided, for a very fragile state that had never existed until 1991 (except for some months during the Russian civil war). The western provinces were attached joined to Soviet Ukraine only in 1939 (and reattached in 1944). As for Crimea, which had been part of Russia since the eighteenth century, Moscow presented it as a gift to Ukraine in 1954. If the nationalists reject the Soviet past as illegitimate “and they are calling for lustration” they should logically be prepared to give up Crimea. Instead, Svoboda’s program calls for the abolition of Crimea’s autonomy. The party also wants to reintroduce ethnicity in identity documents. (A prominent member of Svoboda even proposed to make the use of Russian a criminal offense.)

A situation so fragile would seem to counsel prudence to genuine patriots of Ukraine. But the nationalists, who are a minority in the country, want to impose their will on the others by force. One of the first acts of Parliament after Yanukovich took flight was to rescind the law that allowed certain regions to make Russian a second official language, though subordinate to Ukrainian. This decision was soon annulled by the government, but the damage was done. Polls indicate that a strong majority believes that Russian should be recognized as a second official language. Somewhat less than half the population uses it as their everyday language. Parliament’s actions help to understand the reaction to the new government in Crimea, largely Russian-speaking and ethnically Russian.

The government that was formed in the wake of Maidan is thus anything but a government of national unity, as envisioned by the February 21 Accord, which was aimed at reassuring the Russian-speaking population of the eastern and southern regions. Of the 19 ministers in the new government,

only two come from the east, none from the south. Besides the language question, it has introduced a resolution to outlaw the Communist Party, which took 13 percent of the vote in 2012 and is, in fact, the only remaining oppositional party after the Party of Regions fell apart. In several western provinces, where the legislatures are operating independently of Kiev, the Communist Party and the Party of Regions have been declared illegal.

Ukraine’s divisions are very deep and complex. Besides language, there is culture, in particular historical memory. The heroes of the western provinces collaborated with the German occupation and participated in its crimes; the heroes of the east and south fought fascism and for the Soviet Union. There are also economic interests: the eastern part of the country, the most industrial, is closely integrated with Russia, by far Ukraine’s biggest trading partner. There are also more subtle cultural differences, which are beyond the scope of this article. But one thing is clear “the population of the western provinces, driven by anti-Russian nationalism, is more easily mobilized. A significant part of the protesters on Maidan came from those provinces.

## The American and EU Interventions

A few words in conclusion on the international actors. Many will recall the conversation between Victoria Nuland, US Assistant Secretary of State for Europe, and the US ambassador in Kiev, Geoffrey Pyatt. The media focused on her saying that the UE could “fuck off.” Much less prominence was given to that part of the conversation that should have really shocked: a discussion of the composition of the government that would follow Yanukovich’s ouster. Nuland definitely wanted to have “Yats” as head of the government. And, behold, Yatsenyuk is today Ukraine’s Prime Minister. Surely, a mere coincidence.

One could also see Nuland during the demonstrations distributing bread on

Maidan to the protesters. Imagine the reaction of the Canadian government to the Russian ambassador distributing donuts to student protesters during Quebec’s “Maple Spring.” There is a difference, to be sure (as the West and the media claim without irony): when Western diplomats intervene in the internal affairs of foreign countries they do so to promote democracy and defend the people of those countries. . .

Given the deep internal divisions of Ukraine, its history, its geography, its economy, it seems obvious that the most suitable international stance would be one of neutrality, like that of Finland or Sweden. Polls indicate that 80 percent of the population opposes membership in NATO. Yet all presidents up until Yanukovich pursued membership in NATO. Yanukovich was the first to embrace a policy of neutrality. But NATO will not hear of that.

We do not know why Yanukovich suddenly suspended negotiations on the Association Accord. He did not reject it outright. If he did it under pressure from Moscow, it is not clear why Putin waited so long to apply it, since, had he done it earlier, he could have avoided the mass protest. After all, Yanukovich’s party adopted the goal of an accord back in 2008. It seems probable that Yanukovich himself changed his mind, fearing the negative impact on Ukraine’s economy (which is in very bad shape, as it has been more or less since independence in 1991). The EU was offering a mere 600 million euros to be paid in tranches dependent on “structural reforms,” that is, on a policy of austerity applied to a population among which poverty is already very widespread. Moreover, Ukraine would have to remove all commercial barriers and duties for goods and services coming from Europe and to align its legislation and regulations with those of Europe. That would have had devastating consequences for Ukraine’s industry, located mainly in the east. And what in return? Neither free entry into Europe for its citizens nor membership in the European Union. Yanukovich seems to have taken fright. But not “Yats,” who has promised Ukrainians “painful measures.”



Remember Yugoslavia. It was after IMF-imposed reforms that the separatist movements really took off. An austerity policy would be devastating for the Ukrainian population and reinforce unhealthy and centrifugal tendencies.

## The Russian View

How do things appear from the Russian side? The Russian government no doubt sees what has happened as another step in the longstanding policy of the US and NATO to contain Russia's influence to her own borders, this despite the solemn commitment George Bush made to Gorbachev not to expand NATO in return for German reunification. From the Russian point of view, it is another use of the tactic of manipulation of popular mobilizations, used successfully in Serbia, Georgia, and Ukraine, to bring about regime change.

Besides that, for purely domestic reasons, Putin cannot remain indifferent to the rise of an extreme anti-Russian right in a region with which Russia has close cultural and historic ties. The foreign policy of his authoritarian, corrupt, and largely incompetent regime is about the only thing that attracts positive support from the population.

It isn't surprising, then, that Russia has frozen its offer of \$15 billion in loans to Ukraine, an offer made, be it noted, without austerity conditions. The government has also announced it will not renew its discount on the price of gas. And Russia has many other economic levers at its disposal. Russia is Ukraine's leading trading partner and already threatened to impose punitive tariffs on certain goods when the European accord was being discussed.

Russia's military moves in Crimea appear to be pursuing primarily symbolic goals aimed at its own population as well as at Kiev's right-

wing government, which is being warned not to get carried away. As for Western indignation, one should recall the NATO bombing of Yugoslavia, a flagrant violation of international law (such as it is), under the invented pretext of a threatened genocide of the Kosovars. Or the illegal invasion of Iraq justified by imaginary weapons of mass destruction. And dozens of other illegal interventions in Latin America and the world over.

The words of the last US ambassador to the USSR can provide a fitting conclusion: "Because of its history, geographical location, and both natural and constructed economic ties, there is no way Ukraine will ever be a prosperous, healthy, or united country unless it has a friendly (or, at the very least, non-antagonistic) relationship with Russia." Contrary to the will of the majority Ukrainians, NATO rejects that position out of hand.

14 March 2014

## Child Immigration Divide American Opinion - Right and Left protests; troops to border

21 August 2014, by **Dan La Botz**

The Murrieta protests sparked a firestorm of political controversy. There were counter-demonstrations, many of them by religious liberals, in opposition to the nativist reactionaries. Republican governor Rick Perry of Texas ordered 1,000 state National Guard troops to the border. President Barack Obama urged Central Americans to stop their children from migrating to the United States.

The rapidly growing influx at the southern U.S. border of tens of thousands of unaccompanied and undocumented children, most teenagers but many under 12 years of age, created a social crisis on the border and political crisis in American

society and in the Congress. Until recently, only about 7,000 unaccompanied minors crossed the border each year, but suddenly in 2014 the numbers skyrocketed. So far 47,000 children have been detained at the border this year, 7,000 of them less than 12 years old, more than 700 are younger than five years old, and it is expected that some 90,000 or more will attempt to enter the country without immigration papers this year. Three quarters of these children come from the Central American nations of Honduras, El Salvador, and Guatemala; many of the rest are Mexican. If this trend continues, the government estimates there will be 130,000 in 2015.

Under a U.S. law originally passed by Congress during the administration of George W. Bush and intended to prevent human trafficking, children from non-contiguous countries cannot simply be deported. While the Mexican children are deported immediately unless they indicate that they will be in danger back home, Central American children who enter without documents are taken into U.S. government custody. The children, many of whom are fleeing poverty, violence, and sometimes exploitation involving sex or drug trafficking, are taken by Office of Refugee Resettlement first to penal-like facilities that hold hundreds of children. About 90 percent of the children are released relatively soon

to relatives in cities all over the United States. They are given immigration court dates, but many will never show up and will merge into the mass of 12 million undocumented immigrants already living in the United States.

President Barack Obama requested 3.7 billion dollars to respond to the humanitarian crisis, but also called upon Central Americans to keep their children home. "Our message absolutely is don't send your children unaccompanied, on trains or through a bunch of smugglers," President Obama told the media. "We don't even know how many of these kids don't make it, and may have been waylaid into sex trafficking or killed because they fell off a train."

The violence in Central American nations that drives the current emigration is largely the result of U.S. policies. In 1954 the United States overthrew the elected, progressive nationalist government of Guatemala. Subsequently the United States supported military or rightwing governments in Guatemala and El Salvador against popular insurgencies for 40 years, until the civil wars ended in the mid-1990s. Washington then brought globalization and open markets, leading to plant closing and unemployment in those countries. Former soldiers with no wars to fight and few jobs often became criminals, extortionists, and drug dealers. Kidnapping and murder became common in all three countries affecting people of all social classes, but having the greatest impact on working people and the poor.

The sudden increase in children at the

border has had ramifications across the country, becoming an occasion for demonstrations by rightwing groups who call for new anti-immigrant legislation. In Maryland graffiti appeared on walls reading, "No illegals here. No undocumented Democrats." In Michigan an anti-immigrant group marched carrying flags and signs, as well as assault rifles and handguns. In Massachusetts and Rhode Island, 2,000 miles from the Texas border, protesters demonstrated with signs reading "Stop the Invasion." Rightwing anti-immigrant groups organized over 300 demonstrations across the country on July 19, but almost all were quite small, just handfuls of people.

With small anti-immigrant demonstrations taking place all along the 2,000 mile-long border, the Mayor of Laredo, Texas, Raúl Salinas, told the press, "I don't want them here, we will not welcome them. If they come armed, they will be violating the law and will be arrested. We don't need racist gun-thugs in our towns. We have the Border Patrol, the city police, and all the other authorities, and these people aren't causing any problems." While some leftists see in these demonstrations the beginning of fascism, in truth such nativist movements have occurred in the United States throughout its history whenever new immigrant groups appeared.

Most Americans are not rabidly anti-immigrant and many are sympathetic to the children. A coalition of religious groups, ranging from Catholics and mainline Protestants to Evangelical

Christians who usually fall on the conservative side of things, has rallied to support the immigrant children. The Mormon Church and the Mormon-dominated Republican Party in Utah have also expressed sympathy for the children and said they would be welcome in the Beehive State. There is also an active protest movement by immigrant groups such as CASA in Maryland marched on the White House with banners reading "President Obama—Fight for Our Families." In San Francisco, California the Central American Resource Center organized a march in defense of the immigrant children. Though it may not always appear so, the children at the border have more friends than enemies in America.

The U.S. left is supportive of the immigrant rights movement, but it is the corporations, the big American labor unions (the AFL-CIO, SEIU, the UFCW), and the Catholic Church that tend to shape immigration policy. That constellation of forces has tended to concede that immigration reform that must include stronger controls at the border, a long, complicated, and expensive process of legalization for the undocumented, and guest workers without full rights, policies opposed by some immigrant organizations and by the left. Ultimately it will take the willingness of the Latino community, 17% of the U.S. population or about 55 million people, the Latino immigrants and other immigrants, using their economic and political power to shape a more just policy for the 12 million undocumented people in the United States.

17 August 2014

## Ferguson (USA): Police killing of young black man leads to national protests

21 August 2014, by **Dan La Botz**

Brown's killing brought not only protests in Ferguson, but also demonstrations in solidarity in dozens

of cities across the United States. The killing has also led to a renewed national discussion about racism and

to a new debate about the U.S. government's policy of pushing military equipment—37 billion

dollars worth of itâ€”on large cities and even small towns in the wake of the September 11, 2001 attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon. The federal government armed local police to fight terrorism, but critics argue that the tanks, guns, and grenades have been used instead against the country's poor communities of color and against social protestors. Some on the left argue that the combination of increased police surveillance of the citizenry together with militarized police forces is gradually turning America into a police state.

What exactly happened in Ferguson? A police officer named Darren Wilson shot and killed Brown, an 18-year old youth, on August 9. Several days after the event, police released a report claiming that Brown had forcefully stolen a box of cigars from a local store, though it was not clear that officer Wilson had any knowledge of that incident. One report said that Wilson had stopped Brown for jay-walking. Why the officer shot Brown was not clear. Brown's killing led immediately to protests by African Americans, some of which turned to vandalism and looting. The looting became the pretext for a massive display of military-type police force. Ferguson's chief of police, Tom Jackson, deployed the police, tanks, and tear gas not only against looters, but also against the peaceful protests of African American youth. Protestors responded by throwing Molotov cocktails at police. As Danny Lyon, a famous American photographer of the civil rights movement of the 1950s and 60s, told the New York Times, the images didn't look like the American police-protestor conflicts of that time,

they looked like Soweto, South Africa in the era of apartheid.

Why Ferguson? Ferguson is a small town on the outskirts of St. Louis, Missouri, a major American city that sits on the Mississippi River. The town has a population of just 22,400 people, 53% African American and 45% white. The median household income in Ferguson is \$37,134, lower than the national median income of \$45,000. Some 22 percent of Ferguson residents live in poverty. While Ferguson is a small and usually quiet town, St. Louis, Missouri and East St. Louis, Illinois are cities with a long history of racial segregation, racial discrimination, and violent incidents. The St. Louis area has been badly hurt recently by the closing of many industrial plants, among them two Chrysler auto plants in nearby Fenton, Missouri. The closing of those plants took 15 billion dollars out of the regional economy as well as eliminating 6,400 jobs. As factories began to close in the St. Louis area in recent decades, some African Americans began to move out of the city into the surrounding suburbs such as Ferguson.

While the population in Ferguson gradually changed from white to black, the power structure remained virtually all white. In Ferguson, where more than half the population is black, only one of six city council members is black and the police are 94 percent white. The school board is white and an African American superintendent had recently been suspended by the school board. The hold-over white leadership in Ferguson did not represent the city's new population which was young, poor, and black. The combination of poverty,

unemployment, and a lack of representation of African Americans in government, as well as the pervasive racism against black people in society form the backdrop to Brown's killing.

The political establishment reacted swiftly to the events in Ferguson. President Barack Obama expressed sympathy with Brown's family, calling for transparency on the part of the police, but also condemning vandalism, looting, and violence. Libertarian Republican Rand Paul, a likely candidate for president in 2016, spoke out against racism and the militarization of local police forces. Missouri's Democratic Party Governor Jay Nixon sent in the state police to take responsibility for security in Ferguson, replacing the local police force, an act that was greeted with celebration by the town's African American population. Reverend Jesse Jackson, a historic figure in the African American civil rights movement and former a presidential candidate who is closely connected to the Democratic Party leadership, rushed to Ferguson to lead a protest demonstration there. Jackson is known for his role in both leading and in containing civil rights struggles.

Still, government leaders and politicians have been unable either to stop the continuing protests in Ferguson or the spreading national demonstrations in solidarity. African American youth and its Latino and white allies are everywhere in the streets, crying out against this latest incident of racial injustice and against the government's policy of militarizing the police.

*17 August 2014*

## **Hands Up, Don't Shoot: Ferguson on Center Stage**

**20 August 2014, by Malik Miah**

The mass media have swarmed all over Ferguson, Missouri for one reason : The Black community went into the streets after the police murder of Michael Brown, and refused orders to leave. They have inspired solidarity actions taking place all over the United States and internationally, including Latino, Asian and white young people along with African Americans.

“Hands Up, Don’t Shoot” spread across the country. It reflects a reality for African American boys and men when in contact with the police. There is genuine fear that any wrong move could lead to your death. Racial profiling is commonplace in cities small and big. Accountability for cop violence is not.

A majority of white people, on the other hand, especially in middle or upper class communities, rarely experience cop brutality. Police serve and protect them. So they believe African Americans must be at fault, not the police.

Whites in Ferguson, Missouri, a six-square mile town of 21,000 people, don’t see discrimination or racism ; they see Black people rioting in their neighborhoods. Popular culture propagates fear of African American men. Guns are flying off the shelves at gun shops as whites armed themselves in the St Louis area. Yet whites, 30 percent of the population, control the power structures and police. Black people have no political power.

Ferguson joins a long list of places where the lives of African Americans have been taken away by police violence. The dehumanization and disrespect that Black men suffer by society reflects a broad culture of institutional racism. It is not an accident that a white cop feels threatened by an unarmed 18 year old teenager.

The 28-year-old cop, Darren Wilson, was hidden away as the community erupted for five days. The 53-person militarized police force (only three are Black in a city with a 69 percent African American population) used armored vehicles and weapons more appropriate in Iraq and Afghanistan. All wore camouflage fatigues.

The police sought to control the truth by presenting “Big Mike” Brown and the community as violent and out of control to gain white support and to justify massive military type force. The occupied community is presented as subhumans who are throwing rocks and Molotov cocktails at cops. Police in Ferguson and St. Louis County were indoctrinated with this dehumanizing and disrespectful view of the Black community.

## The Murder and Aftermath

On August 10, the cop instructed Brown and his friend to move from the street to the sidewalk. They didn’t do so and a struggle ensued, the specifics of which are contested. Brown was then shot and killed with hands turned up some 35 feet away from the patrol car. His body was left on the street for four hours.

Between August 12 and 13, police officers fired tear gas and rubber bullets at lines of angry but peaceful protesters, many of whom were in their own front yards when attacked. Reporters were detained and attacked including from the Huffington Post and Washington Post.

Aljazeera America reporters familiar with war zones in the Middle East were hit by tear gas and shot at with rubber bullets by police SWAT Team. CNN cameras filmed an officer addressing a group of protesters by saying “Bring it, you fucking animals, bring it.” Weapons for war are now common among many police departments. This militarization is not to fight terrorists but to control the common citizens of these communities “to put down civil unrest.

The structural racism of U.S. society means that police departments meet their quotas of arrests by going after the “others” who are African Americans, Latinos, and Arabs and all Muslims. Young Black men are profiled by cops, arrested and prosecuted by a justice system that is far from color blind. A common comment heard in Ferguson’s Black neighborhoods : “we demand respect and justice.”

Once the cop’s name was released on August 15, the police spun a new reason why Michael Brown was murdered. The story changed to a shoplifting incident a few blocks away, allegedly by Brown, at a convenience store—yet the police chief admitted that Wilson did not know that Brown was a suspect when he shot him.

## Blame the Victim

The alleged robbery was a classic tactic of misdirect (a “smokescreen”) of blaming the victim for his own death, said Brown’s family. Many whites had already assumed Brown was a criminal. What torpedoed the planned coverup were the eyewitness accounts. It put politicians on the spot, including the Democratic Governor Nixon. The cops had to retreat. Nixon appointed an African American captain, Ron Johnson of the Missouri Highway Patrol, a native of Ferguson, to be the public face of the police force.

Later the Governor imposed a curfew after some protesters started looting stores August 15. Community leaders condemned the action of a few who did not reflect the majority support for defiant but peaceful protests. The provocative actions, many by unknown people coming into Ferguson, played into the cop’s assertion that they had to use heavy force to keep order.

The insensitive response by the police and white politicians exposes what every African Americans knows all too well : Black people live in a racially divided country where different rules apply. It recalls the 1960s when African Americans were treated as less than human, cops were seen as an occupying force, and demands for “community control of the police” became popular.

## Militarization of Police Forces

Glenn Greenwald, the investigative journalist who reported to the world on whistle blower Edward Snowden’s disclosures of massive U.S. spying, discussed in an August 14 article for the internet-based Intercept news



service the origins of the militarization of city police forces :

"The intensive militarization of America's police forces is a serious menace about which a small number of people have been loudly warning for years, with little attention or traction. In a 2007 paper on "the blurring distinctions between the police and military institutions and between war and law enforcement," the criminal justice professor Peter Kraska defined "police militarization" as "the process whereby civilian police increasingly draw from, and pattern themselves around, the tenets of militarism and the military model..."

As is true for most issues of excessive and abusive policing, police militarization is overwhelmingly and disproportionately directed at minorities and poor communities, ensuring that the problem largely festers in the dark. Americans are now so accustomed to seeing police officers decked in camouflage and Robocop-style costumes, riding in armored vehicles and carrying automatic weapons first introduced during the U.S. occupation of Baghdad, that it has become normalized. But those who bear the brunt of this transformation are those who lack loud megaphones ; their complaints of the inevitable and severe abuse that results.

If anything positive can come from the Ferguson travesties, it is that the completely out-of-control orgy of domestic police militarization receives long-overdue attention and reining in."

New York Times reporters Julie Bosman and Matt Apuzzo in an August 14 article explained,

"Department of Homeland Security grant money paid for the \$360,000 Bearcat armored truck on patrol in Ferguson," said Nick Gragnani, executive director of St. Louis Area Regional Response System, which administers such grants for the St. Louis area.

Since 2003, the group has spent \$9.4 million on equipment for the police in St. Louis County. That includes \$3.6

million for two helicopters, plus the Bearcat, other vehicles and night vision equipment. Most of the body armor worn by officers responding to the Ferguson protests was paid for with federal money, Mr. Gragnani said.

"The focus is terrorism, but it's allowed to do a crossover for other types of responses," he said. "It's for any type of civil unrest. We went by the grant guidance. There was no restriction put on that by the federal government."

While the major Homeland Security grants do not pay for weapons, Justice Department grants do. That includes rubber bullets and tear gas, which the police use to disperse crowds. A Justice Department report last year said nearly 400 local police departments and more than 100 state agencies had bought such less-lethal weapons using Justice Department grant money.

The militarization of police is also related to the "war on drugs" that has brought havoc and death to U.S. cities and to Mexico and Central American nations where youth are fleeing for their lives to the southern U.S. border, and contributed to mass African American incarceration.

The important point here is that the social composition of the police force isn't what causes militarization. While it's a factor as seen in Ferguson where few cops are African American, the bigger problems are policies and training. Racial profiling and targeting of minority communities are taught to all cops—"white, Black, Latino, or Asian-American. New York City, for example, has a police force that is majority people of color, yet where a Black man was choked to death on Staten Island, and stop-and-frisk remains a major issue for people of color.

## Mass Public Action

What happens next depends on public protests and pressure on the county, state, and federal governments.

President Obama and Attorney General Holder have instructed the FBI to investigate the Brown killing. Obama failed as usual to mention the underlying racial divisions and tensions in Ferguson. He implied both the community and cops need to do better ! It's up to the district prosecutor and closed-door grand jury to decide if the cop who killed Brown is even arrested and prosecuted. So far he's on paid desk duty.

The country remains divided by race even as some progress has been made for educated African Americans. Ferguson shows that we don't live in "post-racial" society as many hoped with the election of the first African American president. Obama's refusal to take on institutional racism head-on is a reason why whites opposed to full racial equality have been on the offensive since his election in 2008. If anything, Barack Obama's election told whites (at least a sizable minority) to circle the wagons and make sure power is not taken from them.

That's why the hard core of rightwingers and racists in the Tea Party rally around white nationalists who hate Obama and civil rights. It is why voting rights laws are being limited in the Old South and Republican controlled states. The events in Ferguson, Los Angeles, Staten Island, and many other cities show that racially targeted police violence is widespread.

The history of Black people being shot and killed by cops (an average of at least two per week) gets little notice unless video phones are present. Only when African Americans are treated as people and human beings will they respond in kind. Working class and poor African Americans are still waiting for that to happen.

"Hands Up, Don't Shoot" is a demand for fairness and dignity. It is matter of life or death for Black boys and men. It is a universal slogan for all victims of state-sanctioned violence and the oppressed from Ferguson to Gaza

*August 19*

[Against the Current](#)



# Living under occupation in Ferguson

20 August 2014, by **Nicole Colson**

Since 18-year-old Michael Brown was shot and killed by an unidentified police officer in Ferguson, Mo., on August 9, the majority Black city just outside of St. Louis has been rocked by protests against the racism of a system that sees the lives of young Black men as disposable.

The response of authorities has been to flood the town with hundreds of police from dozens of neighboring cities and towns, decked out in riot gear, and armed with assault weapons, attack dogs and militarized vehicles for "crowd control." Protesters say "keeping the peace" is the last thing on these cops' minds—the invaders are acting in a deliberately provocative and aggressive manner, leading to an escalation of violence over several more nights of protest.

In the early morning hours of Wednesday, police shot and critically wounded another young man in Ferguson, not long after that night's protests dispersed. Police say they were called to the area by reports of men wearing ski masks and wielding shotguns, but when they arrived at the scene, the unnamed victim flashed a handgun—"forcing" them to shoot.

But most people in Ferguson—and millions more like them around the country—can't help but be skeptical about any police claims at this point.

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LOOKING MORE like an occupying army than anything else, the massive police presence in Ferguson is responsible for the tensions and violence in Ferguson, having inflicted violent repression on protesters for four days and nights, including tear gas and rubber and wooden bullets.

Steve Walsh was an innocent bystander. On Tuesday, He was walking to the home of his two-month-

old son and the child's mother when he got caught up in a police attack on protesters. Walsh told the Guardian that he was struck in the neck by a "wooden pellet" which left "a bloody, coin-sized wound behind his left ear," the article stated. Walsh told the reporter "I almost fainted. Blood just started coming out."

According to the Washington Post, the clashes come "like clockwork—when the sun goes down each night, those remaining on Ferguson's dark streets are met by heavily armored police, prompting confrontations and injuries."

Pictures of Ferguson on Wednesday night showed a huge cloud of smoke or gas over part of the city. Another showed what was reportedly some kind of an incendiary device used by police as it exploded in the street, throwing off a massive shower of sparks.

One writer at Jezebel described the I Am Mike Brown livestream playing on the KARG Argus Radio website:

Viewers watched as police fired rubber bullets into crowds of unarmed citizens. We watched as police advanced on a group of peaceful demonstrators. I Am Mike Brown livestream reported police were demanding that they turn off their cameras. "Because they don't want witnesses," the reporter said.

And no wonder. While law enforcement tries to paint protesters as violent thugs, CNN cameras caught one white cop on camera taunting demonstrators: "Bring it!" he yelled, "All you fucking animals—bring it!"

Amid the violence of police, many protesters respond with a symbolic action that is a poignant echo of how Michael Brown died: with hands raised in the air, telling police, "Hands up. Don't shoot." Other protesters

march with signs that draw a parallel to the assertion of basic humanity during the civil rights struggle only a few hours south of Ferguson in Memphis, Tenn.: "I am a man," "I am a woman."

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IN A statement, Ferguson police "requested" that those wishing to hold vigils or protests "do so only during daylight hours in an organized and respectful manner. We further ask all those wishing to demonstrate or assemble to disperse well before the evening hours to ensure the safety of the participants and the safety of our community."

But for police to lecture the residents of Ferguson—or anyone else—about "safety" after they gunned down an unarmed teenager and treated protesters like animals is the height of hypocrisy. The cops in Ferguson and the governmental authorities who issue their orders don't deserve anyone's "respect," as their actions this past week have shown again and again.

Police still won't release the name of the officer who shot Michael Brown, because of the "threats" he might face. But they've been more than happy to share with the media the names and mug shots of those arrested in the past week for supposed looting.

It's an illustration of the racism that lies at the heart of the eruption of anger in Ferguson: A young unarmed Black man has his life stolen by a white police officer whose identity is protected—while Blacks alleged to have committed nonviolent crimes like burglary have their names dragged through the mud on the evening news.

Despite the violence of police, protesters have called out this double standard, night after night. Like Jammell Spann, a young demonstrator

who yelled out at police clearing a protest, "All of my friends have been killed. I'm sick of it!"

On Thursday morning, it was reported that St. Louis Alderman Antonio French—who has been critical of Ferguson police and a presence at the protests, where he has been videotaping the police for the past several days—had been arrested. There was no word on the circumstances of that arrest as this article was being written, but it was no doubt retaliation for his criticism of the police.

The cops' fear of independent voices like French's is understandable—they have been going out of their way to make sure their preferred story is the only one coming out of Ferguson. As The Wire's Arit John wrote: "In the last few days reporters have said they were barred from entering the city. Reporters who have made it in have been tear gassed and threatened by police officers, alongside the residents of Ferguson."

Adding to the clampdown on reporting is the fact that the Federal Aviation Administration declared a "no-fly" zone for low-flying aircraft over the area on August 12, after a police helicopter was reportedly shot at—meaning that news helicopters are unable to gather aerial footage of confrontations between police and protesters.

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IN SOME cases, journalists have been turned away from press conferences, and on Twitter, Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist Trymaine Lee—who is Black—reported on August 12: "I've been told to disperse and go to my residence."

The next day, when Washington Post reporter Wes Lowery and Huffington Post reporter Ryan Reilly questioned the pushy tactics of police and engaged in the constitutionally protected act of videotaping cops, they were immediately arrested.

The two were working from inside a local McDonald's that reporters have been using as a hub. Police, some in riot gear, came in and demanded to

see ID. According to Lowery:

Moments later, the police reemerged, telling us that we had to leave. I pulled my phone out and began recording video.

An officer with a large weapon came up to me and said, "Stop recording."

I said, "Officer, do I not have the right to record you?"

He backed off but told me to hurry up. So I gathered my notebook and pens with one hand while recording him with the other hand.

As I exited, I saw Ryan to my left, having a similar argument with two officers. I recorded him, too, and that angered the officer.

Apparently not exiting the restaurant fast enough for the cops, a confused Lowery was arrested—and so was Reilly:

Multiple officers grabbed me. I tried to turn my back to them to assist them in arresting me. I dropped the things from my hands.

"My hands are behind my back," I said. "I'm not resisting. I'm not resisting." At which point one officer said: "You're resisting. Stop resisting."

That was when I was most afraid—more afraid than of the tear gas and rubber bullets.

"They essentially acted as a military force," Reilly later told MSNBC's Chris Hayes. "It was incredible. The worst part was he slammed my head against the glass purposefully on the way out of McDonald's, and then sarcastically apologized for it."

The reporters were told they were under arrest for trespassing in a McDonald's—but the officers refused to give them their names or badge numbers. Once word got around to police officials that two reporters had been arrested, they were quickly released.

Residents of Ferguson, however, don't know when they'll be released from the police occupation they now live under.

"It's like the elephant in the room," Yusra, a resident of East St. Louis, told The Daily Beast's Justin Glawe. "We are being occupied."

She added: "They say it's the death of three men that started a chain reaction of death and destruction in Gaza. Will we as a people rise up like the people of Gaza? Will our community be bombed like last night with tear gas? That was a terrorist attack."

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BUT TO hear St. Louis County Police Chief Jon Belmar tell it, the police have acted as a model of restraint.

"To maintain that restraint, it is, frankly, remarkable," Belmar said of his officers after several nights of protests, according to the St. Louis Post-Dispatch.

The police say they won't release the name of the officer who shot Michael Brown out of "fears for his safety." They've had no comment about Dorian Johnson's claim that officers refused to take his statement. According to Freeman Bosley, Johnson's lawyer and the former mayor of St. Louis, Bosley contacted the police to offer an interview with his client—the person standing closest to Michael Brown when he was shot.

"They didn't even want to talk to him," Bosley told MSNBC. "[The police] don't want the facts. What they want is to justify what happened...What they are trying to do now is justify what happened instead of trying to point out the wrong. Something is wrong here, and that's what it is."

Dorian Johnson told MSNBC that he understands the outrage that protesters in Ferguson feel toward police:

There are two crowds. An older crowd that wants justice, but there's anger. Then it's the younger crowd that wants revenge, but there's anger there, too. What do you expect when something is steadily occurring and it's hurting the community and nobody is speaking out or doing anything about it. I feel their anger, I feel their disgust.

But according to Ferguson City Police Chief Thomas Jackson, the "trouble" in Ferguson is being caused by "outside agitators." On Fox News' Hannity show, Jackson said:

It's a lot of outside agitators that are causing the violence. We've had several very peaceful protests—they're angry, they have questions they want answers to. I understand that. I get that. But the community has now stepped up once this violence happened. Our community leaders, the clergy, some of the activists, have stepped forward and said, "Enough is enough."

That tactic—pitting "good" protesters against "bad" ones, and blaming violence and property destruction on "outside agitators"—is a tried-and-true method of police and the state. During the civil rights movement, complaints about "outside agitators" and "mobs bent on violence" were part of an attempt to divide and conquer, as Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor explained in a SocialistWorker.org article about the urban rebellions of the 1960s:

[T]he rebellions are seen as the dysfunctional cousin to the peaceful and nonviolent Southern civil rights movement. Thus, while the civil rights movement is universally lauded as successful because of its strategic emphasis on nonviolence, the riots are universally condemned because of the violence inherent in them. Moreover, they are also blamed for alienating white allies and supporters, and are widely viewed as the origins of white "backlash politics."

A New York Times editorial, written only a few weeks after the riots in Detroit in 1967, captured this argument: "The riots, rather than developing a clamor for great social progress to wipe out poverty, to a large extent have had the reverse effect and have increased the crises for use of police force and criminal law."

Yet that perspective didn't appear to correspond with a number of polls taken 10 days later that showed massive support for the expansion of social programs aimed at mitigating the material deprivation that many connected with the spreading

violence.

In a poll of both African Americans and whites, strong majorities supported anti-poverty programs. As a Washington Post headline summarized, "Races agree on ghetto abolition and the need for a WPA [the federal Works Projects Administration]-style program." Some 69 percent of Americans supported federal efforts to create a jobs program, and 65 percent believed in tearing down ghettos. Another 60 percent supported a federal program to eliminate rats, and 57 percent supported summer camp programs for Black youth.

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THAT FERGUSON was a powder keg of anger waiting to explode isn't the fault of "outside agitators," nor of its majority African American population. It is the fault of the racist system—and, in particular, the sentries of that system, the police—responsible for the killing of Michael Brown.

Ferguson is a community where the stamp of racism and inequality is imprinted on every aspect of life—from jobs to housing to racial profiling. It was once known in the area as a haven for Blacks who sought to escape poverty and violence in St. Louis, and who were prevented from living in more affluent neighborhoods as a result of redlining and other discriminatory housing practices. But as Blacks moved into Ferguson, whites fled, a New York Times editorial reports:

In 1980, the town was 85 percent white and 14 percent black; by 2010, it was 29 percent white and 69 percent Black. But Blacks did not gain political power as their numbers grew. The mayor and the police chief are white, as are five of the six City Council members. The school board consists of six white members and one Hispanic. As [University of Iowa professor Colin] Gordon explains, many Black residents, lacking the wealth to buy property, move from apartment to apartment...

The disparity is most evident in the Ferguson Police Department, of which

only three of 53 officers are Black. The largely white force stops Black residents far out of proportion to their population, according to statistics kept by the state attorney general. Blacks account for 86 percent of the traffic stops in the city, and 93 percent of the arrests after those stops.

Ferguson residents have spoken powerfully in ways that put a human face on these statistics. As Michael Brown's mother Leslie McSpadden told CNN's Don Lemon in between sobs, "Just because my son is a 6'4" male Black walking down the city street does not mean he meets the profile for anything other than just walking down the street."

Michael Brown Sr. said in the same interview, "My son don't have justice, and we don't have no peace. If he has no justice, we won't get no peace."

That's why the smear that the people of Ferguson have engaged in unrestrained "looting" and "rioting" since the death of Michael Brown is so despicable.

The biggest property damage was done to a QuikTrip convenience store that was set on fire and then tagged with anti-police graffiti. As it turned out, the crowd likely turned its anger on the store when word spread that someone at the store made the call to police reporting an alleged case of shoplifting, which was reportedly the pretext for the officer to stop Michael Brown in the first place. Other targets of protesters include a Walmart and check-cashing store—that is, symbols of poverty and exploitation in an impoverished neighborhood.

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PERHAPS REALIZING that the heavy-handed response from cops has only inflamed the situation, Missouri Gov. Jay Nixon announced on Thursday that he was going to pull St. Louis County police out of Ferguson—reportedly assuring clergy and community members that there will be "operational shifts" and "you all will see a different tone."

It would be hard for the police and politicians to do any worse than they already have in infuriating the people

of Ferguson. But however "different" the tone of police enforcement is, the angry tone of the protest won't change. It is a bitter reaction to the injustice at the heart of not only Michael Brown's death, but the death of John Crawford, a 22-year-old Black man shot and killed by police in a Beavercreek, Ohio, Walmart because he was carrying a toy gun; of the death of Ezell Ford, a 25-year-old Black man shot and killed by police as he lay on the sidewalk in South Los Angeles, complying with their orders; of the death of Eric Garner, a 43-year-old Black man choked to death by police on a Staten Island sidewalk in New York; of the death of Dante Parker, a 36-year-old Black man Tasered to death by police in Victorville, Calif.

These are just some of the most recent examples of Black lives stolen by police murder. And beyond the

killings, untold numbers of people—men and women—have their lives upended by an injustice system that is racist to its core.

And what has been the response of America's first Black president to this epidemic of Black lives stolen? Almost total silence.

The president expressed his condolences over the killing of Michael Brown, calling it "heartbreaking." But as tear gas and rubber bullets were being fired at protesters and riot police roamed the streets of Ferguson on Wednesday night, White House Deputy Press Secretary Eric Schultz tweeted from Martha's Vineyard, where the president is currently vacationing: "Readout of tonight's social gathering coming shortly—spoiler alert: a good time was had by all."

Obama's failure to offer any

substantial political initiative on the urgent question of fighting racism is because he is dedicated to maintaining the system that produces it.

Instead, we should be looking to the example of those fighting racism and fighting to win justice for Michael Brown—and all the other "Michael Browns" across this country whose names we don't yet know.

Like those at the historically Black Howard University where, on Wednesday night, during a meeting about freshman move-in, students felt compelled to respond to Michael Brown's death and the protests in Ferguson. In solidarity, hundreds gathered for a powerful picture—hands raised, faces defiant.

[Socialist Worker](#)

*August 15, 2014*

## Peace-Fighters: The Need for a New Democratic Opposition

20 August 2014, by **Kirill Medvedev**

Maidan, the loudest and most relentless mobilization in post-Soviet space, was, without doubt, a chance for a unique democratic breakthrough, capable of serving as an example to Western Europe, the CIS countries, and many others.

Anti-Maidan, the tumult in South-East Ukraine, was, without doubt, a chance for a "circuit break," an occasion to imagine the development of Western Europe outside of that course (of de-industrialization, privatization, neoliberalization) guaranteed to it by the heads of the European Union and the IMF.

It appears that both chances have been lost. Revolution is made by an active minority, but its fate depends on that minority's ability to attract a majority to its cause, to convince it

that there is a commonality of interests. Maidan proved unable to convey to the South-East, even before its victory, a clear message: we are one nation, we have common interests, there will be room in the new Ukraine for different cultural-historical traditions and economic-political orientations. Instead, there was, at best, confidence that the residents of the South-East will accept anything the revolutionaries will achieve in Kiev, at worst – the most abhorrent social racism and chauvinism, which in the end became the ideological basis for the anti-terrorist operation (ATO).

The republics that came into being in South-East Ukraine are, without doubt, the result of a foreign policy adventure on the part of the Russian regime, which, risking and wavering,

tried to turn to its advantage the entirely justified discontent of a huge part of the population in the South-East with the new Kiev establishment and its politics.

Many on the Left (myself included) hoped that the people of Donbas (like those of Maidan) could formulate and realize their own social and democratic program: this could have either brought the two movements closer together, bringing to the fore the progressive elements of both; or it could have made the question of the territorial integrity of Ukraine (and Russia, and that of any other country in a similar situation) insignificant.

Besides problems of self-organization, of political initiative, which really do exist in South-East Ukraine (as they do in Russia and in many other places), it

is also important that the aggrieved people of Donbas didn't have any well-defined political goals from the start. Therefore, it is entirely logical that at the head of the mobilization appeared a small cadre of people, primarily from Russia, with either military or administrative experience, with some (let it be uncertain and unstable) support from Moscow and a very specific political motive - the restoration and expansion of "the Russian World." Yes, the rudimentary Soviet anti-fascism and egalitarianism that reside in the majority of people of Donbas are not, to put it mildly, the worst of values now diffused in post-Soviet space. But it is impossible to seriously take as signs of left-wing or democratic politics government-implemented ideas about nationalization, the "anti-fascism" of right-wing historical re-enactors and former members of the RNU (Russian National Unity Party), their anti-Western, anti-European rhetoric, which plays on the unambiguously reactionary sentiments of the masses. And there is nothing left-wing about anti-oligarchic declarations as such, which can easily be part of a Right-Left, even a National-Socialist program. And there can be no comparison with either the Cuban or the Bolivarian revolutions as long as we refuse to speak of Russia as a local imperialist, dispatching its cadres to neighboring republics with the following ideas:

"The borders of the Russian World are significantly wider than the borders of the Russian Federation. I am fulfilling a historical mission in the name of the Russian nation, the Russian super-ethnos, bound together by Orthodox Christianity. In the Ukraine, as in the Caucasus, I fight against separatists, this time Ukrainian, not Chechen. Because there is such a thing as Russia, great Russia, the Russian Empire. And now the Ukrainian separatists in Kiev are fighting against the Russian Empire" (Aleksandr Borodai).

It is perfectly clear that the majority of residents of Donbas do not live in the fantasy-world of historical re-enactment, but in a world with their own everyday problems, problems of life and work, their own interests, which differ from the interests of the

visiting fighters and commanders, no matter what hopes might have been placed on them in the beginning. And this is just as clear: even if a left-wing, radical-democratic agenda would suddenly begin to break through from the bottom, it would immediately be either appropriated or simply crushed, with support from Moscow, by the builders of the "Russian World."

Therefore, the only chance to break the vicious circuit in Ukraine is for there to be radical changes in Russia. Changes that would come to pass not under the banner of a struggle for the "Russian World" against juvenile justice, Eurosodom and the like, but under the banner of radical democratic and social changes inside the country, a re-orientation of the economy from the maintenance of an army of bureaucrats, policemen, FSB-men, and heaps of big businessmen, to the social sphere, science, industry.

Of course, it is hard to imagine such changes taking place today. The events in Ukraine have, on the one hand, almost completely demoralized and divided the Russian opposition, divided its flanks from within (the Left flank most of all); on the other hand, they have presented a new problem for the regime: What is to be done with those sentiments that were persistently fired up by Russian propaganda, with the leaders and fighters of the South-East, who have gained authority in the context of the "anti-fascist" hysteria in the mass media? And it is obvious that there is nothing left to do but to co-opt, in some way and measure, their leaders and the sentiments that stand behind, to bring them to power.

Here we approach the subject of fascism. While the phrase "Kiev junta," planted by the Russian propagandists, does nothing to help shed light on the situation, distinct elements of fascism are evident in post-Revolutionary Ukraine. These are, first of all, military forces financed by oligarchs, comprised of fighters motivated by ultra-nationalist ideas, recruited largely from far-right organizations. Attempts on the part of the regime (which may not itself be "fascist") to support and make use of such structures all too often lead to the loss of control or to the surrender

of it as the only means of survival. Historically, the intrigue of relations between bourgeois power and fascism consists precisely in this, which is why there is no point in calling the Poroshenko regime or the Putin regime in themselves "fascist" for the purpose of immediate propaganda gains.

In one way or another, the question of fascism in Ukraine must be discussed responsibly, including in the context of the pan-European situation with the far Right. We must discuss the relationship between the conduct of the pro-Kiev soldiers/fighters and ultra-nationalist ideology. But it must also be clear that racist hatred, torture, violence against peaceful residents are no less criminal if they take place under the Russian, Imperial or Soviet flag. And if we believe that a humanitarian catastrophe is taking place in South-East Ukraine, then we must demand the end of the anti-terrorist operation and the beginning of reconciliation under international control, not military support for our "brothers" coming from the right-wing, authoritarian Russian regime.

And, of course, we must discuss the question of fascism even more seriously in connection with Russia, for both the subsequent logic of events in the Donetsk People's Republic and the example of, say, Ihor Kolomoyskyi, with his private battalions, give momentum to the formation of similar elements of classical fascism in our own country. It has been said more than once that, in the near term, regardless of how this whole Donbas story will end, we will likely see both the rise to power of several "heroes of the DPR" and the formation, from the ranks of militia returning to Russia, of some type of paramilitary structure under the patronage of patriotically inclined big businessmen and groups of the elite. Iconic DPR-men and their newly-recruited associates may very easily be employed in various political and economic conflicts and repressions, serve as examples of the regime's "national-patriotic" character, be brought to the forefront in the event of crisis, and in the event of extreme danger - appointed to the highest posts.

Naturally, and in parallel to this, "anti-



liberalism" will be strengthened, without, however, deviation from the general neoliberal economic course, but only in the guise of refining the figure of the liberal "national traitor" as a bogeyman for members of any kind of opposition. It appears that some on the Left are quite ready to lend a hand in this effort: some simply out of hatred for "liberals," others wishing to find a small, but stable place for themselves in the new situation. They will be poured into the same anti-Western, "anti-liberal" sauce as the trash-conservative agenda. Let us look, for example, at the account of the "Yalta Conference of Resistance" on the site [rabkor.ru](http://rabkor.ru) (in Russian):

"The struggle with the new Kiev regime is in effect a struggle against the EU, not in the form of challenging merely the politics of destroying the family and heterosexual relations, but in the form of challenging the entire anti-social neoliberal economic politics of the Western elites," emphasized in his report the Head of the Centre for Economic Research (IGSO) Vasily Koltashov.

All those who are not satisfied with this dolled-up consensus, all those who want truly democratic, truly progressive social changes in Russia, who still hope that our country can become not just a petty regional predator, but an example of democracy, justice and education for all, need a new opposition. But for it to become possible, it is necessary, however difficult it may appear, to set

aside differences of opinion with respect to Ukraine. Of course, it is impossible to set aside differences of opinion with those who, all these months, have had their teeth sunk into their computers, supporting the the anti-terrorist operation in their attacks on the "Colorados" (the pro-Russian insurgents) just as it is impossible to set aside differences of opinion with those who have hysterically called for a campaign on Kiev and Lviv in order to eradicate "Banderovism" and "Ukraino-fascism." However, we can fully sympathize with those Ukrainians who do not want to live under today's increasingly anti-democratic Ukrainian regime, and we can fully sympathize with those Ukrainians who want to protect their State from any kind of Russian interference. This is not our war, but our people are fighting in it - on both sides - besides a minority of ultra-right-wing thugs, their ideological and military leaders, patrons, and instigators on official TV. A great number of people from the most diverse social strata are fully capable of understanding and sharing this position, they are capable of conveying it to the majority.

We need a program of radical change that is oriented toward the majority, a program that brings together democratic and social demands, a program that proceeds from the fact that the exchange of one group of businessmen for another, more "democratic" one, does not lead to anything good, a program that is oriented simultaneously toward decentralization and toward the unity of

the country, for the Ukrainian example has once again shown everyone what results from the dream of "cozy national governments" under historical and cultural conditions that are unsuitable for them.

We must orient ourselves toward trade unions, which every day fight for labor rights, without which no democratic changes are possible.

We must orient ourselves toward the intelligentsia and toward everyone who cannot and who does not want to "hit the road," but who wants to work in their own country under normal conditions.

We must orient ourselves toward the youth, which sooner or later will begin to rebel against idiotic conservative interdictions.

Such people are fully capable of constituting a real majority in defiance of today's - in fact, ephemeral - ideological "for Putin, for Stalin, for the Russian World."

And we must demand judgment upon those who with singular cynicism manipulated the psyches of millions of TV watchers all these months, demand free access to central TV channels for different political forces (besides those that promulgate ethnic and religious division), social movements, and trade unions.

Our enemy is in the Kremlin!

*The text was published first in Russian on [OpenLeft](#) and translated by Maksim Hanukai for [Left East](#).*

## Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict and role of Russia

20 August 2014, by **Zara Harutyunyan and Anton Ivchenko**

Against the background of crescendoing militarist rhetoric and the de facto end to the status quo, at the initiative of Vladimir Putin, two-

and three-way meetings took place between himself and Presidents Sargosian and Aliiev. Although these meetings were planned long before

the escalation, according to a number of experts, their results could play a decisive role for the unfolding conflict.

The steady stream of cross-border shootings preceding the escalation is in many ways characteristic for the logic of the last 20 years: constant up and downs, which allow the authorities parasiting upon the war, to keep hold of their throne.

Indeed, few other governments have reached the level of professionalism in war speculation demonstrated by the Armenian and Azeri regimes. Warming up nationalist sentiments, they periodically put forth the possibility of a war, thereby legitimizing their own power and pushing aside social problems. Neither side would like to give up such a useful instrument.

This elaborate mechanism of periodic escalations worked not without the participation of third powers such as Russia, the EU, the USA, and Turkey as well as some well-known transnational corporations, which have never been known for their squeamishness about war profits.

As the main player in the region, Russia deserves special attention. On the one hand, it keeps military bases in Armenia for free, selling that country defensive weaponry and claiming the responsibility for its security; on the other, it sells massive amounts of offensive weaponry to Azerbaijan and doesn't recognize Nagorno-Karabakh People's Republic.

At the same time, there are ways in which the current events don't fit into the typical geopolitical scenario of the conflict. Could we say that the elaborate system of three-way negotiation has crashed? Or maybe it has moved up to a new level or changed the format?

But let's give the regimes their due—they are good at hiding their traces and it is difficult to assert anything with a degree of certainty. There are different versions. Some experts think that the border clashes represents typical Azeri militarism while the level of escalation and the above-average number of casualties could be explained by an unusually severe reaction by the Armenian side.

There are those who blame the recent escalation on Russia, which pursues several possible goals: 1) of forcing

Armenia to cede the disputed territories to Azerbaijan in exchange for integration into the Eurasian Union, 2) of reconciling both parties and incorporating them into the Eurasian Union, or 3) of introducing a Russian peace-keeping garrison in the disputed territories.

Others are inclined to blame the West, intent as it is on creating newer sources of instability on the periphery of the emerging Eurasian Union. Given the pre-existing opposition the choice of theory is a matter of taste. As the presidents watched sambo at the Sochi summit, the two peoples, holding their breath, awaited the unfolding of the events: would there be war or not, now or in a month, would it offer a decisive solution to the issue, and in general, what is to be done, and who is to blame.

On August 7th, two days before the beginning of the negotiations, Azeri President Aliyev posted over 60 openly militaristic messages on his personal twitter account about the "unfinished war", which Azerbaijan was finally in a position win, about the country's military preparedness and potential, the bravery of the soldiers, and so on.

A day later, on August 8th, an anti-war rally took place in Yerevan. In their announcement, the organizers of the "No to war!" initiative attributed all the responsibility for the bloodshed to the governments of Azerbaijan, Armenia, and "outside forces" and pointed to the necessity for creating a dialogue between the two societies as the only alternative to the failed negotiations between the official powers. The call for peace, issued by the organizers, was directed not towards the authorities but towards the societies of both countries.

Notwithstanding the mass denunciation of the initiative—not only by nationalists but also by many liberals, including representatives of non-governmental organizations, which have long worked at "regulating the conflict"—as well as the threats issued against the participants, the rally took place uninterrupted, without fights, arrests or clashes with the police.

The same morning, though, the human-rights activist Intigam Aliyev

was arrested in Azerbaijan. A few days earlier, the founder of the Baku Club of Human Rights, Rasul Dzhafarov, was arrested and the head of the Baku Institute of Peace and Democracy, Leyla Yunus, was charged with state treason, spying, and tax evasion. By some accounts, a full-scale persecution of the participants in the Tekalin process has been launched.

Given this wave of arrests, it is hard to expect Azeri civil society to respond to the peace call issued by its Armenian peers.

Also on August 8th, Karen Petrosian, an Armenian citizen and resident of the Armenian border village Chinari, died on the other side of the border, in the hands of the Azeri military. According to official sources in Baku, the reason was heart failure. In the announcement of the Azeri Ministry of Defense, he was detained as a saboteur, but their Armenian peers categorically deny this accusation. According to the relatives of the deceased as well as his medical record, Mr. Petrosian had no problems with his heart but did suffer from mental illness, was unable to read or count, and simply couldn't have been a saboteur.

In the evening of August 8th, the Azeri branch of Radio Free Europe published an online video from Azeri border village of Agbulag, where Karen Petrosian was arrested. In the video, we can see how the villagers clash with the military and the police during the arrest. We can only guess their motivations: whether they understood what fate awaits the prisoner or are simply afraid of the end of the two village's peaceful co-existence.

Karen Petrosian's death, whether caused by premeditated murder or criminal negligence, provoked a massive reaction in both Armenia and Azerbaijan. The Armenian side interpreted this incident as an open provocation, and significant parts of Azeri civil society also condemned it.

It has to be acknowledged that in this context the meeting of the presidents was an achievement in itself. During the three-way negotiations, the Armenian and Azeri presidents were restrained and formalistic in the

extreme. They practically said nothing: they supported regulating the conflict, they referred to the resolution of the UN's Security Council and the resolution of the conflict on the basis of a just compromise. Every side, however, has its own vision of justice.

Russia's role in these circumstances is hard to underestimate. During the course of the whole negotiations process, Putin took on different personas: sometimes as the dove of

peace, sometimes as a passive observer for whom "international formats for resolving these conflicts exists" and who "has great respect for these international formats", but who at the same time insisted that "we have special, particularly close relations [among these countries], deep pre-history, so to say" and that "at any rate, it's always useful" to meet and talk.

Putin's peace-making process was truly impressive, in Russian media

coverage, that is. If until recently Russian TV channels insisted on the inevitability of the war, now we are showered with assertions that no war is impossible.

If not war, then what? Most likely, a preservation of the status quo: there will be new escalations, manipulations of the threat of war, and if nothing changes, new occasions for hatred in both sides.

Zara Aratiunian and Anton Levchenko, leftists and anti-war activists

## A Missouri city erupts against police murder

19 August 2014, by **Nicole Colson**

That was the heartbreaking message Louis Head wrote on a piece of cardboard and held up for the community to see after his stepson, Michael Brown, was shot down by a cop in the streets of Ferguson, Mo., on August 9.

The death of the 18-year-old ignited the bitter outrage of a community that says police brutality directed at Black men is all-too-common in this majority-African American suburb outside St. Louis, leading to angry protests two nights in a row.

Mainstream media outlets focused on the damage done to property during the demonstrations, but for millions of people around the country, horror at the police execution of another unarmed Black youth—and the sense that it's time something is done about police violence—were the dominant feelings.

According to the police version of events, a shop owner reported that someone allegedly matching Brown's description shoplifted from their store. Later, an officer—who still had not been named when this report written—stopped Brown and a friend as they walked down a street, say the cops, and Brown attempted to push the officer into his car and tried grab for the officer's gun.

Police say one shot was fired from the officer's gun during the struggle. Then, after the unarmed Brown fled, the cop fired several shots at Brown, fatally wounding the teen.

Witnesses tell a completely different story. Dorian Johnson, who was walking with Michael Brown, and Piaget Crenshaw, a bystander who witnessed the shooting, told Fox 2 News that after confronting Brown and Johnson for walking in the street, the officer began assaulting Brown by choking him, and trying to pull Brown into his squad car. His weapon fired at least once at this point.

When both teens ran, the officer then fired a second shot. Johnson told reporters at the scene, "[The officer] shot again and once my friend felt that shot, he turned around and put his hands in the air and started to get down, and the officer still approached with his weapon drawn and fired several more shots."

"We weren't causing no harm to nobody," Johnson said. "We had no weapons on us at all."

Brown's family and friends learned of his death because his lifeless body laid in the street for some four hours while police "investigated"—or tried to get their stories straight about a case of cold-blooded murder, to judge from

the eyewitness accounts.

As the St. Louis Post-Dispatch reported, Brown's friends "saw photos of him lying in the street on Canfield Drive where his body remained for hours. Some joined the crowds of mourners and protesters who had gathered there since the shooting in protest of how Brown had died: Black, unarmed and from multiple gunshots."

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THE DEATH of yet another young Black man at the hands of police caused community outrage to boil over in the days following the killing—though this happened only after what many call a deliberate police provocation.

Black residents who gathered for a vigil on the evening of Brown's death in front of the police station were met with a heavy-handed response. Dozens of police had been called in from the surrounding towns, and they were dressed in riot gear, many holding shotguns. The crowd chanted, "The people, united, will never be defeated," and some residents held up their hands to show police that they were unarmed, shouting, "Don't shoot me" at the cops.

Anger in the community built, not only in response to the official police story

about Brown's death, but to the media portrayals of Brown—who was to begin his first day of college on Monday.

As TheRoot.com noted, many media outlets chose to use a picture of an unsmiling Brown flashing a peace sign, which some labeled a "gang sign." As Yesha Callahan put it:

You'd be hard-pressed to find mainstream media showing Brown at his high school graduation or with members of his family. Ironically, all of those photos exist courtesy of Brown's Facebook page. Unfortunately, because of Ferguson police, we'll never be able to see a photo of Brown attending his first day of college today.

The following night, August 10, hundreds of protesters gathered for another candlelight vigil. When some took to the streets, chanting "No justice, no peace," they were confronted by hundreds of police in riot gear, armed with attack dogs.

It was widely reported that Black residents began chanting, "Kill the police!" before engaging in what the media generally termed a "riot," including the looting of some local stores. But many people who said they participated in the demonstration took to social media to insist that protesters actually were chanting not "Kill the police," but "No justice, no peace!" Many also stated that protesters were deliberately provoked by the heavy police presence.

At some point, some protesters reportedly began looting and spray-painting several stores, with one convenience store set on fire. Police eventually used tear gas to disperse them.

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THIS SO-called riot was an understandable explosion of anger at the rampant racism Black residents of Ferguson face every day, especially at the hands of police.

DeAndre Smith defiantly told Kim Bell of the St. Louis Post-Dispatch that he had participated in the protest the night before:

This is exactly what's supposed to happen when an injustice is happening in your community—when you have kids getting killed for nothing...You don't have to kill him. He didn't have a gun in his hands. Why'd you kill him? You said Trayvon had a hoodie on, you didn't know what was going on with him. [Michael Brown] didn't have a hoodie on, and his hands were up when you shot him. So what's your excuse?

Smith went on to explain why he was in the streets when the so-called "rioting" took place—and provided a window into the anger many were feeling:

I was out here standing side by side with the community. I don't think it's over, honestly. I think we just got a taste of what fighting back means. "Insane" Louis—the last state to abolish slavery. Do they still think they have power over certain things? I believe so, because they're doing stuff like this and getting away with it...I don't think it's over honestly, I just think they got a taste of what fighting back means.

Two young men who had been part of the crowds police stopped from coming onto the scene expressed similar sentiments to KMBC reporter Brenda Washington.

"I believe that it needed to happen," said one. "I believe that they're too much worried about what's happening to their stores and commerce and everything—they're not worried about the murder. They're not worried about the senseless death. That's what I'm worried about."

"I just think what happened was necessary to show the police that they don't run everything," the second added.

For African Americans, the stories of murders like the killing of Michael Brown are terrifyingly commonplace—taking place once every 36 hours, according to a report by the Malcolm X Grassroots Movement produced after Trayvon Martin was killed in 2012.

Days after Brown died, there was another horror story, this one from a

suburb of Dayton, Ohio. John Crawford was shot and killed by police as he talked on the phone to his pregnant girlfriend from the aisles of a Walmart store—because he was carrying a toy gun, and that alarmed two other shoppers.

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THE PROTESTS in Ferguson are an expression of deep frustration at years of institutional racism and police brutality that never seems to get any better—or even paid attention to. In an editorial, the St. Louis Post-Dispatch cited statistics showing racial disparities have been getting worse in Missouri, on an almost yearly basis:

Last year, for the 11th time in the 14 years that data has been collected, the disparity index that measures potential racial profiling by law enforcement in the state got worse. Black Missourians were 66 percent more likely in 2013 to be stopped by police, and Blacks and Hispanics were both more likely to be searched, even though the likelihood of finding contraband was higher among whites...

While he wasn't driving a car when he was pulled over and shot, the concept is the same: Nearly every Black man in America has a story of being pulled over, stopped or harassed as a young person for doing something that a white teenager would never imagine might end in being on the wrong end of a police officer's gun. Driving While Black. Walking While Black. Wearing a Hoodie While Black.

In Ferguson, the city where Michael died, the police in 2013 pulled over Blacks at a 37 percent higher rate than whites compared to their relative populations. Black drivers were twice as likely to be searched and twice as likely to be arrested compared to white drivers.

Just three of the 53 members of the Ferguson Police Department are Black—even though two-thirds of the city's population of around 21,000 are Black, according to Reuters.

Antonio French, a St. Louis city councilman, told the New York Times

that he found the official police story "hard to believe." He added that it was the heavy-handed response of local officials that was responsible for the anger expressed on Sunday night.

"It's a textbook example of how not to handle the situation," he said. "Ferguson has a white government and a white mayor, but a large Black population. This situation has brought out whatever rifts were between that minority community and the Ferguson government."

In fact, back in November 2013, the Missouri chapter of the NAACP filed a federal civil rights complaint against the St. Louis County police, alleging racial profiling against Black citizens and racism in police hiring practices.

And the response of then-county Police Chief Tim Fitch? He complained to the Post-Dispatch that an accusation of racial profiling was "career ending" for an officer.

It's hard to believe anyone, no matter how steeped in law-and-order propaganda, could believe that complaint, given the statistics on, for example, racial profiling in the NYPD's stop-and-frisk program. But Fitch went on to denounce the local NAACP president for having "no regard for the facts and how it's going to affect their lives and their careers."

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AT A protest on Monday, hundreds of

people turned out in front of the Ferguson police station to demand a murder charge against the unknown officer who killed Michael Brown. Police arrested at least 15 people, as protesters held their hands in the air as if they were surrendering and chanted, "Stop the killer cops."

Meanwhile, a Twitter campaign using the hashtag #NMOS14 is leading to local gatherings around the country for a National Moment of Silence to honor Michael Brown. No doubt there will be other protests as the struggle to win justice for Brown's family unfolds—and further powerful social media campaigns like #IfTheyGunnedMeDown, where African American youth are posting two contrasting pictures to draw attention to the fact that the media has been using a picture of the college-student-to-be Michael Brown that makes him seem like a gang member.

This killing in a little-known Missouri town has reverberated across the country precisely because it's a crime so familiar to African Americans—from New York City, where Eric Garner was choked to death by police less than a month ago; to Sanford, Fla., where Trayvon Martin was murdered by racist vigilante George Zimmerman in 2012; and so many other towns and cities in between.

As SocialistWorker.org's Keeanga-Yamahatta Taylor commented:

There have been many anniversaries from the civil rights era celebrated this year, including Freedom Summer and the Civil Rights Act that ended Jim Crow in the South. But this year also marks the 50th anniversary of the first wave of urban rebellions that served notice on the U.S. that the rights of citizenship without justice and equality was not real freedom.

From Rochester to Harlem and Philadelphia, African Americans rebelled against racism, injustice and equality and exposed the fundamental lie that is "American democracy"—an important exercise given that the U.S. was carpet bombing Vietnam in the name of "democracy."

Today, 50 years later, the U.S. government is bombing Iraq for freedom and funding Israel's massacre in Gaza in the name of freedom—while at home, the police are hunting and murdering Black men in the streets for the crime of being Black. Mike Brown was to begin college this week. Instead, his family will be planning his funeral.

Fifty years after Freedom Summer and after Jim Crow, the mass of Black Americans still are not free. Fifty years later, riots and rebellion remain the voice of the voiceless yearning and demanding to be heard

[Socialist Worker](#)

*August 12, 2014*

## A humanitarian intervention?

19 August 2014, by **Syria Freedom Forever**

The IS since June has been in continuous advance in various regions since taking the town of Mosul. To start with IS worked within a heterogeneous coalition comprising ex-Baathists and tribal chiefs, but the jihadist group has rapidly moved to the forefront of the other components of the coalition. [[For a background to the events in June, see an article "[Iraq](#)

[the continuous suffering](#)"] IS has repressed all the components of the population that refused its authority, including Sunni Muslims, while attacking Christian minorities and the Yezidis (a Kurdish-speaking minority whose monotheistic religion has roots in Zoroastrianism practiced mainly in Iran). IS has emptied Mosul of its Christian population and has occupied

Qaraqosh, the largest Christian town in Iraq.

Nonetheless we should note the solidarity of part of the Muslim population of Mosul against the attacks of the IS upon the Christians. Some Muslims have in effect joined the Christians in demonstrating with placards carrying the inscription "I am



Christian, I am Iraqi", interposing themselves between their Christian compatriots and the jihadists of the IS. Mahmoud Am-Asali, professor of law at the University of Mosul, was the first Muslim beaten by the jihadists for having defended the Christians. On Saturday 19 July, expiry date of the notorious ultimatum of terror (in which the jihadists offered three choices to the Christians of Mosul "Islam, Dhimma (a special tax) or the sword to those who refused the other two"), Muslims in Mosul joined Mass in the church to pray alongside their Christian brothers. This also happened on Sunday 20 July in Baghdad, at the Catholic church of St George.

The advances and the terror exercised by the IS have now caused the flight of 100,000 Christians who have been forced to leave their homes, as well as 20 to 30,000 members of the Yezidi community who remain trapped by attacks by the IS in the mountains of Sinjar, without food, water or shelter, according to the High Commissioner of the UN for Refugees. Thousands of others, exhausted and dehydrated managed to get to Kurdistan via Syria. More than 200,000 people have been displaced by the military advance of the IS, at the same time as the latter have massacred civilians.

The IS comprises about 10,000 men in Iraq and about 7000 in Syria. The US military intervention has taken the form of airborne attacks "targeted" at the jihadists of the IS, the sending military advisors to the field, as well as the supply of arms to the governments of Iraq and the autonomous Kurdish region. France and the UK have also armed the latter. The support of the self-styled "anti-imperialist" Iran for the US strikes in support of its Iraqi allies should be noted...

The Iranian regime has also sent "Pasdaran" ("Revolutionary Guards") to Iraq to fight the IS, while it has delivered some Sukhoi SU-25 ground-attack and close-support planes (reserved to Pasdaran forces only within the Iranian armed forces). At the same time, Iran has continued to mobilize and finance Iraqi Shia militias. Members of the Lebanese Hezbollah also appear to be involved in the tasks of command and control.

One of them, Ibrahim al-Hajj, veteran of the 2006 conflict with Israel, has recently been killed in the North, near Mosul, which the IS has controlled since the start of its offensive in June.

On the other hand, Kurdish fighters from Iraq, Syria and Turkey have unified their forces in a rare alliance, putting their differences aside temporarily, to unite against the jihadists in Northern Iraq in the region of Rabia and Sinjar, to the west of Mosul. Kurdish combatants of the Turkish PKK, of the Syrian PYD and the Iraqi Peshmergas have effectively unified their forces in an unprecedented collaboration.

The US military intervention, in spite of its "humanitarian" propaganda, nonetheless fits the clear political objectives of protecting US diplomatic personnel stationed in Irbil and the big multinational companies in the oil sector, including Mobil, Chevron, Exxon and Total which exploit the oil of the region and which have already invested more than \$10,000,000,000, but the main objective is to support their ally, the Iraqi regime, successor to the US invasion. The US did not intervene when Mosul and other regions fell and when more than 200,000 refugees fled towards Kurdistan, but not until the IS threatened to conquer Kurdish territory and the capital Baghdad in the South.

It is because the US only wanted superficial changes within the Iraqi regime, such as replacing the Prime Minister Maliki, who has also been abandoned by his Iranian ally because of his disastrous rule over the country. The new Prime Minister, Haidar al-Abadi, does not represent anything like a revolution; he is close to Maliki and a member of the same party Dawa, whereas he has been the Minister of Communications within the interim government put in place after the overthrow of Saddam Hussain in 2003. He has received international support, including from Iran. Maliki nonetheless tried to cling to power, but eventually he was forced to resign. Following this announcement, the US leadership has declared that it is prepared to increase economic and military aid to Iraq, if the new Al-Abadi government

becomes more inclusive in particular of the Sunni population of Iraq. But it has been forgotten that the government has the same formula and the same political forces which has led Iraq into the current situation as we explained in our June [article](#).

The protection of religious and ethnic minorities is not at all a priority for the US as can be seen when one observes the practice of its political allies in the region, which have on the contrary discriminated against and oppressed their minorities, such as Saudi Arabia and its Shia minority, Egypte and its Coptic Christian and Shiite minorities, and of course Israel and the Palestinian population (including Christians), which has repressed them and forced them into exile from the lands occupied in 1948 (now the Zionist state) to the West Bank, Jordan and Gaza, without mentioning its Apartheid policies, of occupation and colonisation. The US did little to stop attacks on minorities following the American-British invasion of 2003.

We have to remember that the origins of the IS started with the constitution of Al-Qaida following the US invasion. Its leader Abu Bagdadi gained his experience of jihadism after the invasion when he joined the Iraqi branch of Al-Qaida under the command of the Jordanian al-Zarkaoui. In 2010, he took the leadership of the then ISIS (now known as IS) which replaced Al-Qaida in Iraq. It is nonetheless its involvement in the Syrian revolution, fighting the Free Syrian Army more than the Assad regime, particularly after 2013, which has allowed the IS group to become what it is today. The fighting in Syria has given the IS training and unprecedented experience of combat. Now the group has resources including tanks, Humvees, missiles and other heavy weapons captured during its offensive in Iraq. This material, often US made and notably abandoned by the Iraqi army during its retreat from Mosul in June has considerably reinforced the military strength of the IS.

The US intervention is motivated by political and imperialist interests and nothing else. These interests demand the maintenance of the authoritarian

and sectarian regime that the US created in 2003 and which it has supported ever since. The IS is the enemy of the US because it threatens the sovereignty of a government that collaborates with the US, and not because it is an ultra-reactionary group which attacks minorities and Iraqis in general.

More so, if the US has not intervened in Syria, it is not because the Assad regime protects religious and ethnic minorities, but because it does not actually want to overthrow a regime which has served its political interests on many occasions in the past, notably by repressing progressive Palestinian and Lebanese resistance movements in Lebanon and in Syria or when it took part in the imperialist war against Iraq in 1991 within the US-led coalition., etc.... The US wants a "Yemeni solution" with the Assad regime - that is to say to keep the regime's structures and incorporate within it part of the self-styled opposition which serves Western interests. It's for this reason that the US haven't intervened in Syria, and not the protection of minorities.

Moreover the actions of the IS within Syria haven't resulted in a change to the politics of the US in relation to the

Syrian revolution. The events in Iraq have simply resulted in the Assad regime attacking its base in the town of Raqqa, to give it the appearance of fighting "terrorism" in front of the international community. The Assad regime since the start of the Syrian revolution has devoted itself in effect to attacking democrats, the people's committees, and the Free Syrian Army, all the while releasing from prison islamists and jihadists and allowing them to develop. The latter, with the support of regional forces such as the Saudis and Qatar have been able to build strong and well-armed military forces.

The protection of religious and ethnic minorities, and all Iraqi citizens can only be achieved by a truly democratic state, social and clear of all political sectarianism and foreign international and regional interventions. In the same way this doesn't stop us supporting the self-determination of the Kurdish people, and even the independence of Iraqi Kurdistan if that is what it wants. This support doesn't mean for one moment that we should support the feudal chief Barzani, allied with the US and Turkey, who must on the contrary be fought against and considered as an enemy of the popular

Kurdish classes because of his authoritarian, neo-liberal policies, and alliances with Western imperialism and regional collaboration with Turkey and Israel.

It is because we must oppose ourselves to the imperialist intervention of the US and other regional powers such as Saudi Arabia and Iran, and to oppose the jihadists of the IS, its crimes and its reactionary policies, as well as the authoritarian and sectarian government of Baghdad. These foreign interventions are one of the main reasons for the current situation within the country.

The foremost need in Iraq is to build a popular social movement; democratic, progressive and non-religious, opposing itself to communitarianism, to allow the popular classes to oppose the different political groups and foreign states that try to divide them on religious and ethnic grounds, to impoverish them with neo-liberal policies and to oppress them by authoritarian and repressive measures.

*Translated by **International Viewpoint** from the blog [Syria Freedom Forever](#).*

## Gaza: "Better to be dead than go back to the way we were"

18 August 2014, by **Julien Salingue**

At present, attention is focussed on the "negotiations" underway in Cairo, to seek a lasting cease-fire. Will they succeed? That is far from certain. And even if they do, nothing will really be solved.

### A "ceasefire"?

The dominant political and media narrative is heavily skewed by the Israeli point of view. "Hostilities" are reduced to the bombing of Gaza and the firing of Palestinian rockets. A

solution to the "crisis" would therefore require an agreement to put an end to both. Western leaders and media could then take a deep breath and move on to other events, until in a year or two, Israel launches a new military campaign, on the pretext of further rocket fire, and everyone asks why the "truce" did not last...

The facts, however, are simple. The first hostility faced by Gaza and its people is the illegal and inhuman blockade imposed on the small coastal enclave, with the complicity of Egypt,

for over 8 years. This blockade has destroyed life in Gaza and every day threatens its people a little more with a real humanitarian tragedy. A UN report published in 2012 indicated and Gaza would be "uninhabitable" by 2020 due to the lack of infrastructure (at least 800 additional health centres should be built, the number of schools should be doubled) and the lack of essential resources (prior to the current aggression, half of Gaza's inhabitants had no regular access to clean water and nearly 80% of the population had to settle for four hours

of electricity per day).

The current Israeli operation has made the situation worse, with the damage estimated between 5 and 6 billion dollars (or about \$ 3,000 per capita). Gaza's only power plant has been destroyed and the authorities say it will take at least a year to repair it; thousands of buildings were damaged or destroyed, including schools, hospitals and essential industrial plants; the number of people dependent on international food aid has increased further to over 75% of the population. According to an official of the Israeli NGO Gisha, which has been campaigning for freedom of movement of goods and persons to and from Gaza, if the blockade is not lifted, "it will take 100 years to rebuild Gaza", because building materials in particular are being prevented from entering the Strip.

## **"Better to be dead than go back to the way we were"**

In such a situation, and contrary to the prevailing account of the current negotiations, the Palestinian conditions for signing a cease-fire are absolutely not "maximalist" or "radical". In fact there has been a consensus on these demands among all Palestinian forces, including the very docile Palestinian Authority in Ramallah, headed by Mahmoud Abbas, whose tendency to "compromise", of rather "cave in", is only too well known. It might seem surprising that hardly any of those who praise the "moderation" of Abbas, as compared with the "radicalism" of Hamas, have pointed this out, if we did not already know that this kind of talk is primarily intended to weaken the Palestinian side.

So what are these demands? The lifting of the blockade, of course, which means especially opening the borders with Israel and Egypt, the rebuilding Gaza's port and airport (which was destroyed and closed at the end of 2000), the extending of the fishing zone to 10 kilometres off Gaza's coast. As Francesca Albanese, a lawyer who has worked for eight

years for the UN, points out, "None of these demands are new. The United Nations, among others, has consistently demanded the lifting of the siege, which is illegal under international law, as a condition for ending the disastrous humanitarian situation in the Gaza Strip. Allowing the movement of goods and people between the West Bank and the Gaza Strip was already stipulated in the Access and Movement Agreement (AMA) signed between the Government of Israel and the Palestinian Authority in 2005. Even the building of a port and the possibility of an airport in Gaza were included in the AMA, although neither was ever implemented. The current demand to expand the permitted fishing zone is less than that envisaged in 1994 in the Oslo Accords, and it was already part of the cease-fire terms in 2012."

There is nothing "maximalist" or "radical" in these demands, which simply reflect the minimum for the subsistence of the people of Gaza, and which are recognized as legitimate by all international organizations. It is these claims that Israel refuses to hear, demonstrating once again that what the occupying power rejects, in the name of its supposed security, is not the national rights of the Palestinian people (also enshrined in international law), but the satisfaction of their most elementary needs: housing, health care, adequate food, education and the ability to move about. Hence the exasperation of the people of Gaza and the Palestinian resistance organizations, and the more and more widespread feeling among people in the enclave, despite the violence of the current aggression, that, as Raji Sourani of the Palestinian Center for Human Rights (PCHR) put it: "It's better to die than to go back to the way we were before."

## **No justice, no peace!**

Therefore there is zero intransigence on the part of the Palestinians, but rather a certain moderation, since no organization is today demanding satisfaction of all Palestinian national rights (the end of the civil and military

occupation, self-determination and the right of return for refugees) in exchange for a cease-fire, but only basic rights and some breathing space. The intransigence is to be found, once again, on the side of the State of Israel, which demonstrates clearly, to anyone that might want to forget it, that it pursues, in the name of so-called "security", a painstaking project to destroy Palestinian society in order to prevent the Palestinians from being able to demand collectively their rights. This is one of the unspoken goals of the aggression against Gaza: to send the small coastal strip back to the stone age, so that people's concerns are not related to the struggle to end the occupation, but to the struggle for survival and reconstruction.

That is why, in the current negotiations, Israel has refused to countenance a real lifting of the blockade, which would indeed allow Gazans to breathe a bit and, ultimately, to reorganize to fight the occupation. One is tempted to say that the state of Israel would be wrong to behave in any other way, given that no one in the Western governments makes any demands on it, or sees the need to put any pressure against on it. On the contrary, they accuse the Palestinians of being responsible for the failure of the so-called "truces", and demand the latter cease to demand their most basic rights, in exchange for a "lull", that is an end to the massive bombings.

That is why it is very urgent to listen to the repeated calls of the Palestinian organizations, whether political organizations or those of civil society, who keep saying that the most urgent task now is to impose real sanctions against Israel, with the extension of the BDS (Boycott Divestment and Sanctions) campaign, the only thing that can exert real pressure on Israel and contribute to its isolation and a change in the balance of forces in favour of the Palestinians. As several civil society organizations in Gaza have stressed since July 15th, "without pressure and isolation, the Israeli regime has shown that it will continue to perpetrate massacres such as those we are witnessing at the moment, and that it has no intention of putting an end to decades of ethnic cleansing,

military occupation and apartheid policies. (...) We invite you to join the growing campaign for Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions, in order to demand accountability from this rogue state that has once again shown itself so violent while enjoying the greatest impunity."

The best service we can render the

Palestinians is to show as much determination and perseverance as them in making the Israeli state pay for the suffering it has inflicted. And this should also apply to all those who support it, notably the Hollande-Valls government. Whether there is a lasting truce or not, the fight must continue to prevent Israel from feeling free, in the future, to bomb, imprison, deport, kill and colonize. Whether it's

their national rights or of their most basic rights to subsistence, the Palestinians' rights are not negotiable and cannot be sacrificed to the interests of the State of Israel and its Western and Arab allies. In other words, as the Palestinians and all those who are genuinely supportive of their cause have said for decades: without justice, there will be no peace.

## **Cleaners: A handful of women show the way!**

**18 August 2014, by Sonia Mitrailia**

These women have become "political subjects" and the leadership of the current resistance movement in its entirety, having the guts to face up to such powerful enemies as the Greek government, the Central European Bank, the European Commission and the IMF.

However, after 11 months of struggle, having set themselves against the government and the Troika and becoming their main enemy, having short-circuited the implementation of the austerity measures and having a constant presence on the political scene through the mass media, these fighting cleaners are still treated, by opponents of the politics of austerity, as though they are not political subjects.

The fact is that, from the moment the Troika-imposed austerity measures appeared, the women came out en masse on the streets and their resistance displays its own dynamic, with its own specificity which is rich in political lessons.

In the four years of austerity politics which have transformed Greece into a pile of social, economic and above all human ruins, few amongst us have spoken of the lives of the women and of course even less about their struggles against the diktats of the troilka. It was therefore to be expected that public opinion would be shocked by this exemplary fight which is executed exclusively by women. But

is this fight really that shocking?

Women have participated en masse in the 26 general strikes. In the "movement of the indignant" they occupied city squares, set out camps, demonstrated. They mobilised at the front line for the occupation and the independent running of ERT. Acting in an exemplary manner, they became the soul of the strike committees of the universities' admin staff against the "reserve pool" policy, (ie those to be sacked after 8 months, at 75% of their normal salary). 25 000 public servants, women being the majority, will be the victims of staff cuts in the public services. And it is also women that form the vast majority of the volunteers in the Solidarity Movement and the self-managed solidarity health structures that are trying to deal with the human crisis and the collapse of health services.

The mass participation of women in the resistance movements against the demolition of the welfare state and against the politics of austerity, is not surprising and it did not happen by accident. First of all, we all know very well, that women find themselves at the eye of the austerity storm. The dismantling of the welfare state and of their public services, is damaging their lives; forming the majority of the civil servants and of the main users of public services, women are doubly hit by all cuts. They have therefore one thousand reasons not to accept this

historic deterioration of their living standards, akin to a return to the 19th century.

It is true that at the beginning women were not differentiated as "women - political subjects", participating as they were in the same demands and the same forms of action with the men within the various movements. They were simply participating in large numbers.

However, already within the framework of the pioneering struggle against gold extraction at SCOURIES in Chalkidiki, taking on the Canadian multi-national ELDORADO GOLD, the women were rapidly being differentiated through their specific forms of action and their radicalism. And, despite the fact that the press and popular perceptions were ignoring the significance of their gender identity in the way they were fighting, the police did not ignore it. Indeed the opposite, with the MATs (Greece's special riot control police units) targeting mainly women, using savage and selective measures in order to terrorise the whole population through them and eradicate any form of disobedience and any resistance movement.

Women were imprisoned, legally persecuted, and subjected to violence and humiliation, even "sexual" degradations specifically adjusted to their bodies and their gender.

In the following year women took

more initiatives and developing their own forms of action.

It all started when, in order to implement the harshest part of the austerity programme and comply with the terms imposed on it by the "lenders", the government targeted, in advance of anybody else, the cleaners at the Ministry of Economic Development, the Inland Revenue and the Customs offices. It placed them on "reserve lists" since last August (which means that for 8 months they would be paid only three-quarters of their salary of 550 Euros per month, and then sacked).

The government followed the same tactics as in SCOURIES.

It started with targeting first the weakest and those with the least chance of getting support, ie the cleaners, to be followed at the next step by the bulk of the employees, the 25,000 civil servants to be made redundant. And it was timed at the moment when the resistance movement was getting exhausted after the relentless austerity measures, with many activists getting demoralised, depleted and forced to try and solve their own problems individually.

The government believed that, with this group of workers, ie poor women, of "lower class", pay levels around 500 euros per month and, as they assumed, not very intelligent (which explains the origin of the cleaners' slogan "we are cleaners, not idiots"), they could sort them out quickly, squashing them like worms.

The target was to privatise cleaning work as a gift to the private cleaning contractors. These mafia-like contractors, known as tax-evasion champions, would then re-employ them at c200euros per month (ie 2 Euros an hour), with almost non-existent security and no employment protection rights, practically equivalent to slave labour.

These women, sacked from their jobs, sacrificed to the man-eating tendencies of the Troika, these women of 45 to 57 years of age, many mothers in single parent households, divorcees, widows, over-indebted, with children, unemployed husbands, or caring for disabled dependants, with

no access to "early" pensions after 20 years, and without a chance of finding another job, decided not to give in. They decided to take control of their lives in their own hands.

And so we've got a handful of women who decided to change the established forms of action adopted by the traditional trade unions. Some have taken the initiative and organise themselves for themselves, with a group of cleaners at their core, who had already fought battles 10 years ago and won significant victories. They have worked hard like the proverbial ant and they have weaved a web that has acquired national dimensions.

And since these workers of the ministry of economic development had been thrown on the dole and there was no point in going on strike, they decided to build with their bodies a human wall on the street, in front of the main entrance of the ministry's offices in Syntagma Square, the most emblematic location for the establishment.

It is not by chance that these imaginative forms of action were created by women.

Since these women were being ignored because of their gender and social class, they were marginalised within the unions and had minimal links with the traditional Left organisations, they were forced to make a lot of noise so that they could be noticed and heard.

Instead of reactive strikes and short-lived ineffectual days of action, they chose direct collective action, based on non-violence, humour and shock tactics. Wearing crowns of thorns on their heads during Easter, nooses around their necks outside Ned Democracy's offices, with music and with dance, they are demanding the immediate reinstatement of each and everyone.

These are novel actions in Greece. They occupy the entrance of the Ministry and obstruct access, especially to the Troika officials, chasing them and surrounding them, forcing them to run and enter through the back door with their bodyguards.

They are engaging in physical skirmishes with the special police units. Every day they are devising new forms of action, that are reported through the mass media and attract the attention of the wider population. In short, they are breaking through the isolation.

This way, things that are usually presented as soul-less statistics, all these numbers describing record levels of unemployment and poverty, all those abstract concepts, are acquiring a human dimension, they have a human face, become real women in flesh and blood, and, what's more, women with strong personalities and their own political volition. They have names like Litsa, Despina, Georgia, Foteini, Demetra ... And with their example, their courage, their persistence and their dogged determination to win, they are giving back hope to all the victims of the austerity regime.

But .. it is important to be aware that the forces of law and order are almost daily bullying these women to make an example of them, because their bosses are worried that the phenomenon would spread. The whole country is watching this sad spectacle of women, many of advanced age, being daily trampled upon, manhandled and injured by the police "Rambos", who could have been their sons.

And why? The simple reason is that the Troika itself wants to fight them, because they are an example, a model to be adopted by all those oppressed; because they are at the front line of the rejection of the austerity politics not just in Greece, but the whole of Europe; because their fighting spirit is infectious...

More than ever, the struggle of these 595 heroic cleaners, is also our struggle. Lets not leave them fighting on their own. They are fighting for us, let us fight for them too. Lets organise the pan-european and international solidarity.

Sonia Mitralia is a member of "Women's Initiative against the Debt and Austerity Measures" and member of the "Committee against the Debt - CADTM Greece".



# Would military take over once again in Pakistan?

18 August 2014, by **Farooq Tariq**

A few thousand marchers who left Lahore riding expensive cars from the residence of Imran Khan at Zaman Park, spent six hours on The Mall. It was a tactic to give an impression that people would not let them move forward.

The Azadi March is being complimented by an ‘Inqilab March’ (Revolution March) by Pakistan Awami Tehrik (PAT). The government allowed the ‘Revolution March’, led by religious scholar and chief of PAT, Tahir-ul- Qadri, only after initial bid to repress it so that people can not join it from Lahore. Tahir Qadri, a Canadian citizen, has talked about changing the system and replacing it with more progressive set up.

The PMLN government’s strategy to arrest the workers at district-level and cordon off provincial capital Lahore and federal capital Islamabad with large containers worked well in containing the numbers of participants.

Awami Workers Party has termed the two marches as reactionary and appealed to the working class not to participate in the marches led by rich politicians and mullahs. Both marches have reached Islamabad separately at the time of writing these lines. The unity of the two was hit hard by the big ego of the both leaders, Imran Khan and Tahir Qadri, on the question of: “who would lead the rallies”.

Meantime, Nawaz Sharif has been repeatedly asking: “why the march and what is our fault?” He asked the question in his long awaited nationally televised speech on August 12.

Imran Khan says that the May 2013

general elections were rigged and is demanding a new midterm election under a government of technocrats. He later took a U-turn on the issue of technocrats’ interim government after the president of PTI, Javed Hashmi, objected and refused to be part of the long march.

The issue of rigged elections came a “little”--- 14 months--- late. During the period, Imran Khan formed provincial government in Khayber Pukhtoon Khawa province and PTI is still in power over there. He did not adopt the strategy adopted by India’s Aam Admi Party (AAP) whereby AAP leader Arvind Kejriwal left the Delhi state government on principled grounds.

Imran Khan was at ease with the federal government to start negotiations with the religious fundamentalist Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP). As was expected, the talks did not go very far and a military operation was launched in June this year.

Initially, Imran Khan raised questions about the launch of military operation; his main objection being that why was he not consulted? Later, it turned out that the interior minister Choudhry Nisar of ruling Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz (PMLN) was not consulted either. However, Imran Khan endorsed the military operation reluctantly and offered all help from his PTI government in KPK.

Within a month of launching the military operation, Imran Khan announced in a public meeting that he would march to Islamabad to finish off the rule of a “corrupt royalist” government. This announcement puzzled many commentators about the

real motives of the long march.

It seems that Imran Khan who always tried to please the religious fundamentalists is again on the same path. A military operation could not be opposed publically, so he started a campaign against PMLN on the issue of election rigging, thus giving a tough time internally.

It is worth noting that during the general elections of 2013, most of the political parties like Pakistan People’s Party, Awami National Party, and Mutihida Qaumi Movement were attacked by suicide bombers. They were not allowed to canvass publically by the fanatics. Both PMLN and PTI were not attacked by the fanatics for a single time. The reason was simple: both were seen as sympathetic towards the extreme religious groups including TTP.

Now both the conservative right wing parties are at loggerheads on the issue of power sharing. Both are in power, one in Centre and other in KPK province. Imran Khan wants the power at the Centre just after 14 months of the general elections. It seems an untimely decision as the PMLN has not lost all the popularity it enjoyed after PPP failed miserably during its five years term 2008-13.

Earlier another stalwart Muslim religious scholar Tahir Qadri had announced that his long waited “Inqilab” (Revolution) march would also be launched on August 14. Tahir Qadri’s Pakistan Awami Tehreek (PAT) is a religious political grouping active in the field of education and health and has a worldwide network of charity.

Both PAT and PTI have presented the

most serious challenge that PMLN government is facing during their last one and half year of power.

Both are using revolutionary vocabulary to attract the masses. Azadi (independence) and Inqilab (revolution) marches are an insult to the real meaning of the two slogans. Imran Khan's PTI is supported and joined by the rich of Pakistan. It has become a right wing conservative new capitalist party while the Pakistan Awami Tehreek is a counter revolutionary party using revolutionary slogans. The PAT wants religion as dominant political force to guide the state.

They are gaining popularity because the Nawaz government has failed miserably to do anything for the uplift of the poor. There is a fast implementation of neo liberal agenda. To fulfill the conditionality of IMF for a USD 5 billion loan, the PMLN government's first act was to double the prices of electricity. It has also raised the prices of gas and other services for the same purposes.

A wholesale privatization of major public sector institutions has been announced despite massive opposition by several political parties and trade unions. Pakistan economy got little

breathing space after the massive loans by the IMF besides the Saudi "gift" worth USD 1.5 billion.

Still Imran Khan's Azadi March is badly timed and the reasons presented by PTI leadership are not convincing for many. If it was just against the rigging of general elections, why it took fourteen months for Imran Khan to announce an all out agitation?

Issue of election rigging is just a cover for Imran Khan. The real motives include the covert opposition to military operation, PMLN insistence to try General Musharaf and to cover the worst performance of PTI's KPK provincial government during the last 14 months.

The real question is: what would happen after the dharna (sit in) in Islamabad? The PMLN has made it clear that it will not give in. The Lahore High Court has declared these dharnas as unconstitutional. Imran Khan says that he would not come back without securing resignation of the prime minister. Tall claims have been made by both Imran Khan and Tahir Qadri. It seems that both are expecting some sort of military intervention. There is no other way to remove this government. However, Military intervention seems unlikely at present:

1. The two marches lack support in Sindh and Balochistan. That is an important factor why military might not take power in hand.

2. There is a total opposition at least in words by all major political parties except the PTI, of course. Even PTI leadership is paying lip-service to the cause of democracy.

3. There is still a vibrant lawyers' movement and an activist judiciary that is totally against military take over and they are not going to validate the military coup as was the case during the past when judiciary would endorse every khaki coup.

4. Another reason would be the opposition of the social movements, organizations and peasant and trade unions to such a takeover.

5. The present civilian government is not unpopular to an extent where any military coup would be accepted and justified.

Imran Khan is in haste. His 'rigging formula' is not being accepted by the majority it seems. His appeal is still confined mainly to Punjab. He has used very dogmatic language. He has made a bad case against the PMLN government. It could have been another situation if he had launched his campaign in a year or so.

# Statement of solidarity with the Syrian revolution

**17 August 2014, by Syria Freedom Forever**

On the anniversary of the attack, August 21st, we call on supporters of the Syrian Revolution, and of the region wide and global uprisings for freedom, dignity and social justice, to organize events to denounce the atrocities, misinformation, lies and shamed silences, and to show solidarity, both political and material, with the ongoing efforts of grassroots Syrians. Syrian revolutionaries have continued to struggle for freedom

despite the many obstacles they face. To kill the revolution, the Syrian regime pursued four strategies: 1) militarization of the revolt through a six-month long campaign of violent repression of peaceful protests 2) islamization of the uprising by targeting secular groups and empowering Jihadists, 3) sectarianization of the conflict through recruitment of an increasing number of Shia fighters from abroad, coupled

with the targeting of Sunni areas, and 4) internationalization of the war by inviting Iran and Russia to play a central role. At the same time countries such as the United States, Saudi Arabia and Qatar backed reactionary groups to undermine the popular revolution.

The case of the "Douma 4" also shows that Syrian revolutionaries are fighting on two fronts. Four brave

activists working for the Violations Documentation Centre were kidnapped in December 2013 by unknown masked armed men believed to be from Islamist groups. These activists were targeted because they consistently spoke out against all forms of tyranny and human rights abuses regardless of the perpetrator. Their kidnapping is a reminder that the Syrian revolution is not only against the Assad dictatorship, but also increasingly against reactionary and opportunist groups that oppose the objectives of the revolution: democracy, social justice and an end to sectarianism.

The first anniversary of the chemical attacks is an occasion to reaffirm the importance of the revolutionary process not only in Syria but also in

the entire Arab World. The Syrian struggle against dictatorship, global jihadism, and imperialism from whichever quarter it comes, should not be viewed as local or even regional. It forms part of an insurrectionary moment in which the whole world has become the battlefield. The new developments in Iraq and the resumed war on Gaza have shown that the fate of the Syrian revolution is connected to the situation in the entire region. The struggle of Syrians for dignity, freedom, and self-determination cannot be delinked from the historic rebellion against Zionism, the Egyptian struggles against military despotism, the Bahraini uprising against dictatorship, the Kurdish struggle for self-determination, the

Zapatista and other indigenous populations' resistance against racism and neoliberalism, or the massive workers' rebellions on every continent against crisis-driven austerity demands.

The Syrian revolution is at a crossroads, and Syrian revolutionaries are in desperate need of support as they fight on several fronts. A victory for the various counter-revolutions would make permanent the largest ethnic cleansing of our century, leave the country in ruins, and critically destabilise the region and the world. A victory for the revolution, however, would unleash long-repressed social and political aspirations throughout the Arab world and beyond.

*To sign on to this statement please email: srsbases@gmail.com*

## Elections without a Left

17 August 2014, by **Alex de Jong, Zely Ariane**

These presidential elections, the fourth after the fall of Suharto 1998, were especially tense because there were only two candidates. The two symbolized very different attitudes towards Indonesia's recent past of dictatorship and to the development of democracy.

Jokowi is the incumbent governor of Indonesia's capital Jakarta, a city of over 10 million. He is a political phenomenon who entered the elections for governor of Jakarta as a relative outsider but won with a comfortable margin. His popularity was usually explained by pointing to his earlier track record as mayor of Surakarta, a much smaller city in central-Java. Unlike many powerful Indonesian politicians, Jokowi is not a representative of a political clan or a business tycoon who entered into politics as a side-business. His father ran a furniture workshop and before entering politics, Jokowi himself had a modestly successful business selling furniture. In office, he became known as modest, willing to interact with

'common' people and - a change from the widespread corruption and nepotism - honest. It's a style of politics that is very different from the haughty elitism cultivated by Indonesian politicians since Suharto's Orde Baru (New Order) regime. It made him very popular. It also brought him the label of 'populist', but in his policies there is little that reminds of, for example, the populism of Indonesia's first president Sukarno. Instead, Jokowi aims to be a liberal technocrat; modern, efficient, and of course pro-business.

His rival on the other hand was in many ways a throwback to the Orde Baru era. Prabowo's father was minister of economy and of research and technology during Suharto's dictatorship. Prabowo joined the Indonesian army in 1970 and in 1976 he joined infamous Indonesian special forces, Kopassus. The Orde Baru's founding act was the massacre of at the very least half a million of (supposed) communists, trade-unionists and other leftists in late

1965, early 1966. Units that would later form Kopassus played a central role in organizing and carrying out these massacres. Since then, Kopassus repeatedly drenched its hands in blood, violating human rights throughout the country, including during counter-insurgency campaigns in East Timor, Aceh and Papua. Prabowo joined Kopassus a year after the Indonesian invasion of East-Timor that overthrew a popular and progressive government led by the East-Timorese independence movement FRETILIN. This was the beginning of a quarter century of brutal occupation that led to around 200.000 Timorese dead. Prabowo 'saw action' in the Indonesian army's campaign against the East-Timorese resistance.

Prabowo was a rising star in the Suharto-dictatorship. Western governments supported Suharto's crushing of the Indonesian Left and his opening of the country to foreign capital. While Indonesian soldiers were rampaging through East-Timor

and Aceh in the eighties, Prabowo was given 'anti-terrorist' training abroad. In 1980 and 1985, Prabowo received training in the United States and in 1981 he trained with the GSG-9 special forces of Germany. Prabowo was one of the dictators golden boys and in 1983 he married Suharto's daughter Siti Hediati Hariyadi. Through the years he rose to the rank of Lieutenant General, while he was implicated in human rights violations in Papua and East-Timor.

The fall of the Orde Baru regime was also the fall of Prabowo - at least temporarily. As the 1998 East Asian crisis impacted on Indonesia, Suharto's regime was rocked by mass protests against economic inequality, poverty, corruption and abuses of power. Prabowo's soldiers helped organize pogroms against the country's Chinese minority in a partially successful attempt to divert discontent against the historical scapegoat. He was directly involved in the abduction and torture of pro-democracy activists, including members of the radical-left Partai Rakyat Demokrat (PRD, People's Democratic Party) that played a prominent role in the anti-dictatorship movement. Thirteen of them never returned. When Prabowo's implication in the disappearances became known, he was discharged from the army and went into voluntary exile in Jordan. King Abdullah of Jordan is a personal friend.

After returning to Indonesia, Prabowo joined his brother, who had become rich as a Suharto crony, in business. Today Prabowo himself is a multi-millionaire. His properties include oil, gas and coal companies and palm oil plantations. For Prabowo, wealth isn't enough; already in 2004 he made a failed attempt to become the presidential candidate of Golkar, Suharto's former party. In 2008, his own party was set-up; the Gerakan Indonesia Raya or Great Indonesia Movement (Gerindra). In 2009 he tried to become a presidential candidate but instead only managed to win the position as candidate for the vice-presidency - with former president Megawati Soekarnoputri, daughter of Sukarno, as presidential candidate. The pair won only 27 per cent of the vote and lost to Susilo

Bambang Yudhoyono (known in the country as SBY), another Suharto-era general.

This time, Prabowo came closer, winning almost 47 per cent of the vote. Especially in the final weeks, the election campaign was a bitter fight. Although Jokowi started with a comfortable lead, in the weeks before the elections Prabowo was steadily gaining in support. Behind Prabowo rallied a coalition of the country's most reactionary forces, including Golkar, several Islamist parties, SBY's Partai Demokrat and the Islamic fundamentalist thugs of Front Pembela Islam (FPI, Islamic Defenders Front). Jokowi's coalition was smaller and ran a poorly organized campaign that however benefited from more grass-roots support and the work of volunteers. Jokowi's coalition included Megawati Soekarnoputri's Partai Demokrasi Indonesia - Perjuangan (PDI-P), a secular party that thanks much of its support to the memory of Soekarnoputri's father, and the Partai Hati Nurani Rakyat, the party of yet another former general: Wiranto, Prabowo's commander during the 1998 violence.

Jokowi thanks his success largely to his 'man of the people' image; he campaigned with slogans describing him as 'jujur, sederhana, merakyat' (honest, modest and close to the people) and Jokowi-JK adalah kita (Jokowi-JK is us). Jokowi combined this populist style with technocratic language about good governance, liberal democracy (including defending Indonesia as a nation of many different cultures and religions), development and fighting corruption. It was a message that appealed to the country's religious minorities - who have been subjected to increasing violence from sectarian militia like the FPI - and to the urban middle-classes who are frustrated with the widespread corruption and Indonesia's culture of impunity for human rights violators. It also brought Jokowi the support of many capitalists, like Sofyan Wanandi - chair of the Indonesian Employers Association. Many of them would like to see a government and state that is more professional and more predictable.

## Nostalgia for a dictator

Prabowo played on very different sentiments, trying to simultaneously channel Sukarno's populist nationalism and Suharto's propaganda of him as a benevolent autocrat as Bapak Pembangunan Republik Indonesia, Father of Indonesian Development. His campaigning team, which included soldiers that had been under his command during the 1998 pogroms and disappearances, appealed to feelings of nostalgia for the Suharto-era. It might be difficult to imagine nostalgia to such a bloody regime, but many Indonesians who weren't victimized by it remember the Orde Baru period as one of stability and steady progress. They contrast this with the rapid, often confusing changes of the post 1998 Reformasi-era and after, and yearn for order and strong leadership. The Orde Baru regime was probably one of the most corrupt governments in the world, but back then censorship hid the true scope of the rapaciousness of Suharto and his cronies. Today, the media is filled with news of widespread corruption. Media and government report record GDP growth-rates and the growth of the a new middle-class but many people don't see it. For example, Indonesia's public infrastructures is one of the worst in the region. And in addition to corruption, the government seems to be characterized by incompetence - which in turn is partly the result of the practice of politicians and high bureaucrats of giving away public service jobs to supporters and family.

The Prabowo camp also appealed to xenophobic and bigoted attitudes. Since over two decades conservative interpretations of Islam have been on the rise in Indonesia. In the final weeks before the elections, rumors and pamphlets that attacked Jokowi as a non-Muslim, a Jew, a Christian and Chinese and his supporters as 'communists' - that old Orde Baru bugbear - increasingly circulated. Especially in the conservative countryside, this tactic brought Prabowo votes.

In addition to firm leadership,

Prabowo promised he would defend the interests of 'the little people'. He claimed among other things he would end the system of outsourcing, the contracting out of a business process to a third-party that often employs workers on precarious contracts. The multimillionaire even talked about an 'ekonomi rakyat', a people's economy. This was pure demagoguery, lacking concrete proposals or credibility considering the track record of the political crooks around him and of himself as one of the country's big capitalists. Chauvinism and populist demagoguery blended together in Prabowo's ranting against the influence of 'foreigners' in Indonesia. This was in part an attack on ethnically Chinese Indonesians who in racist imagery are all wealthy merchants.

## Trade-Unions divided

In recent years, the Indonesian trade-union has become increasingly militant, organizing mass-demonstrations and strikes, with two nation-wide strikes that involved millions as the most visible signs. Jokowi however alienated many workers in Jakarta when he refused their demands during large strikes at the end of 2013 and had little to offer them during his campaign. With his demagoguery, Prabowo tried to capitalize on workers discontent. Outsourcing for example has been one of the recurring targets of workers mobilizations. Prabowo succeeded in attracting workers who are frustrated that they see so little of the supposed economic success of the country.

The Konfederasi Serikat Pekerja Indonesia (KSPI, Indonesian Trade Union Confederation) played a prominent role in the recent mobilizations. Its lead in a rather top-down fashion by the charismatic Said Iqbal who entered into an agreement with Prabowo promising to support him. This agreement was based on 10 demands of workers or what it was called SEPULTURA (Sepuluh Tuntutan Buruh dan Rakyat). This document promised among other things a 30 per cent increase in the minimum wage, healthcare- and pensions and cheap

housing for workers. Said Iqbal is also president of the Federasi Serikat Pekerja Metal (FSPMI, Federation of Indonesian Metal Workers' Unions) whose uniformed Garda Metal functioned as stewards of large trade-union mobilizations. In past weeks, Indonesian leftists found themselves trying to convince some of the militant workers they have worked with in the past years not to support an Orde Baru thug like Prabowo.

This highlighted the weakness of the Indonesian Left. The Orde Baru physically annihilated what had been one of the largest left-wing movements in the world. Decades of repression and propaganda against kind of left-wing ideas broke any kind of organizational and ideological continuity. Today's Indonesian Left is not only very small, it's also marginalized because of the continuing strong social stigma on Left ideas. It is now more isolated than around the turn of the century, when the influence of the PRD was stronger. The veterans of the Indonesian Left are the small numbers of activists who entered the anti-dictatorship movement in the mid to late nineties and remain on the Left.

Few of the radical Left groups have real organic roots in the workers movement. Left groups have been very active in the recent workers mobilizations and in organizing workers. But a large social and cultural distance still separates the radical activists and the workers they are active among. Many Left activists, often former students and full-timers supported by their organizations, live very different lives from those of the workers they try to represent. Only rarely do workers join the political groups. Often the leftists organizers, not workers, remain the real leadership of the workers organizations they set up. Such 'red' trade-unions organized by radical leftists remain relatively small. By far the largest of the radical unions is KASBI (Kongres Aliansi Serikat Buruh Indonesia or Congress of Indonesia Unions Alliance) with around 250.000 members. KSPI has almost 3 million members.

## Slow recovery from defeat

The Indonesian Left as it is now is of course still deeply characterized by the total defeat the Suharto-regime inflicted on any kind of progressive movement and by the experiences of the 1998 crisis. Back then, the PRD, an organization with never more than a few hundred members, found itself propelled to the front line of a huge mass movement. Many of the now existing socialist groups in Indonesia have their roots in splits from the PRD. Many share an attitude similar to what Daniel Bensaïd called 'hasty Leninism' in his discussion of the French radical-left after May '68. In both instances, small groups of often young radicals suddenly found themselves playing central roles in mass movements, scrambling to find ways to lead the movement in a revolutionary direction. In both cases, many cherished overblown hopes of imminent revolution and vanguard pretensions that were out of proportion to their influence on the course of the movement.

One way Indonesian Left groups have tried to politicize the recent movements is by introducing slogans that link social militancy to political radicalism. In different movements, like the protests against cutting fuel subsidies or for wage increases, Left activists for example used slogans about 'national industrialization under workers control'. And in recent elections, a slogan of part of the Left was 'reject bourgeoisie elections, build a people's party'. Such slogans remain abstract in the absence of any actor that can keep take them up.

The Left struggled to determine its position towards the recent elections. Because of the Left's weakness and the restrictive demands on political parties in elections, any Left candidacy was impossible. In recent years, the majority of the Left called for 'resisting' the elections but it hasn't been able to build a real sustained campaign around it. Likewise, calls to focus on the building of a workers party remain isolated from the social developments. The one



force that could potentially build such a party is the trade-union movement, not the small propaganda groups of the Left. A part of the Left, including independent scholars and activists, decided to support Jokowi. They hope that he will extend democratic space in the country and make it easier for the Left to campaign in the future.

Another (small) part of the political Left even fell for the 'anti-imperialist' demagoguery of Prabowo and campaigned for the businessman. The most startling thing was to see some of the victims of the abductions in '98, former members of the PRD, join the Prabowo campaign and declare the past didn't matter anymore. It's not only former PRD-members who supported Prabowo. In several areas, PRD-members campaigned for him, sometimes even joining his Gerindra party. After several unsuccessful attempts to build a national Left wing force in the century's first decade, the PRD collapsed into Indonesian nationalism. Nowadays, they seem to have adopted the idea that human rights and democracy are matters of secondary importance, to be dealt with after the country has broken free from the domination of foreign capital. This notion rejects any idea of self-emancipation of Indonesia's poor and exploited, instead putting hope in a 'savior from above'.

Realizing the need to have a orientation to these elections that went beyond general slogans, a part of the Left campaigned against the continuing influence of the military in

Indonesian politics; an implicit rejection of Prabowo without giving support to Jokowi. Together with other social and workers organizations, Politik Rakyat (Popular Politics) organized a series of commemorations of the death of Marsinah, a female worker activist who was raped and killed by the military in 1993. After her death, Marsinah became a symbol of different social struggles in Indonesia and of the violence of the military. These commemorations were an attempt to link workers concerns to those of women and the struggle against militarism. Such initiatives had some success but they remain small.

So what now? Prabowo has declared his defeat was the result of election fraud but few people give credibility to his complaints and his coalition is unlikely to hold. Jokowi's election did create new hope among progressive segments of Indonesian society; he is after Gus Dur only the second Indonesian president who symbolizes distance, and not continuity, with the Orde Baru regime. But Jokowi is likely to continue the same kind of neoliberal policies as SBY. He already declared he will continue to cut subsidies on fuel for example.

But unlike Prabowo, Jokowi is not expected to actually further decrease democracy. But it seems unlikely Jokowi will keep promises like prosecuting human rights violators and ending Indonesia's culture of impunity. Prosecuting one prominent

human rights violator would open up the possibility of prosecuting the whole old regime since human rights violations were systematic. Of course, unlike Prabowo, Jokowi is not a human rights violator, but he is still surrounded by them, like general Wiranto. Another close associate of Jokowi is the former head of the Indonesian intelligence agency, Abdullah Mahmud Hendropriyono. Hendropriyono is implicated, among other things, in the murder of prominent human rights activist Munir in 2004. Outside Indonesia, Jokowi's running mate for the vice-president, Jusuf Kalla, is maybe best known for his appearance in Joshua Oppenheimer's documentary about the killers of 1965, *The Act of Killing*. There, he can be seen praising the murders and explaining the necessity of political gangsters 'to get things done'.

The challenge for Indonesian leftists to help build a political expression to the new labor militancy remains. Common political work that goes beyond the small ranks of the Left groups is crucial for this. Here, there is room for some optimism. Many of the grassroots volunteers that supported Jokowi will be disappointed by him but they have been politicized and the Left groups could work with them. And another wave of strikes and demonstrations is a possibility this October and November when, like each year, the minimum wages are determined anew. Jokowi's victory was a moment for relief - but only a moment.

# The Growing Crisis in the Middle East: An Update on Palestine, Iraq, and Kurdistan

14 August 2014, by David Finkel

If it were possible to expel the Gazans, the current Israeli government would strongly consider that option. Since expulsion is not physically or politically feasible, massive destruction is the alternative. The

reality is that brutal and straightforward, and any explanations that make it look "complicated" are fraudulent.

This time around, the world is more

aware than ever that United Nations schools, refugee shelters, hospitals, and kids on the street have been deliberately hit. The Israeli regime has made it clear that it doesn't care who knows. The bill for this massacre will

come due, but not anytime soon—not so long as the wretched Obama administration makes daily pronouncements on “Israel’s right to defend itself” and boasts about U.S. partnership in Iron Dome.

As Noam Chomsky rightly observes, what Israel is doing in the Occupied Palestinian Territories is far from South African apartheid: it is much, much worse. Indeed, the apartheid regime at its murderous worst didn’t bomb apartment blocks in Soweto, whose inhabitants the South African economy required as its labor force.

No one honestly looking at the U.S. role in Palestine can entertain any illusions that it has progressive intentions in its new military intervention in Iraq. How does the rhetoric of preventing a slaughter of civilians by the hideous “Islamic State” in northern Iraq mesh with supplying the weaponry for the

massacre of civilians in Palestine?

That’s not the only side of the question, however. Socialists who support self-determination for the Palestinian people also support the right of self-determination of the Kurdish people—and certainly, the right of minorities (Yazidis and Christians) not to be massacred. There can be no question that the armed forces of the autonomous Kurdish territory in Iraq are waging a progressive war against the “Islamic State,” and their victory is the only hope for stopping a real genocide against religious minorities in northern Iraq.

For the same reasons that the people of Gaza and the resistance are justified in getting assistance from anywhere they can, the Kurdish forces have the right to demand the assistance they need against an

invading enemy heavily armed with the U.S. weapons that were abandoned by the northern Iraqi army as it melted down. The Iraqi catastrophe is a direct product of the U.S. invasion that tore that society apart.

While supporting the Kurdish forces’ right to receive the aid they need, we should have no illusions that Washington’s motivations in Iraq, or anywhere else, are either humanitarian or democratic. It’s our hope that the Kurds will take as much freedom as they can defend – and save the populations facing annihilation by the “Islamic State” – with full knowledge that the imperial benefactors who praise them as brave liberators today may treat them like Palestinians tomorrow.

*13 August 2014*

from the website of [Solidarity USA](#).

# The Second International and the First World War - Responding to capitalist global disaster: 1914 and today

**14 August 2014, by John Riddell**

On this day one hundred years ago, a Bosnian nationalist assassinated the crown prince of Austria-Hungary, setting in motion a chain of events that led a month later to the outbreak of the First World War. The war shattered the world socialist movement and unleashed an overwhelming social catastrophe in Europe, killing seventeen million soldiers and civilians. The resulting revolutionary struggles brought the war to an abrupt end in 1918, while toppling the continent’s three great empires and bringing workers and peasants to power in Russia. The war also contributed to a global rise of anti-colonial struggles.

What does this unique cataclysm mean for us today? It is useful to compare

World War 1 with the dangers posed today by climate change and environmental collapse.

The world is still ruled by arrogant imperial powers, which wage and threaten wars in many continents. Still, these powers do not seem to be on the verge of hurling themselves at each other in a global war as they did in 1914. Meanwhile, the colonial empires have given way to new forms of domination. We face a looming environmental disaster, but it will mature over decades, not weeks. The socialist movement is far weaker and less militant than in 1914. The road to socialism now seems more extended than it did at that time.

Yet many aspects of the socialist

response to the First World War have resonance in our time. It is particularly helpful in defining the socialist response to climate change and in clarifying some disputed issues in this arena.

## Campaign against war

Let us begin with socialists’ response to the approach of world war and its outbreak in 1914. [5] All socialists contended that war was an evil endemic to capitalism, one that could be banished only through its overthrow. But in the previous century, socialists had viewed some wars as legitimate acts of national

liberation or national defense. That is the framework in which Marx and Engels analyzed the Franco-Prussian war of 1870–71. With the dawn of the age of imperialism, this approach had to be modified. Marx and Engels' continuators now denied that wars among the Europe's imperialist powers could be justified on grounds of national defense.

All socialists agreed that the war danger was now strategically central to the world socialist movement. Militarism and imperialism had popular support, which was all the more reason to oppose them frontally. The Socialist International identified the danger of world war at its 1891 congress and campaigned against it with increasing vigor. Later, the movement divided into reform-oriented and revolutionary wings, but it was still united in opposing imperialist war and colonial subjugation. In 1900, a world socialist congress in Paris resolved to combat militarism and colonialism, oppose military expenditure, and build a protest movement against the war threat.

## The 1907 Stuttgart congress

A decisive debate on socialists' response to war took place at the Socialist International congress in Stuttgart, Germany, in 1907. Delegates agreed that the danger of war was growing due to economic rivalries inherent in modern capitalism, and that socialists should rally the working class against this threat. They disagreed, however, on what to do if war seemed imminent. Four resolutions were presented, three from the French party, and one from Germany.

â€¢ The most authoritative French socialist leader, Jean Jaurès, called for workers to respond to imminent danger of war with a general strike.

â€¢ Gustave Hervé, known in the French party for his extreme leftist views, upped the ante: he favored a general strike plus an insurrection.

â€¢ Another French leader, Jules

Guesde, represented a sometimes rigid Marxist alternative to the often reformist views of Jaurès. He opposed such special measures, holding that "the best means against militarism" was simply "the organization of workers of the entire world for socialism."

â€¢ August Bebel, speaking for the German party's executive committee, stated that workers should do all possible to avert war and, if it broke out regardless, "intervene for its rapid termination." But Bebel said it was impossible to specify in advance what measures workers should take. [6]

The resulting debate polarized delegates from France and Germany around the positions of Jaurès and Bebel, respectively – a dangerous dynamic reflecting tensions between these two capitalist states. The threat of deadlock was broken, however, by an initiative of a small group of revolutionary delegates led by Rosa Luxemburg and Lenin.

## Revolutionary course

Together with Julius Martov, they introduced an amendment to Bebel's resolution that conceded his point regarding the need for flexibility in the measures to be taken. Workers "must employ the means they consider most effective, which naturally vary according to the sharpening of the class struggle and the general political situation," the amendment stated. It then added a passage that was to become the banner of revolutionary socialists in the run-up to the war and during its course:

"In case war should break out anyway, it is their duty to intervene for its speedy termination and to strive with all their power to utilize the economic and political crisis created by the war to rouse the masses and thereby hasten the downfall of class rule." [7]

Through a process of negotiation, the German and French leaders were won to support the amendment, and the resulting resolution was adopted unanimously, with ardent enthusiasm. Even Hervé, eager as always to go one

extra step, climbed on a table and raised both his arms to signal agreement. [8]

The amendment's text had been edited by the German party's lawyers to avoid any suggestion of subversion, but its revolutionary implications were evident. [9] Luxemburg's speech to the congress was also carefully worded, yet clear. Referring to the fulsome praise of the worker-peasant uprising in Russia in 1905 by delegates of many viewpoints, she said: "We give you back your homage, but learn from us.... The Russian revolution ... did not merely result from the Russo-Japanese War; it has also served to put an end to it." [10]

The Stuttgart congress, in short, had made an unmistakable threat to respond to war with workers' revolution. This should not be misunderstood. For many of the International's leaders, the goal of the Stuttgart resolution was not to bring about revolution but to prevent the outbreak of a war that could trigger revolution as one of its attendant disasters. [11] The resolution was clear, but the delegates had conflicting and often unstated motivations.

Writing nine years after the Stuttgart congress, Bolshevik leader Gregory Zinoviev noted that at Stuttgart, and again at the Socialist International's 1912 conference in Basel, there was not "the slightest suggestion that the Socialists of even one of the countries that will be dragged into the war will have to â€˜defend the fatherland'.... Not a word, not a murmur of this!" But the Second International's weakness, he stated, "lay in its failure to say clearly and precisely that ... in the epoch of imperialism the concept of â€˜defense of the fatherland' does not apply to imperialist war." [12]

Nonetheless, the Stuttgart resolution had several distinctive strengths, which defined socialist response during the war.

â€¢ Socialists did not wait until the danger of world war exploded in their face. They acted as soon as the danger was apparent.

â€¢ Socialists did not rely on

persuading imperialism to take the sensible course. They worked to build an independent mass movement.

â€¢ Socialists did not try to set the date for insurrection. They resolved to pursue the struggle however long was necessary.

â€¢ Socialists did not merely seek peace. They aimed to utilize the war crisis to put an end to capitalism, the true cause of war.

## Anti-colonialism

During this period, the international socialist movement consisted principally of parties in Europe and the European settler nations in North America, Australia, and New Zealand. The rest of the world was made up mainly of colonies, like British India or Indonesia, or semi-colonies – nominally independent countries under imperialist domination – like China or Iran. From its foundation in 1889, the Socialist International was critical of colonialism, but some of its leaders held out hope for a reformed or socialist colonial policy. The 1904 world congress was ambiguous on this point.

At the next congress, in Stuttgart, leaders supporting colonialism came very close to winning a majority. In the commission on colonialism, an amendment was adopted to the effect that under socialism, colonialism could be a force for civilization. Eduard David, a leader of the German Socialist party, was more blunt: “Europe needs colonies,” he said. “It does not have enough of them. Without them, we would be economically like China.” However, a minority draft flatly opposed every form of colonialism. [13]

In the discussion, racist views were on full display. Hendrick Van Kol, until then the International’s most prominent spokesman on colonial issues, ridiculed the idea of approaching colonial subjects in friendship. “Suppose we bring a machine to the savages of central Africa,” he said. “What will they do with it? Perhaps they will start up a war dance around it. (Loud laughter) ... Perhaps they will kill us or even eat

us....” And a good deal more in that vein. [14]

The congress defeated the pro-colonial motion by a narrow margin, 128 votes to 108. In Lenin’s view, the closeness of the vote reflected the fact that colonizing countries were sustained not merely by the labour of proletarians within their borders but by that of “enslaved natives in the colonies.” This provides a material basis “for infecting the proletariat with colonial chauvinism,” he wrote. [15]

In the years that followed, the revolutionary wing of socialism continued to hammer on the need to oppose colonialism in every form and support colonial liberation struggles. Lenin’s 1913 article, “Backward Europe and Advanced Asia,” pointed to colonial peoples as a vanguard force in the global struggle for socialism. “Everywhere in Asia ... hundreds of millions of people are awakening to life, light, and freedom,” while “advanced” Europe is “plundering China and helping the foes of democracy,” he wrote. [16]

The congress also stated that peoples of colour should be able to immigrate into the countries of advanced capitalism with full and equal civil rights. [17]

A further point must therefore be added to the principles of Stuttgart:

â€¢ The struggle against war is a global question, embracing the cause of freedom for colonized peoples.

## Outbreak of war

The Stuttgart position was confirmed by international congresses in 1910 and 1912. In 1913, however, Rosa Luxemburg – alarmed by the German party’s support for a graduated income tax for war expenditure – predicted that, if war was to break out, the party would approve war credits.

That is indeed what happened a year later – one hundred years ago this August – causing a definitive split in the socialist movement. The Socialist parties in the main warring countries –

Germany, Austria-Hungary, France, Belgium, Britain – betrayed their pledges in Stuttgart and rallied to support the war effort of their capitalist governments. Only in Russia and Serbia did the Socialist deputies oppose war credits. [18]

This betrayal occurred in the context of mass enthusiasm for the war, which influenced part of the working class in these countries. It even seemed to some that the moral goal of socialism had been achieved: all classes seemed to be as one in comradeship for the cause of the nation.

The German Socialist leader Max König recounted how he was accosted in a railway station by a group of soldiers who said, “König, you’re going to Berlin, to parliament; think of us there: see to it that we have all we need; don’t be stingy in voting money.”

Another German Socialist, Konrad Haenisch, later recalled the rapturous moment of his conversion: “Such a driving, burning desire to throw yourself into that powerful current, the universal tide of national feeling... [the] longing to surrender yourself fully to that feeling that roared and raged about you and which had long since taken possession of your soul.” [19]

By supporting the war, the Socialist movement retained its legality and its structures, but its spirit was shattered, and only a tiny handful stood loyal to its principles.

â€¢ There’s a lesson here in standing firm even when that means social isolation.

## The Zimmerwald conference

Before the war was a year old, the handful of Socialists loyal to the Stuttgart decisions organized internationally to build a movement against the war. The Socialist Women’s Movement acted first, on Clara Zetkin’s initiative, holding a conference in Bern, Switzerland, in March 1915 that proclaimed, “Only the united determination of the people



can stop the slaughter.... Down with capitalism.... Down with the war! Onward to socialism!" [20]

The following month, revolutionary youth of Switzerland, Italy, and Stuttgart, Germany, held a similar conference in the same city. Youth leagues in nine countries, with tens of thousands of members, were represented.

The celebrated Zimmerwald antiwar conference, which also brought together socialists from nine countries, took place in September 1915. Its manifesto called on workers to fight for peace, without annexations or indemnities. The struggle for peace is also a struggle for freedom, reconciliation of peoples, and socialism, it said. [21]

The Zimmerwald manifesto, drafted mostly by Leon Trotsky, circulated illegally in the warring countries and became a banner for revolutionary workers. There was a minority at Zimmerwald, however, led by the Bolsheviks and known as the Zimmerwald Left, which considered this response to be inadequate. This left current insisted on the need to struggle not just for peace but for the overthrow of capitalism, and it called for a clear political break with the "social patriots" who were supporting their rulers in the war. Trotsky countered that the Left was wrong in failing to take up the call for peace, which he termed "the immediate central cry of the proletariat, mobilizing it against militarism and chauvinism." Trotsky also criticized Lenin's view that in this imperialist war, socialists should favor the defeat of their own ruling class. [22]

Within three years, the slogans of Zimmerwald were being voiced up by millions of workers and soldiers across Europe. In 1917 and 1918, revolutions took place in Russia, Germany, and some neighboring countries. Communist parties were formed, encompassing both the Zimmerwald Left forces and a wide range of other socialist leaders, including Trotsky, Rosa Luxemburg, Clara Zetkin, Karl Liebknecht, and Christian Rakovsky. [23]

## World war and global warming

How does the World War experience relate to our reality 100 years later? As previously noted, global capitalism is vastly different today and does not seem to be on the edge either of economic collapse or a nuclear conflagration. However, capitalism's economic difficulties and the rivalries among capitalist powers have been powerful enough to have restrained capitalist rulers from making even a pretense of action to bring environmental problems under control. Meanwhile, the climate change generated by carbon emissions is undermining the livelihood and security of increasing numbers in poor countries and has become, in itself, a significant cause of war.

On capitalism's present course, climate change and related challenges will within a few decades cause a disaster dwarfing that of the First World War. Global warming, if left unchecked, will cause immense human loss and will become the overriding challenge to human society, just as did the world war a century ago.

That is not to say that the danger of war has receded. Indeed climate change provokes capitalist governments into brutal efforts to exclude climate refugees and a scramble for diminishing resources. The pressure of climate change aggravates conflicts over mining, oil and gas extraction, possession of agricultural land, and Indigenous rights. All of these factors increase the danger of war, which, in turn, worsens the climate change crisis. The world is already experiencing wars brought on, in part, by climate change.

This experience is unlike that of the First World War in several profound ways.

â€¢ Basic facts are contested. No one can understand climate change solely through their personal experience, and the conclusions of science are often challenged in the ruling-class media.

â€¢ The crisis has no outbreak; it

develops only gradually and over a lifetime.

Effects are displaced in time: What capitalism does now breeds disaster only decades later.

â€¢ Effects are displaced in space: The damage of carbon emissions in rich countries is felt above all in poverty-stricken areas of the world.

â€¢ Effects are displaced in terms of social class: Climate change is caused mainly by the actions of the rich; the effects are felt mainly by the poor.

These factors may help us understand the slowness of working-class reaction to oncoming disaster, but they do not explain the response of socialists.

## Socialism or barbarism

Before 1914, there was widespread popular unconcern regarding the war danger and illusions in capitalism's ability to muddle through. But in the socialist movement, all currents recognized the war threat and sought to take action to meet the challenge.

Today, socialists are divided regarding the challenge of climate-fueled crisis. Those who deny the evidence are now rare, but many voices stress capitalism's capacity to adapt, while others caution against voicing blunt warnings about the oncoming disaster and question whether workers are capable of understanding the danger and taking action. [24]

Participants in this Socialism 2014 conference have been in the vanguard in responding to the challenge of climate change. They have joined in building an ecosocialist movement, that is, an action movement for environmental justice committed to system change, to socialism.

Like the socialists at Stuttgart, this movement does not shrink from speaking the truth regarding capitalism's plunge into disaster. We do not announce some "tipping point" as the deadline for revolution. We stress that we will conduct our struggle through to victory, no matter how long it takes, and how great the suffering that capitalism imposes upon



humanity and the damage done to our biosphere.

The resolutions of the Stuttgart congress suggested a global strategy linking its stand against war with opposition to colonialism. So too, today, ecosocialists link their call to action on climate change with a defense of its victims among the dispossessed and in poor and dependent countries.

Like the Zimmerwald Movement, we do not rely on the imperialist rulers to take appropriate action; our response to capitalism's climate change is that only the united determination of the people can overcome the crisis. In responding to climate change, we struggle for freedom, liberation of the oppressed, and socialism.

We build broad and effective campaigns around issues like the Keystone tar sands pipeline, challenging corporate and government policies that augment climate change and put working people at risk.

Socialists fuse environmental goals with the longstanding demands of the working class. This approach has come to be called climate or environmental justice.

What we are building could well be a crucial component of a twenty-first century Zimmerwald movement.

We take our lead from Rosa Luxemburg, writing what was to become celebrated as the "Junius pamphlet" while in jail during the war. She sought to avoid fruitless speculation over the degree to which

capitalism can adapt, and counterposed the socialist solution to capitalist disaster.

She reworded (from memory) a thought found in classic texts by both Engels and Marx as follows: "Bourgeois society stands at the crossroads, either transition to socialism or regression into barbarism." [25] This puts it well: an accurate description of what we face and a solid foundation for a revolutionary movement.

John Riddell

*With thanks to Joanne Landy and Charles Peterson for editorial suggestions.*

5 August 2014

John Riddell

## How being pro-Palestine got a professor fired

13 August 2014, by **Bill V. Mullen**

Steven Salaita a leading Arab-American scholar and tireless public critic of Israeli racism and colonialism, was notified in early August that he had been fired from his new job at the University of Illinois at Urbana Champaign (UIUC)—before he even set foot in a classroom.

The reason? Salaita's angry tweets denouncing Israeli atrocities committed during the month-long bombing of Gaza that killed nearly 2,000 Palestinians and wounded some 10,000 more.

Salaita had already resigned his position at Virginia Tech University after signing a contract to begin work as associate professor of American Indian Studies at UIUC. Then he was notified by UIUC Chancellor Phyllis Wise and Christophe Pierre, vice president for academic affairs, that he was fired.

The egregious assault on Salaita's First Amendment rights, academic

freedom and right to due process generated a storm of outrage, anger and condemnation. The Campus Faculty Association of the University of Illinois came to Salaita's defense, sending a publicly posted letter to University Chancellor Phyllis Wise which demanded that he be reinstated.

For years, Zionism has been a potent ideological and political force on U.S. university campuses. Groups like the David Project and AMCHA Initiative have conducted dirty wars of harassment and intimidation against pro-Palestine faculty and students, who have grown increasingly bold in their criticism of Israeli apartheid and settler-colonialism.

What you can do

Sign the [change.org](http://change.org) petition demanding that Steven Salaita be given his job back. [here](#)

Send an e-mail expressing your support for Steven Salaita to UIUC

Chancellor Phyllis Wise. Copy your e-mail to the chair of American Indian Studies Robert Warrior.

Salaita, the most recent victim of such a war, is the author of six books, a regular contributor to [ElectronicIntifada.net](http://ElectronicIntifada.net) and a featured speaker at this year's Socialism 2014 conference last June in Chicago.

UIUC's action came after right-wing news site The Daily Caller published an article denouncing Salaita's tweets. The executive director of the Simon Weisenthal Center also sent a letter to University of Illinois President Robert Easter calling Salaita a "baseless anti-Semite."

On August 7, the Center for Constitutional Rights (CCR) issued a blistering attack on UIUC and a strong defense of Salaita. "An attempt by university officials to repress or penalize speech on a matter of public concern such as Israel/Palestine because of disagreement with its

message is impermissible 'viewpoint discrimination,' a serious First Amendment violation," wrote Baher Azmy, CCR Legal Director.

One day later, Palestine Solidarity Legal Support and the National Lawyers Guild of Chicago compared the university's firing of Salaita to the McCarthy-era witch-hunts directed against left-wing academics. The letter also noted that the dismissal is part of an ongoing campaign to harass and intimidate scholars, such as Palestinian Professor Rabab Abdulhadi at San Francisco State University, who has been targeted by AMCHA.

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To be sure, Salaita's 140-character tweets, issued in the midst of Israel's savage bombing of Gaza, are furious and provocative. And since it's impossible to make a fully developed point in such a short space, pro-Israel critics have seized on a few statements in an effort to claim that Salaita is "anti-Semitic"—even though it's clear his criticisms are directed at the policies of Israel and the war crimes it committed in Gaza.

Both the national American Association of University Professors (AAUP, one of the two largest unions in higher education in the U.S.) and the union's Illinois chapter have also come to Salaita's defense, pointing out that Salaita's use of social media was protected under AAUP guidelines for faculty activity and academic freedom.

This full-throated defense of Salaita by the AAUP was a slap in the face to past AAUP President Cary Nelson. Nelson, an ardent defender of Israel, began a public campaign to attacks scholars associated with the American Studies Association (ASA) vote last December to boycott Israeli universities. Salaita was one of the scholars who helped lead that campaign. University of Illinois Chancellor Phyllis Wise, who fired Salaita, also rejected the ASA boycott vote.

When Salaita's firing was announced, Nelson said that the administration of UIUC, where he is emeritus professor of English, had done the right thing.

Nelson claimed that Salaita lacked the "civility" or collegiality to work at the institution. Such charges of incivility are regularly used to academics whose dissident opinions strike out at discrimination and marginalization by the establishment guardians of the Ivory Tower.

Nelson's attacks were barely concealed attempts to smear, bully and intimidate scholars critical of Israel. To their credit, the AAUP official statements defending Salaita distanced themselves from this bombast.

As of this writing, Salaita has retained lawyers to represent him. More than 13,000 people have signed a change.org petition demanding that he be re-hired. Hundreds, if not thousands, have written e-mails and made phone calls to Chancellor Wise, making the same demand.

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SALAITA'S CASE is a watershed moment for Palestine solidarity within the academy. The wave of legal, political and popular support he has received marks a challenge to years of Zionist intimidation against scholars and students supportive of the Palestinian people.

The support for Salaita's pro-Palestine politics also reflects the growing strength of the boycott, divestment and sanctions (BDS) movement in the U.S. The organizing collective of the United States Campaign for the Academic and Cultural Boycott of Israel (USACBI) is among the groups that have issued public defenses of Salaita.

Salaita's backing is also a carry-over from the groundswell of mass protests against Israel's ongoing killings in Gaza. An already mobilized Palestinian solidarity network in the U.S. turned its attention to Salaita's case the day his firing was announced at the Inside Higher Ed website.

Salaita's firing also exposes increasing bureaucratic intimidation and harassment by university administrators, which is intended as a measure to divide and discipline both

faculty and students. University of Illinois at Chicago Prof. Lennard Davis, who last year helped lead a faculty strike, has written that Salaita's unilateral firing by top administrators reflects a weakening of faculty governance that is part of the "continuing fallout from the corporatization of the American university."

Faculty at UIUC, unlike graduate employees, are not collectively organized. "Is it merely coincidental that the administration at Urbana was emboldened to tamper with a departmental appointment because it knew it would not face organized faculty opposition?" asked Davis. "Would a union have made a difference?"

The most important political lesson to be drawn from the case of Steven Salaita is that any worker in the United States can be fired for what they put on Facebook or Twitter. This is especially true for workers of color, women, immigrants, LGBT workers and now—especially in a time of Israeli occupation and the war in Gaza---Arab and Arab-American workers. Bosses looking for new ways to divide and discipline employees will not hesitate to go outside the office to run their own dirty wars.

In the very same week Salaita was fired for his tweets against the massacre in Gaza, the New Israel Fund reported that dozens of Palestinian citizens of Israel had been fired from their jobs for voicing their opposition to the war through social media.

Only international working-class solidarity with Palestinian self-determination can defeat Israeli Zionism and bring down the last settler-colonial state on earth. Only workers united in the fight to control of our destinies can keep the bosses off our backs and out of our computers.

Steven Salaita must have his job back. Our job is to stand with him.

[Socialist Worker](#)

*August 12, 2014*

# The future depends on the peoples' struggle for social liberation

13 August 2014, by **Anthony Legrand, Éric Toussaint**

**Do you think that (humanitarian) â€œmoral emergency' prevailed over exhaustive analysis within international solidarity? Action rather than reflection? Do you think that the NGOs are trying to address the causes of underdevelopment or rather dilute its effects?**

It's a little difficult for me to answer that since the CADTM's strategic approach is based on the medium and long terms and therefore, by definition, we take a rather critical view of sudden outbursts of urgent humanitarian problem. On the other hand, of course there are emergency situations (e.g. earthquake in Haiti in January 2010, the floods in Pakistan in 2010, the typhoon in Philippines in 2013 or solidarity with the Palestinian people who are victims of the Israeli army's aggression in the occupied territories during this summer 2014) that call for a large scale and urgent intervention. If organizations providing emergency aid can go beyond the urgency and look into the structural problems of a country and its people, that's great. And sometimes that is the case. But basically, we criticize an approach which is strictly humanitarian and is an emergency approach: problems cannot be solved merely by putting bandages on horrible wounds. Therefore, we need an action which fundamentally and primarily aims at changing the structure in the medium and long terms.

The inadequacy of the NGOs and the development cooperation in addressing the structural issues is highly alarming.

In the North, Development Education involves serious work by many organizations trying to understand the global structures causing the

problems. However, the biggest chunk of the funding of the Northern countries for international co-operation goes to NGOs, particularly to the development projects for the South which do not deal with structural problems. I do not mean just humanitarian assistance but also technical assistance (e.g. agriculture, health, education and other services) that has a revamped paternalist outlook and even a confirmed neo-liberal dimension (promoting commodification in general). Let's take the well-known slogan of a North / South solidarity campaign which sounds nice at first, *'Do not give them fish, teach them to fish.'* As if the Southern people did not know how to fish! This is paternalism or evidence of a profound ignorance. This reflects what a section of the North thinks of the South: that the South must learn from the North. What ought to be done is that giant Northern fishing industries should be prevented from depleting fish stocks in the Southern lakes and seas, water pollution should be checked, facilities for food preservation and local marketing should be adequate, food sovereignty must be ensured... to enable millions of people, who have been traditionally depending on fishing, to live with dignity.

To expose the paternalistic, Eurocentric and arrogant stand of many Northern organizations, we can refer to the speech of French President Nicolas Sarkozy, delivered at Dakar on the 26th of July, 2007:

*'The tragedy of Africa is that the African has not fully entered into history. The African peasant, who for thousands of years have lived according to the seasons, whose life ideal was to be in harmony with nature, only knew the eternal renewal of time, [structured] by the endless*

*repetition of the same gestures and the same words.*

In this imaginary world where everything starts over and over again there is no place for human adventure or for the idea of progress.

In this universe where nature commands all, man escapes from the anguish of history that torments modern man, but he rests immobile in the centre of a static order where everything seems to have been written beforehand.

This man (the traditional African) never launched himself towards the future. The idea never came to him to get out of this repetition and to invent his own destiny.

The problem of Africa, and allow a friend of Africa to say it, is to be found here. Africa's challenge is to enter to a greater extent into history. To take from it the energy, the force, the desire, the willingness to listen and to espouse its own history." [26]

How arrogant, isn't it?

The Eurocentric idea of Europe's superiority is deep-rooted in the minds of many intellectuals, political leaders and journalists. This excerpt from a key work by an influential academic from the English-speaking world in the 1960s makes it clear: *'The new rulers of the world, whoever they may be, will inherit a position that has been built up by Europe, and by Europe alone. It is European techniques, European examples, European ideas which have shaken the non-European world out of its past - out of barbarism in Africa, out of a far older, slower, more majestic civilization in Asia; and the history of the world, for the last five centuries, in so far as it has significance, has been European history. I do not think that we need to*



*make any apology if our study of history is European-centric'. [27]* Major influential international organizations like OECD publish works that reflect the same attitude. I can cite the work of Angus Maddison (renowned economist of the OECD), who has tried to show that since the 16th century Western Europe does not owe its supremacy to the use of force. For this, he tried to demonstrate that Western Europe had caught up with most advanced Asian countries by the end of the 15th century before embarking on a military conquest of the world. Angus Maddison opposed others, such as Paul Bairoch [28], who expose the exploitative role of the European powers and challenge the capitalist system. Angus Maddison wrote: *"If Bairoch is right, then much of the backwardness of the third world presumably has to be explained by colonial exploitation, and much less of Europe's advantage can be due to scientific precocity, centuries of slow accumulation, and organizational and financial prosperity."* [29] Angus Maddison could not accept that Europe successfully dominated much of the world largely by force. Thus, in his work published by the OECD, he works hard at demonstrating the superiority of Europe and capitalism from the 15th century onward. I teach a course on North / South relationships at the University of Liège and I dedicate part of it to these debates and to the criticism of Eurocentrism. [30]

I point out how the World Bank advocates a development that supports the widespread commercialization of goods and services (privatization and commodification of communal or collective land, water, health and education...) and the largest possible opening of Southern economies to foreign investment, goods and services. In my book on the World Bank I quoted one of its official reports, which says a lot about the said direction: *"In his Principles of Political Economy (1848), John Stuart Mill mentioned the advantages of foreign trade'. Over a century later, his observations are as pertinent as they were in 1848. Here is what Mill had to say about the indirect advantages of trade: "A people may be in the quiescent, indolent,*

*uncultivated state, with all their tastes either fully satisfied or entirely undeveloped, and they may fail to put forth the whole of their productive energies for want of any sufficient object of desire. The opening of a foreign trade, by making them acquainted with new objects, or tempting them by the easier acquisition of things which they had not previously thought attainable, sometimes works a sort of industrial revolution in a country whose resources were previously undeveloped for want of energy and ambition in the people: inducing those who were satisfied with scanty comforts and little work to work harder for the gratification of their new tastes, and even to save and accumulate capital, for the still more complete satisfaction of those tastes at a future time."* [31]

These different quotes demonstrate that the CADTM is not fighting against ghosts; it is attacking the ideas that are still currently deep-rooted in the thoughts and actions of powerful international organizations, important political leaders, intellectual establishments and mainstream media.

**Do you think that 'political NGOs' have been marginalized within the NGO sector? If so, why?**

Yes, of course. Both the mainstream media and the government have clearly marginalized the NGOs (and other associations) having an emancipatory and critical political vision of the issues of North / South relationships. Funding agencies have a systematic policy of marginalizing this type of organizations; or steer them, under the pretext of improving their technical capacity, towards abandoning a critical overview of the system. It's a constant struggle for the NGOs (and other associations) with a critical, holistic and political approach. It is a struggle to go against the trend of some NGOs who lose sight of the strategic perspective of challenging a number of structural phenomena. However, these issues do not easily invite funds or convince donors. Quite a lot of NGOs have the tendency to comply with methods that make it easier to get funding (e.g. Microcredit advocacy - CADTM is

critical of it [32] - the fight against AIDS, the issue of climate change). The CADTM critiques the tendency of NGOs to succumb to a bandwagon effect when it comes to the manner in which the mass media declare what the most urgent global problems are and in which the Northern governments set up a hierarchy of priorities for granting access to their funds. The CADTM, which works on the issue of Third World debt, has repeatedly confronted the viewpoint of donors that the debt is no longer a problem for the Third World and its advocacy is not required any more. We have also faced arguments such as *'you're asking us for grants while saying that countries indebted to the North must stop paying back because the debt is illegitimate. Do you find this convincing enough for receiving funds?'* Despite everything, we remain independent. Moreover, the CADTM's budget, as compared to the budget of big humanitarian NGOs, is minute.

**Some people, both in the North and the South, plead for putting a stop to international aid, accusing it of creating a dependent development in the developing countries. What do you think?**

It depends on who these critics are (e.g. extreme-right politicians who prefer to prioritize their countries or Southern voices that challenge the structures of public aid for development -PAD- as it functions). The CADTM's stand is to stop talking about development finance. In international law, there is an **obligation for development cooperation** in the sense of arranging for remittances to (re)set the balance. This is the result of struggles over the past 50 years, especially in the work of the United Nations.

**The UN Declaration on the Right to Development adopted in 1986 provides a solid basis for forming a positive approach towards human development. It is very little known, which is why I have some excerpts for you here:**

#### Article 1

- The right to development is an inalienable human

right by virtue of which every human person and all peoples are entitled to participate in, contribute to, and enjoy economic, social, cultural and political development, in which all human rights and fundamental freedoms can be fully realized.

- The human right to development also implies the full realization of the right of peoples to self-determination, which includes, subject to the relevant provisions of both International Covenants on Human Rights, the exercise of their inalienable right to full sovereignty over all their natural wealth and resources.

#### **Article 2**

1. The human person is the central subject of development and should be the active participant and beneficiary of the right to development.

(...)

#### **Article 3**

1. States have the primary responsibility for the creation of national and international conditions favourable to the realization of the right to development.

2. The realization of the right to development requires full respect for the principles of international law concerning friendly relations and co-operation among States in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations.

3. States have the duty to co-operate with each other in ensuring development and eliminating obstacles to development. States should realize their rights and fulfill their duties in such a manner as to

promote a new international economic order based on sovereign equality, interdependence, mutual interest and co-operation among all States, as well as to encourage the observance and realization of human rights.

#### **Article 4**

- States have the duty to take steps, individually and collectively, to formulate international development policies with a view to facilitating the full realization of the right to development.
- Sustained action is required to promote more rapid development of developing countries. As a complement to the efforts of developing countries, effective international co-operation is essential in providing these countries with appropriate means and facilities to foster their comprehensive development.

#### **Article 5**

States shall take resolute steps to eliminate the massive and flagrant violations of the human rights of peoples and human beings affected by situations such as those resulting from apartheid, all forms of racism and racial discrimination, colonialism, foreign domination and occupation, aggression, foreign interference and threats against national sovereignty, national unity and territorial integrity, threats of war and refusal to recognize the fundamental right of peoples to self-determination.

#### **Article 6**

1. All States should co-operate with a view to promoting, encouraging and strengthening universal respect for and observance of all human rights and fundamental freedoms for all without any distinction as to race, sex, language or religion.

2. All human rights and fundamental freedoms are indivisible and interdependent; equal attention and urgent consideration should be given to the implementation, promotion and protection of civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights.

3. States should take steps to eliminate obstacles to development resulting from failure to observe civil and political rights, as well as economic, social and cultural rights.

#### **Article 7**

All States should promote the establishment, maintenance and strengthening of international peace and security and, to that end, should do their utmost to achieve general and complete disarmament under effective international control, as well as to ensure that the resources released by effective disarmament measures are used for comprehensive development, in particular that of the developing countries.

#### **Article 8**

1. States should undertake, at the national level, all necessary measures for the realization of the right to development and shall ensure, inter alia, equality of opportunity for all in their access to basic resources, education, health services, food, housing, employment and the fair distribution of income. Effective measures should be undertaken to ensure that women have an active role in the development process. Appropriate economic and social reforms should be carried out with a view to eradicating all social injustices.

2. States should encourage popular participation in all spheres as an important factor in development and in the full realization of all human rights.(...) ' [33]

The neoliberal policies enforced globally since the 1980s have thwarted the implementation of the said United Nations Declaration. The CADTM needs to take a sharp turn at the international level, redefine international cooperation to finally start implementing this fundamental text of the United Nations as well as



the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) [34] and the International Covenant on civil and political rights (ICCPR) [35].

The planet's richest countries have the obligation to transfer resources to the South so that the basic needs of people can be met. For us, such transfers imply the indebtedness of the Northern countries to the Southern populations. Europe's wealth since the 15th century partly resulted from the plundering of the South. So somehow we need to provide some reparations and compensations for this centuries-old plunder (outright theft, unequal trade, etc.). Therefore, it's not a matter of our generosity or charity but a duty to make amends.

We question development finance conceived by the North as an extension of their foreign policy and as an appendage of their export industries, including the service sector. We want a mechanism for transfers and reparations leading to direct results for the people involved, along with development projects designed by Southern citizen movements in a sovereign manner. We want the communities within the Southern societies to have control over the allocation of funds. Regarding reparations, we want an end to claims for the repayment of *illegitimate debts*, the return of ill-gotten gains (e.g. cultural goods displayed in western museums - Louvre, British Museum, Tervuren near Brussels, Vienna, New York... - as property unlawfully acquired by the North as a result either of war and looting or of corrupted governments of the South selling off their countries' heritage), the end of mechanisms used by the Northern pharmaceutical or seeds companies to plunder the Southern biodiversity, the revocation of bilateral investment treaties shamelessly promoting major international private companies, the questioning of trade and investment treaties that are weapons of mass destruction for local producers who succumb to the competition with big private exporting companies. These are the global mechanisms on which we have to operate. If we can stop the plundering of the South and the transfer of wealth from the South to the North,

cooperation in human development would be much less required.

## Perspectives

**After half a century of activity, failure to produce sustainable change is central to the critique of the work done around development cooperation. What do you think of questioning the legitimacy of NGOs as true agents of change?**

In any event, we should always question the legitimacy of the organizations and their policy. In particular, we should thoroughly analyze the results of their actions. I think that a major portion of the NGO work, even if done in a positive and not monopolizing or self-centered spirit, is still widely questionable and limited. Nevertheless, just as development assistance can be questioned, it also depends on who formulated it. If the Southern people challenge the paternalist role of Northern NGOs or their kind of action, particularly their standard of living, I totally understand (e.g. the employees of humanitarian NGOs travel in expensive cars and are sometimes provided with comfortable accommodation while at the same time, the agency or state sending this emergency aid requests the receiving State to lay-off public servants or not to grant health or education benefits to its employees). Obviously, their legitimacy must be questioned in such a case. We see it every day: during a Southern humanitarian crisis we send Northern agencies and the money earmarked for Northern development aid goes to them, we charter Northern aircrafts, pay Northern medical staff, purchase medicines from Northern pharmaceutical companies, etc. whereas local health professionals are available and we could purchase medicines in India, South Africa, Brazil or Cuba. This type of attitude must be challenged.

**According to your latest policy impact assessment (the CADTM's ultimate goal of a virtuous circle), very few laws have been adopted despite a marked progress in the process of awareness-building for decision makers: 'the financial**

**obligations of States somewhat continue to take precedence over human rights everywhere." What do you think of this lack of political outlets?**

Like other organizations, the CADTM finds it extremely difficult to get political results from the decision-makers, such as a government or parliament. An example: with the help of other North / South solidarity movements we made the Belgian Senate adopt a resolution on Belgium's need to conduct an audit on its debt claims on poor Southern countries. Though a majority of the Senate adopted the resolution, it was blocked by the government, especially the finance and cooperation ministers, leaders of a right-wing neoliberal political family, who decided that a resolution is not binding, is not a law, and that there was no money to conduct these audits. Years later, we have been unable to assemble enough convinced parliamentarians for turning this resolution into a law so that Belgium is obliged to act. Our political results have not met our expectations in this area.

**Confronted with problems that have become global, how can the NGO sector influence major policy decisions to produce long-awaited radical changes?**

NGOs need to create a front with larger forces, especially big trade unions, peoples' organizations and movements, political parties who want serious changes. We must succeed in increasing the number of social, civic and political forces which are involved with and supportive of the political priorities that we promote. This requires a major effort because these organizations are always mobilized around national, regional or local issues. Discussions on the Third World debt, international trade agreements, bilateral investment treaties, policies of the WTO and the World Bank go beyond such immediate boundaries. Therefore, it's a challenge. We are working on it but the results are not as obvious as we would like them to be.

**What is the relationship between the CADTM and the development NGOs? Is there any competition**

## within the sector?

The approach of the CADTM, which is a movement, towards other movements and associations in the field of human development and change is very clear: we seek maximum convergence. That means putting aside our differences and entering into strategic or specific agreements to bolster convergence on precise objectives. That is the focal point of the political charter of our international movement. [36] With this approach, we dedicate all our energy towards others working independently of the government. So we are not at all in any competition.

## The alter-globalist movement is considered to be a continuation of Third Worldism. Do you agree?

Yes and no. The Third Worldist movement derived from a desire for North-South solidarity. Alter-globalization aspires to go beyond the North-South solidarity and build a common movement where we are not simply in a relationship of solidarity but joint action and a more intense cooperation. The CADTM has played an active role in the formation of the alter-globalist movement since the 1990s. We have participated in the World Social Forum since its inception in 2000-2001. We have contributed to the creation of the term "alter-globalist" (at first the media spoke of anti-globalization while we prefer another globalization, hence the term "alter-globalization").

## Since 2005, it is said that the alter-globalist movement has run out of steam, even failed. What do you think?

The alter-globalist movement is suffering from a crisis since 2005-2006. It peaked in the second half of the 1990s and early 2000s with a huge capacity for mobilization against the WTO, WB, IMF, G7, G8 and sometimes came up with a large number of ideas. Meanwhile, the World Social Forum (WSF) was formed which brought together a significant part of alter-globalist activists from all around the world. This success has redefined the strategies of major organizations and we have been attacked from important

quarters. The alter-globalist movement can no longer make it difficult for the big international institutions to meet because these institutions have now decided to convene at inaccessible venues knowing full well how hated they are. There are also other factors: the success led to a group of forces, including NGOs, who now have significant means to join the dynamics of the WSF and have come into prominence; a tendency to institutionalize the WSF (which has become an economic factor, especially for the local hotel industry. Indeed, a WSF meeting which can assemble 100,000 or more people for 4-5 days is a high stake for the local tourist industry) which affected the sustenance of an independent critical approach, favoring activism; certain social forces that once propelled the WSF began to support governments (the center-right Prodi government in Italy, the governments of Lula and then Dilma in Brazil, etc.) following the logic of joint leadership with a friendly government. All this contributed to the institutionalization of the WSF.

Despite it all, the WSF remains a point of reference (see Éric Toussaint, 'The Social Forum, upon contact with a reality at boiling point, has produced a positive chemical reaction' <http://cadtm.org/Eric-Toussaint-The-Social-Forum> published on 31 March 2013). However, it is encountering difficulties in defining strategies, priorities, ability to intervene in order to change the unacceptable course of things. Finding a new lease of life is a real problem for the alter-globalist movement.

'This is one of the most difficult periods of the past 15-20 years regarding the formulation of a structure and a process where different protests can converge and promote alternatives'

In 2011, the CADTM was very hopeful of the Indignados movement in Spain which spread to Greece, Portugal and then crossed the Atlantic with the Occupy Wall Street movement. It was

great, but we realized that it was getting difficult for this movement to form an international structure, expand and maintain it through time. This important movement in which we participated was not related to the institutionalized dynamics of the World Social Forum. It was a new generation which joined the social and political action in an extraordinary manner. So this movement has not contributed to the older WSF movement. So far, this highly promising new movement has not found a strategy for expanding with time (see

<http://cadtm.org/From-the-Arab-Spring-to-the> and <http://cadtm.org/Indignados-and-Indignados-of-the> ). So we are in a situation where, in the end, we lack driving forces. The CADTM participated in the Indignados movement in Spain. Also when the Arab Spring happened in 2011, we were particularly active in a series of struggles taking place in Tunisia (dictator Ben Ali's overthrow in January 2011) and Morocco (February 20 movement).

Moreover, and it is highly encouraging that there is a fairly strong momentum for the citizen debt audit in Europe (Spain, Portugal, Greece, France, Belgium... see ICAN <http://cadtm.org/ICAN>). The CADTM has played a decisive role in this new phenomenon. Even so, if public debt is an important element vis-à-vis austerity policy, we do not claim to bring together, through the citizen audit, as many people that gathered around the alter globalist or Indignados movements. These movements can unite all the alternative aspirations confronting an overbearing globalization. Hence, the CADTM playing its role in its own field wishes to be redeployed to other international networks for rejuvenating the alternative movement. We have not achieved this yet, which does not mean that we have given up. This is one of the most difficult periods of the past 15-20 years regarding the formulation of a structure and a process where different protests can converge and promote alternatives.

## Are you optimistic about the possibility of North / South relations getting more balanced

**and the world getting more equal and just?**



*Extraction PDF **Marxisms and Transitions***

Very frankly, I am not optimistic, no. In the short term, I am worried because some very promising experimentations are taking rather disturbing turns, especially in Venezuela, Ecuador and Bolivia. Contrary to media propaganda, these gave rise to genuine hope because there were political reforms with new democratic constitutions; important civic experiments; people reclaiming their natural resources; redeployment of public services; affirmation of a new-found dignity, sovereignty, and the aspiration for an alternative to the neoliberal model.

We are aware that these experimentations have shown their limitations since 2009-2010 (e.g. extremely slow operations of the Bank of the South even though it was officially launched in 2007). [37] There are phenomena of bureaucratization, loss of enthusiasm and energy, corruption... Governments are pursuing a development policy mainly based on exports of raw materials (petrol, gas, minerals, and agricultural products). Fortunately, their policies are still quite far from the neo-liberalism that exists in Europe or North America. But the ongoing South American processes have not yet found the right formula for the self-organization of the populations towards a political outlook - at a governmental level - which would be permanently based on popular control or on forms of self-management. These are emerging but without a proper expression yet.

Similarly, the Arab Spring and the 2011 Indignados movement faced

difficulty in forming democratic forms of government breaking away from neo-liberalism. This is most evident in Egypt, but also true for Tunisia.

So I'm not optimistic in the short term. But I also observe that populations revolt periodically and successive rebellions end up with political results. The CADTM's work is embedded in local processes in a number of European and Southern countries (Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean, Asia). I have also observed that the issue of illegitimate debt is progressively getting questioned and spreading consistently. It is not only a matter of challenging illegitimate, unsustainable, odious or /and illegal **public** debt, it is also important to fight for the cancellation of private, illegitimate debts claimed from millions of families abused by banks for mortgages (this is especially important in the United States, Spain, Ireland, in several Central and Eastern European countries), the hundreds of thousands of families affected by usurious interest rates in micro-credit especially in the global South, farmers (especially in India where more than 250,000 farmers, overburdened with debt, have committed suicide over the last ten years) also victims of usurious interest rates and policies of the World Bank. This implies new responsibilities for the CADTM and all organizations and individuals fighting for the cancellation of illegitimate debts.

In the medium and long terms, I am extremely hopeful that people would be able to take their destiny in hand vis-à-vis global challenges such as debt or climate change, though I would certainly not live to see this happen. I am also keen to contribute to the continuing struggle for emancipation. I am convinced that the coming generations will be able to come up with a new emancipatory project and organizational forms that will respond to the crises and the phenomena of institutionalization and fatigue, encountered by previous

generations. Therefore, our priority is to train the young generation. And that's one of the strengths of CADTM because our team is enlivened mostly by people between 20 and 45. This is also a cause for optimism.

**How do you see the future of development cooperation in general and NGOs in particular?**

The role of official Northern agencies of international cooperation can and should be criticized: they often highlight their humanitarian activity to cover up the foreign policy interests of their country and their government. Organizations such as the CADTM should criticize and point out the limitations of this approach.

I hope that the critics of the current form of cooperation have a stronger voice, that traditional cooperation enters a critical phase which is more acute than the one it is now encountering, that the tendency to impose cuts in development aid through the austerity policies, which is prevailing in the North, are offset by popular understanding that we need a North standing in solidarity with the rest of the planet and cooperation among equals. I hope that the North / South solidarity movements and the NGOs who think seriously would be able to question and act to prioritize structural issues. We should work on campaigns on globalizing issues that refer to structural and not conjunctural problems. I hope that the crisis of international cooperation; the dangers of austerity policies pursued by the current governments; the tendency to promote humanitarian, emergency and technical solutions will be overcome and that we will once again be able to take on the structural problems. These are our challenges and we will work with other forces in this direction. In any case, the future depends on the peoples' struggle for social liberation.

*Translated by Suchandra De Sarkar in collaboration with Christine Pagnoulle and Eric Toussaint.*



# The terrible rise in inequality across both the global North and the global South is intolerable. The trivialization of this increasing imbalance is unacceptable

12 August 2014, by **Anthony Legrand, Éric Toussaint**

**1. You are trained as a historian and a political scientist. With a PhD in Political Sciences, you are a lecturer at the International Institute for Research and Education in Amsterdam. You are a member of the scientific council of ATTAC France, the scientific network of ATTAC Belgium, and the International Council of the World Social Forum since its inception in 2001. You are a senior lecturer in North / South relations at the University of Liège and a lecturer at the Belgian Technical Cooperation on global financial transactions and the alternatives. You are also the founder and president of CADTM Belgium and it is mainly in this capacity that I am interviewing you. You have written many books, mainly on the issue of debt, and participated in numerous international conferences [38]. You have advised governments including those of Ecuador (2007-2008), Venezuela (2008, you advised the Minister of Planning and Economy) and Paraguay (2008-2009, here it was the President Fernando Lugo -removed from power by a right-wing coup in June 2012). Have you only been officially involved with governments in the South?**

- I have advised only governments of the South (or some of their ministers), as mentioned above. No government of the North has approached me yet. Perhaps this will change in the future, for example if a left-wing political force formed the government in Greece and decided to take the debt issue head-on. That said, my priority is the work in and around social

movements. I have not become an adviser to governments and international agencies. I think changes will come under the pressure of mobilisations from below.

**2. CADTM (Belgium) was established in 1990 after the Third-Worldist period. Would you call the CADTM a Third-Worldist NGO?**

- No, CADTM is not a Third-Worldist organisation. It was formed as a platform bringing together a series of pre-existing movements and individuals to fight hand-in-hand for the cancellation of the Third World's debt: trade unions, cultural organizations, organizations for continuing education, some members of parliament, and some people from the North-South solidarity movement. It was a collective, a platform- not a Third-Worldist NGO.

**3. During the era of Third-Worldism, two opposing theories came up: the Modernization theory with its emphasis on internal causes of underdevelopment in developing countries and the Dependency theory which insisted on external causes. What do you think of these two opposing views on underdevelopment?**

- Evidently CADTM follows the Dependency School [39]. But this way of summarizing the opposition is simplistic because from the angle of the Dependency School, there were both an understanding of external factors - the subordination of peripheral countries to core countries as part of an analysis of the global

capitalist system - and an analysis of internal causes. Several key thinkers of the Dependency School, such as the Brazilian Rui Mauro Marini [40], demonstrated a clear understanding of internal factors blocking social progress, notably the role of the bourgeoisie. Moreover, as early as 1965, Rui Mauro Marini described Brazil, for example, as a sub-imperialist country or a country with peripheral imperialism [41]. That is to say that this author did not magnify the role of his country and its ruling classes. At the time, Brazil's urge to dominate South America was already a key factor in the analysis of the author, who subscribed to the Dependency School.

**4. What are the causes around which CADTM's activities revolve?**

- CADTM's activities are based on both external and internal factors. Since solving external factors, fundamentally improving the relations with the outside world (e.g. Northern creditors) will not entirely solve the fundamental problems of countries if the South's internal factors (such as the dominance of one capitalist class over agrarian, agro-industrial or commercial sectors) and the social structure in those countries remain unchanged (e.g. high concentration of land in the hands of a landed capitalist oligarchy). Therefore we must work at both external and internal levels in the South. In this sense, the CADTM has an inclusive vision of solving the problems faced by the people in the South.

# DEVELOPMENT MODEL

**5. The development paradigm followed by international cooperation ranges from development through economic growth (according to Rostow) to fighting poverty in the same manner. What is the CADTM's position regarding that paradigm?**

- For the CADTM, GDP growth is not a criterion to assess the fulfilment of human rights and human development in any country. CADTM does not stop at speaking of development in general, we speak of human development. The CADTM critiques the term "development" taken as an end in itself because mainstream perspective links it to economic growth. Our criterion is the achievement of basic human rights: economic, social, cultural, civil, and political rights. There is a debate: organizations of the North, connected to the Western world dominated by the United States, will prioritize civil and political rights as they understand them, i.e. strictly individual, while others emphasize economic and social rights. For the CADTM, human rights are indivisible and we want the fulfilment and an improvement in the fulfilment of all human rights.

So there is a very clear distinction between what is fashionable in the eyes of the organizations specializing in international cooperation, international institutions or governments of the North; and how CADTM sees things. We observe a strong economic growth and at the same time an impoverishment of a large section of the population. This contradiction is pervasive. The countries which follow the Western model or the capitalist model of development are experiencing a significant growth in inequalities vis-à-vis economic growth. This is true for China, which has been following its own capitalist path since the 1980s. This is also true for the African countries which set their priorities as formulated by Northern governments and international organizations such as the World Bank and the IMF.

**6. South-South cooperation allows the peripheral countries to have some autonomy vis-à-vis the centre. However, in the Third World, we notice that some countries themselves become new centers and continue the pattern of exploiting raw materials and labour at low prices in the periphery. In this context, what is the CADTM's position regarding the South-South cooperation?**

- The CADTM is completely in favour of South-South cooperation, but in reality we find that the behaviour of a group of power centres in the South is unacceptable when it comes to guaranteeing their access to raw materials and reproducing the systems already implemented by the Northern powers. Think for example of China's influence on Asian neighbours, and also in Africa and Latin America; South Africa's influence on southern Africa; Brazil on its neighbours in Latin America and some African countries (former Portuguese colonies such as Angola or Mozambique). When South-South cooperation takes up the issues that we support, it actually amounts to the initiatives for integration among pro-progress Latin American countries - initiatives that seem far too weak at the moment (e.g. ALBA - Bolivarian Alliance for the Americas, which is extremely interesting on paper but faces serious limitations). So we're very much in favour of a South-South cooperation involving the integration of peoples and not in favour of an integration limited to economy. Such an integration would imply, for instance, the implementation of systems for transfers from the stronger to the weaker countries in the South.

## SOLIDARITY

**7. According to an OECD report of 2003, the media, predominantly the television, is the primary source of information on development, but the public is not quite informed about international cooperation, development issues, and poverty. People give more importance to humanitarian causes than to others (international trade, governance,**

**democracy), except environment.**

From what we have seen in your assessment reports, the media attention towards CADTM is increasing and its expertise on debt is widely recognized. Your strategy is the intensification and diversification of your media outreach. What is your view on the manner in which public information, the media, treat the challenges of the South?

- The mass media, particularly the television, present speeches and images on the North-South relations and the problems in the lives of the Southern people through a terribly distorted lens. They propagate prejudice and provide a simplistic view of a miserable South, or on contrary, of a smiling South, standing in solidarity. Development Education (DE), as perceived by organizations like the CADTM and others, makes an effort at deconstructing the distorted visions of the South as well as the prejudice promoted by the media. DE should extensively deconstruct preconceived patterns. For that purpose, it is very important to appeal to activists, the advocates of the Southern cause, observers of the South and to let them speak out. It is important to build mechanisms rigorously and pertinently from the perspective of the message and be able to convey it. The CADTM is working on a series of mechanisms, ranging from books at university level to comics, role plays, board games, videos, websites, etc.

We must expose the basic mechanisms which can explain the continuation of the "development of underdevelopment" (André Gunder Frank). This infernal process keeps rolling every day. We must explain to the public why the situation of the Democratic Republic of Congo never changes (per capita income of \$ 180 annually). It's not for want of well-timed humanitarian aid but because of structural reasons, both external and internal, that this country continues to be in a subordinate position vis-à-vis the rest of the world.

**8. The 80s saw the decline of Third-Worldism. During that period the Third-Worldist NGOs faced an ideological impasse due**



**to the fall of the socialist bloc, the splitting or the breaking up of the Third World, as well as to critics of humanitarian NGOs (who accused them of mechanically aligning with the South, neglecting local responsibilities and capitalizing on Western guilt). What are your views on the decline of Third-Worldism and the critiques aimed at the Third-Worldists?**

- A series of seemingly promising experiments in the South turned out to have limitations. There has to be an explanation for those limitations. The role of the Northern powers is important but that does not explain everything. The idea that a third path could emerge from the Non-Aligned Movement and benefit the Third World has faded, lost ground. The illusions of a third world movement on developments trailed off. The North's deliberate intervention by means of a new type of NGOs played the role of catalyst. Humanitarian NGOs have received a strong and active support from the North, parallel to the emergence of the concept of humanitarian intervention which was itself a product of the NGO world. Bernard Kouchner of Médecins Sans Frontières (Doctors Without Borders), who later pursued a government career, as well as other people have pointed to the need for humanitarian intervention. Somehow this served the interests of the great powers in the North and people who seemed to be disinterested and who "represented" 'civil society' embraced it. But we have seen that their interests were not so independent of the interests of the great powers as they claimed. Many big humanitarian NGOs have played an active role in discrediting Third-Worldism and Northern governments have supported this to a large extent. The concept of humanitarian intervention was linked to human rights, but it is not something new: during the Berlin Conference of 1885, King Leopold II of Belgium laid territorial claim on the Congo area under the pretext of thwarting the Arab slave traders. This debate rebounded during 1980-90.

Since the CADTM is not a Third-Worldist organization, the Third World crisis is not a problem for it as the CADTM was rapidly formed in a

process of joint action of militant activists from both the South and the North. That is why the CADTM quickly became a horizontal international organization in which a majority (3/4th) of member organizations is from the South and play a key role in determining the CADTM's international action plans. These organizations are directly involved with the realities and contradictions of their own countries and try to meet them adequately.

**9. The 90s were marked by professionalization and specialization in the sector of development cooperation, which has been gradually focusing on technical assistance and humanitarian aid. At that time the current generation of NGOs emerged and Stangherlin calls them "technicians without borders." These NGOs are "less ideological, more apolitical and more pragmatic." What is your assessment of this process of specialization and professionalization of the NGO world?**

- This technical evolution of international cooperation led by the NGOs in the 1990s has not really produced convincing results. The ability to comprehend problems as a whole has been significantly lost. We look for technical solutions to a technical problem (e.g. best selection of seeds, best use of land, projects that are better-planned at the technical level), but if we do not get the technical solutions in the context of social relations - property relations, problems of marketing the product - relations in a given country vis-à-vis the dominant forces in international trade - we will not solve the problems at all. Evidence: solutions for the past 15 years are not better than those in the previous periods.

If the CADTM is professional and specialized it is because it does not have a technical vision of problems. CADTM tries to develop analytical tools, particularly the mechanisms to audit the debts of so-called developing countries, to arrive at a complete assessment of the structural policies recommended or imposed by international bodies. But we do not

entertain the illusion of solving problems by techniques. Solutions always involve a comprehensive analysis: for example, a debt-audit is not an analysis related to accounting or a strictly legal contract. It is a holistic evaluation (e.g. looking at the social and environmental impact a dam will have on the local population). Technique is a fundamental dimension of a scientific approach but a technician's vision of development leads to a total deadlock and a demoralization for those who believed in it and who have been working in this framework for years. It leads to a loss of contact with reality because the technicians of development prefer to believe that they are doing some useful work.

**10. Do you think that the professionalization and specialization of the NGO sector have had an effect on its activities at the political and ideological level?**

- For a number of cases I think the overview is lost, although there should not be any illusion about the previous generations who had significant limitations as well.

**11. Since the early 2000s new regulatory frameworks, supposed to improve the effectiveness of development aid, have been set up (Paris Declaration of 2005, as part of the Millennium Development Goals). A strong influence of the North (particularly, Anglo-Saxon) can be noticed in this regulation in terms of both the formulation and the conception of the development approach. How do you evaluate these new regulatory frameworks?**

- The MDGs were established by international bodies within the UN framework, with the help of specialized UN agencies with direct government intervention. This approach can be criticized because the goals are too limited. We should set goals for eliminating the causes of poverty, the impossibility for young people to receive a normal education, the difficulties in achieving food sovereignty. Instead of setting a target for reducing poverty, we should have the following goals: achievement of food sovereignty, energy

independence or encouraging it at best, liberation from the debt trap. Starting from there, we should develop strategies to achieve these fundamental objectives that would have important consequences on other areas.

**12. Do you think that these regulatory frameworks promote aid effectiveness (managerial and administrative approach) rather than development effectiveness (a more political approach)? Can the dominant model be questioned in the context of this regulation?**

- We must challenge the dominant model. It does not produce any result that can deal with the situation. On the contrary, what is absolutely intolerable and quite obvious is that there is a terrible rise in inequality, both in the South and in the North of our planet, and a trivialization of this increasing inequality. In some cases, official organizations highlight an

increase in per capita income and completely put aside the rise in inequality, while for us it is the most worrying problem. We believe that the contemporary tools, the regulatory mechanisms, are often mechanisms for de-regularizing existing mechanisms. These have had a catastrophic result: a rise in inequality. Here we should add the issue of climate crisis-the result of two centuries of industrial capitalism, with terrible effects on the people in the South. The climate crisis is global and the solutions must be explored, not country by country, but across the globe. We should turn away from a productivist and extractivist mode of production that is based on an intensive use of fossil fuels and which does not hold a future for humanity.

We must break away from a hierarchical world in which a small minority (the 1%, denounced by the Occupy movement) dominates the majority.

The capitalist system is catastrophic in the short term and even more frightening regarding what will happen in the coming decades. As for the regulatory frameworks regarding the effectiveness of development cooperation, we return to a vision of development aid in terms of technical efficiency. This has its limitations and excludes from its content an approach which should be holistic and which should take into account the economic and social structures of a country, its gender relationships (male-female relations), the mode of production, the mode of appropriation. This is what should come first in the vision for a development that can be seen as human development providing for basic human rights.

*Translated by Suchandra De Sarkar in collaboration with Christine Pagnoulle and Eric Toussaint.*

<http://cadtm.org/Eric-Toussaint-The-terrible-rise>

# 100 years ago: Capitalism's world war and the battle against it

12 August 2014, by **John Riddell**

One hundred years ago, fighting broke out among the great powers of Europe, launching what has become known as the First World War. The brutal conflict, which lasted more than four years, proved to a decisive turning point for humankind and for its socialist movement, and its effects are strongly felt even today.

The run-up to war began on June 28, 1914, when Franz Ferdinand, heir to the Hapsburg throne of the Austro-Hungarian empire, was assassinated in Sarajevo by a Serbian nationalist. Four weeks later, Austria-Hungary reacted with an ultimatum to the Serbian government that would have virtually destroyed Serbian independence.

Serbia rejected these demands, and

Austria declared war on July 28. Over the next seven days, the great powers of Europe joined the conflict: Russia, France and Great Britain on the Serbian side; Germany in alliance with Austria-Hungary. A German invasion brought Belgium into the war.

The initial shock of battle was inconclusive, and the war settled into a murderous and extremely destructive and stalemate. The list of belligerents grew, including Ottoman Turkey on the German side (called the Central Powers); Italy with the British and French (the "Entente").

Both sides imposed naval blockades, the Germans utilizing submarines. Both utilized aviation, newly invented, as a weapon of war. Fighting spread to overseas colonies, with Japan

seizing several German possessions in the Far East.

The United States entered the war in 1917, giving the Entente a marked material superiority.

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For the peoples in Europe's warring countries, the conflict brought untold suffering and death. As the war progressed, working people responded with strikes, protests, mutinies and uprisings. The 1917 revolution in Russia took the country out of the war in March of the following year.

Starting in August 1918, the Entente armies began a sustained advance on all fronts. A tide of revolution swept the Central Powers; the uprising of

German workers and soldiers brought the war to an abrupt end on November 11, 1918.

An estimated 10 million armed personnel were killed, along with 7 million civilians. Production in the warring countries fell by about a third, afflicting millions of workers with hunger and destitution. Nor did the guns fall silent in 1918: armed attacks continued against the Russian Soviet republic; rebellious workers in Germany, Hungary and other countries; and insurgent colonial peoples.

At the war's end, a workers' and peasants' republic had been established in Russia, which thus broke free from world imperialism. Meanwhile, the victorious powers seized many pieces of land in Europe and the colonies. Several new capitalist states were set up in Eastern Europe.

The victors formed a continuing alliance, the League of Nations, supposedly to keep the peace, but imperialist rivalries continued as before, and within 20 years, Europe and the world were plunged into an even more destructive conflict.

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The socialist movement before 1914, which enjoyed mass support across all Europe, foresaw the oncoming conflict and joined in an effort to head off the war threat.

A conference of the Socialist International in 1907 pledged to "exert every effort to prevent [war's] outbreak." If war broke out regardless, socialists would "intervene for its speedy termination" and "strive with all their power to utilize the economic and political crisis created by the war to rouse the masses and thereby hasten the downfall of capitalist class rule."

The quoted passage was proposed by Rosa Luxemburg, a leader of the International's left wing. Although cautiously worded, it contained an unmistakable commitment to respond to war by efforts toward a workers' revolution. The pledge was repeated by the International's congresses in

1910 and 1912, and many strong antiwar actions took place, including in 1914.

When war arrived in August 1914, the rulers in each country utilized their control of newspapers and dominant social institutions to impose their interpretation of the war as purely an act of self-defense. Some in the socialist ranks were influenced by this barrage. Socialist movements faced a threat: Resistance to the war would drive them into illegality, sacrificing their impressive administrative and publishing apparatus, and subjecting them to severe repression.

Party leaderships in Britain, France, Belgium and Germany crumpled before this prospect. On August 4, 1914, the parliamentary representatives of the International's strongest component, the German Social-Democratic Party (SPD), voted unanimously to finance the German war effort, a blatant repudiation of socialist principle. British, French and Belgian leaders did likewise, and the Socialist International collapsed. Only in Russia and Serbia did Socialists stand by their pledge to oppose the war.

Lenin, the central leader of the Bolshevik wing of Russian socialism, was then living across the border in Austria-Hungary.

The local authorities arrested him on August 8. Austrian socialists secured his release, and he made his way to neutral Switzerland, arriving in Bern on September 5. During the next three days, he met in conference with other Bolshevik leaders. They adopted the first major statement on the war by its socialist opponents.

The war was "bourgeois, imperialist, and dynastic" in character, the Bolsheviks stated, continuing:

"A struggle for markets and for freedom to loot foreign countries, a striving to suppress the revolutionary movement of the proletariat and democracy in the individual countries, a desire to deceive, disunite, and slaughter the proletarians of all countries by setting the wage slaves of one nation against those of another so as to benefit the bourgeoisie" these

are the only real content and significance of the war."

The Bolsheviks declared that support of the war by major socialist parties signified "the ideological and political bankruptcy of the [Socialist] International." Neither of the warring blocs was in any way superior to the other, they said.

Soldiers and workers needed to "use weapons, not against their brothers, the wage slaves in other countries, but against the reactionary and bourgeois governments of all countries," the Bolsheviks stated. They stood for "a revolution in Russia" and "liberation of and self-determination for nationalities oppressed by Russia."

The statement faithfully applied the International's prewar stand and also accurately predicted the course actually taken by Russian workers and soldiers in the 1917 revolution.

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During the six months that followed, the revolutionary wing of German socialism raised its banner, setting in motion the organization of antiwar socialists internationally.

In early August 1914, in response to the SPD's approval of war spending, a few left-wing opponents of that decision met in Rosa Luxemburg's apartment and decided to send 300 telegrams to left-wing party officials, inviting them to discuss a collective response to the August 4 betrayal. Only one clearly positive answer was received, from Clara Zetkin.

However, opposition stirred in some local SPD organizations. For example, a meeting of SPD leaders in Stuttgart, where Zetkin was based, condemned the war credits vote by 81 to three.

On September 21, Karl Liebknecht, a parliamentary deputy and prewar leader of the SPD's antiwar campaign, met in Stuttgart with a group of prominent party leaders there. They berated him for his failure to break party discipline and vote against war spending on August 4. "You are quite right in criticizing me," Liebknecht responded. "Even if alone, I should have called out my 'no.'"

In November, Luxemburg's local party branch sent out an underground message calling for underground work and a new party. "Had the Social Democratic fraction done its duty on August 4," the circular stated, "the external form of the organization would probably have been destroyed, but the spirit would have remained...."

On December 2, the minority view in the SPD broke through the censorship with a dramatic action. Liebknecht voted in parliament against war spending, "in protest against the war; against those who launched it and those who direct it; against the capitalist policies that brought it about; against the capitalist objectives for which it is waged...." Liebknecht's bold stand resounded across Europe.

On March 26-28, 1915, Zetkin convened the first wartime international Socialist conference in Bern: a conference of the Socialist Women's Movement with 29 delegates from seven countries. "Only the united determination of the people can stop the slaughter," the conference declared. "Down with capitalism.... Down with the war! Onward to socialism!"

The following month, delegates representing socialist youth leagues in nine countries, with tens of thousands of members, held a similar conference in Bern.

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In September 1915, 42 delegates from

11 countries gathered nearby, in Zimmerwald, Switzerland. A left wing in the conference, led by the Bolsheviks, stressed the need for a clean break with pro-war socialists and a struggle to overthrow capitalism; other forces emphasized the need to struggle for peace.

All currents at the conference, however, united in calling on workers to fight for peace, without annexations or indemnities. The struggle for peace is also a struggle for freedom, reconciliation of peoples and socialism, the conference stated.

The Zimmerwald manifesto, drafted mostly by Leon Trotsky, circulated illegally in the warring countries and became a banner for revolutionary workers. The war lasted for three more horrific years. By its end, the slogans of Zimmerwald were being voiced up by millions of workers and soldiers across Europe. In 1917 and 1918, they carried out revolutions in Russia, Germany, and several neighboring countries.

The manifesto reads, in part:

"The war has lasted more than a year. Millions of corpses cover the battlefields....The most savage barbarism is today celebrating its triumph over all that hitherto constituted the price of humanity....

[T]he war that has produced this chaos is the product of imperialism, of the attempt on the part of the capitalist classes of every nation to

feed their greed for profit by the exploitation of human labor and of the natural resources of the entire globe....

[We] call upon the working class to come to its senses and to fight for peace. This struggle is the struggle for freedom, for the reconciliation of peoples, for socialism....

Proletarians!...[Y]ou must stand up for your own cause, for the sacred aims of socialism, for the emancipation of the oppressed nations as well as of the enslaved classes...No sacrifice is too great, no burden too heavy in order to achieve this goal: peace among the peoples....

Beyond all borders, beyond the reeking battlefields, beyond the devastated cities and villages: Proletarians of all countries, unite."

A century after the First World War, the spirit of Zimmerwald still resounds in our global struggle against war and oppression.

28 July 2014

[Socialist Worker](#).

(Quotations in this article are from Lenin's *Struggle for a Revolutionary International*, a documentary collection edited by John Riddell (available from Pathfinder Press). See also *War on War*, an account of the Zimmerwald movement by R. Craig Nation, available from Haymarket Books.)

# The imperialist carve-up of Ukraine: where does the left and anti-war movement stand?

12 August 2014, by **Fred Leplat**

Most of the left does not describe Putin and his regime in Russia as being progressive. But there is reluctance to denounce, sometimes silence, and even support for Russia's annexation of Crimea and intervention

in Eastern Ukraine. The recently launched Ukraine Anti-Fascist Solidarity campaign [42] only opposes UK, NATO and Western involvement but not Russian intervention in Eastern Ukraine.

This is in stark contrast to the Ukraine Socialist Solidarity campaign whose basic aims are "to support and build direct links with the independent socialists and the labour movement in Ukraine; (and) to support the right of

the Ukrainian people to determine their own future free from external intervention from Russian or the Western imperialism". [43]

Left Unity and the Socialist Workers Party [44], have rightly opposed the attempt by Britain and the USA to seize the opportunity of the crisis in Ukraine to expand yet again NATO's reach and ratchet up the threat of war. But they have also condemned Russia's attempt to annex as much as possible of Ukraine.

Left Unity stated [45] in March: "Whether under the flag of US, NATO, Russia or the European Union, military intervention only ever makes the situation many times worse. So it is in Ukraine. The West's hypocrisy in condemning Russia for breaking international law is breathtaking: nevertheless, Russian troops hold no solution to the crisis." And concluded with the call for: "No foreign intervention in Ukraine - whether political, economic or military; Democracy and equality for all the people of Ukraine".

Putin has been explicit in expressing his ambition to annex parts of Ukraine. Following the agreement on the 17 April 2014 between Russia, Ukraine, the USA and the EU after the flight of former president Yanukovich, Putin declared that "Kharkov, Lugansk, Donetsk and Odessa were not part of Ukraine under the Tsars. God only knows why they were transferred in 1920". Their transfer followed the defeat of the counter-revolutionary generals Denikin and Wrangel and the recognition of national rights for all Ukrainians by the new Soviet Union. Subsequently in 1954, Khrushchev also transferred the Crimea to Ukraine. The annexation in March 2014 by Russia of the Crimea with its naval base in Sebastopol is part of Russian imperialist consolidation of its regional geo-strategic interests, just as is its backing for the murderous Bashar al-Assad regime in Syria which allows it a naval base in Tartus.

Imperialism has repeatedly attempted to intervene in mass movements to try to subvert them for its own objectives, whether it be in Europe or elsewhere. The popular mass movements for

democracy in Hungary in 1956 and that of Prague in 1968 were supported by Revolutionary Marxists from the New Left and Trotskyist tradition. Communist Parties opposed these movements claiming CIA manipulation but their real motivation was support for the ruling Communist parties in those countries and the USSR's "buffer zone" of states.

The Maidan of late 2013 was a mass movement at the base of society, mobilising at times hundreds of thousands. It combined revolutionary aspirations of democracy and against the corruption of oligarchs and Yanukovich, reactionary features of nationalism as well as illusions that joining the EU would bring prosperity and democratic rights. Yanukovich had originally been tempted in 2013 by the EU's financial bail-out of a bankrupt Ukraine, but was then brought back in-line by Putin with a better offer as the latter feared the loss Ukraine from Russia's strategic "buffer zone". His downfall was the result of the Maidan mass movement, not a Western organised "coup".

In the absence of a strong left, the far right - including the fascists of the Pravyi Sektor - was able to steer the Maidan movement away from a progressive outcome. The election of Poroshenko as president confirms the balance of forces in Ukraine. He leads an authoritarian, nationalist, neo-liberal government which includes supporters of the far-right. There has been no mass movement on the scale of Maidan in Crimea and eastern Ukraine where the events have been described as a "gangster-police putsch, presented in a 'people's' wrapping". [46]

We have to take mass movements as they are, understand their contradictions and the forces involved, rather than dismiss them as being manipulated by imperialism if they do not fit into our schemas. Chris Nineham, a leading member of Counterfire and the Stop the War Coalition writes off the Maidan movement as having been "co-opted" and therefore that "denouncing all interventions equally and calling for support for the Ukrainian revolution, as some on the left are doing, is worse than meaningless". [47]

Revolutionary Marxists cannot be neutral in the current civil war in Ukraine. In the first instance, we should oppose our own government's intervention and defend the sovereignty of Ukraine. But we also support the working class struggle for democracy, for social and economic justice against the Ukrainian oligarchs, and against Russian as well as Western imperialist intervention. Part of the crisis in Ukraine, is that of the unresolved national question left by Stalin and then the collapse of the Soviet Union. As the Fourth International recently put it: "In Ukraine, a left that leaves the national question to the nationalists will condemn itself to failure in advance. In the nationalist camp there are already currents emerging that are taking advantage of the marginality of the socialist left, and wish to appear in the eyes of workers as an alternative to capitalism". [48]

The approach of Counterfire, along with the Communist Party of Britain and Socialist Action, [49] is that today the major threat of war comes from Western imperialism, in particular the USA as it is the major military and imperialist power in the world. Furthermore, NATO's expansion eastwards in Europe and its military exercises are a dangerous escalation reminiscent of the eve of World War 1 in 1914. Some believe that a "uni-polar" world under US hegemony is more dangerous than a "multi-polar" world of rival states. [50]

The conclusion of this approach is that while Putin's regime is not nice, at least Russia and China are a counterweight to US hegemony. Therefore the only thing that matters today for socialists is to stop our own government's drive to war and NATO expansion.

Criticisms of Russia and China are seen as a distraction as these countries are possible progressive allies of the left as they are not such dangerous war-mongers as the US and for some, capitalism has not been restored. This is a resurrection of a form of "campism" which infected parts of the left, in particular the Communist Party and the Labour left, during the existence of the Soviet Union.



While socialists should obviously in the first instance oppose their own imperialist government they should also oppose imperialism in general against attacks on working people and smaller nations and states across the globe. This means not just opposing NATO expansion and interventions, but also the annexation of Crimea by Russia and the carve-up of Ukraine by both the EU and Russia.

Today, capitalism is a global intertwined and integrated system under US hegemony [51] in a way which it was not in 1914. The two world wars of the 20th century were mainly wars of inter-imperialist rivalry to gain or maintain control of areas of the world. The outcome of these wars was the establishment of the USA by far and away as the major power in the world, ruling the capitalist system through its massive economic and even greater military power, and through institutions such as the World Bank, the IMF and NATO. This global capitalist system has further expanded with the restoration of capitalism in Russia and China, but this does not mean that inter-imperialist rivalries and the threat of regional wars are no longer on the agenda.

The form of US hegemony in operation today means that weaker states are allowed to pursue their own imperialist ambitions and regional geo-strategic interests, including through military interventions conditional on them at least not challenging the main thrust of US interests; something which is delicate to achieve as the imperialist ambitions of Russia and China have to a certain extent be at the expense of US imperialism. If they step out of line, they become "rogue" states that have to be subdued militarily as in the case of Iraq, or sanctions imposed such as for Iran and now Russia. To maintain weaker states within the framework of US imperialism, the latter has to carry out a lot of sabre-rattling. This is a dangerous game, as any incident such as the accidental downing of MH17 in Ukraine, or of the Iran Air plane by the US navy in 1988 killing 269 people, can rapidly escalate into a full military confrontation, the dynamics of which may no longer be in the hands of US imperialism and its allies. But sabre-rattling should not be confused

with a dynamic towards inter-imperialist war like that leading to the two world wars. This is not the nature of the period today.

As long as Russia remains within its regional geo-strategic sphere, Western imperialism (i.e. the USA and NATO) is not greatly concerned by Russia's annexation of Crimea. The few sanctions against Russia announced are so far symbolic – mainly against individuals – and there are deep divisions on extending them because of arms and gas deals, and because of the globalisation of the capitalist system. Sanctions that hurt Russian capitalism also affect Western capitalism.

This explains why US imperialism is not worried about Russia backing Bashar al-Assad in Syria with a continuous supply of arms. There is a coincidence of interests between both countries as neither wants Bashar al-Assad to fall. The collapse of his regime would revive the stalled "Arab spring", threatening not just Russia's naval base in Tartus, but also the US attempt to rebuild its credibility in the region and possibly overturning Syria's "peaceful co-existence" with Israel.

Co-operation between the USA and Russia goes back to the fall of the wall in 1989. Gorbachev then did not object to the re-unification of Germany and its integration within NATO in an implicit exchange for foreign investments and a lowering of the cost of the arms race. The co-operation goes back even further to the period of "peaceful co-existence" between the Soviet Union under Stalin and US imperialism. Then revolutionary movements were held back and subordinated to the needs of the Soviet Union's foreign policy. The "building of socialism in one country" meant an accommodation with imperialism.

This view of a global integrated capitalist system under US imperialist hegemony, albeit with a hierarchy of imperialist states, is at odds with those socialists who see US imperialism as the main danger and other imperialist states as lesser evils and who therefore believe that we have entered a period "of global

conflict that is leading the world towards the violent chaos we witnessed one hundred years ago". [52]

Unfortunately, there are no mass socialist revolutionary upheavals such as those of Russia, China, Cuba or Vietnam which required massive military intervention to crush them. Neo-liberal austerity is being rolled out across the world with little resistance, destroying many of the gains of the working class and introducing new relations of production.

Those who see US imperialism as the main danger consequently fail to oppose the Russian intervention in Ukraine, and some even allow themselves to be used by pro-Russian nationalists. They believe these nationalists when they proclaim their support for the working class against Western imperialism and their fight against the "Nazi" regime in Kiev imposed by a coup.

John Pilger, a respected investigative journalist, writes that "What is certain is that Barack Obama's rapacious, reckless coup in Ukraine has ignited a civil war and Vladimir Putin is being lured into a trap" and that "Moscow's inevitable response (to Washington's putsch) in Russian Crimea (is) to protect its Black Sea fleet". [53] Once you believe that there has been a coup and not a mass movement, albeit with a strong nationalist and neo-liberal character, then you can believe anything including Russia's right to annex Crimea.

Pilger writes in a later article [54] that "the leaders of these obstructive nations are usually violently shoved aside, such as the democrats Muhammad Mossedeq in Iran, Arbenz in Guatemala and Salvador Allende in Chile, or they are murdered like Patrice Lumumba in the Democratic Republic of Congo. All are subjected to a western media campaign of vilification – think Fidel Castro, Hugo Chávez, now Vladimir Putin". Comparing Putin to Chavez and Castro stretches political credulity.

But Pilger goes further when he carries on in the same article that "having masterminded the coup in

February against the democratically elected government in Kiev, Washington's planned seizure of Russia's historic, legitimate warm-water naval base in Crimea failed. The Russians defended themselves, as they have done against every threat and invasion from the west for almost a century". To believe that Washington had planned to seize Russia's naval base in Crimea makes us wonder whether Pilger has lost all his senses.

But it gets even more incredible when he writes further in the same article that "for the Germans, it is a poignant irony that Putin is the only leader to condemn the rise of fascism in 21st-century Europe". Evidence abounds that Putin works with the far right and fascists in Russia and across Europe. In January, Marine Le Pen of the Front National in France was welcomed in the Duma and met the Speaker of the Duma and Deputy Prime-Minister. [55] Pravda openly acknowledges Russia's support for the fascists in the European Parliament [56]. Nazis are allowed to march in Moscow alongside Stalinists on the 1st May. [57]

Such an article by Pilger flies in the face of facts, supports Russian imperialist annexation and paints Putin as an anti-fascist. Such rubbish should be condemned and it is extraordinary that it was posted on the Stop the War Coalition website without comment.

Unfortunately, Pilger is not the only socialist supporting Russia. Eamonn McCann wrote earlier in the year "if we have to pick a side over Crimea, let it be Russia" because "in this instance Russia has more right on its side than the West". [58] Socialist Action views the events in Ukraine as a struggle between Russia and imperialism [Imperialist offensive causes tragedy in Ukraine, Paul Roberts, 22 July

2014, <http://www.socialistaction.net/Inte...>], obviously implying that Russia is not imperialist. John Pilger's nationalist references to "Germans" are echoed in the Communist Party's view that "German monopoly capital is clearly preparing for economic expansion into Ukraine". [59] Socialist Appeal and Workers Power are also covering up Putin's imperialist land grab by cheering on the struggle against Kiev-based fascism.

What is worrying is that Russian nationalists and reactionaries are working with some on the left in Russia and elsewhere to cover-up what is the Russian imperialist grab of parts of Ukraine. The latest event was an "international conference" entitled "The World Crisis and the Confrontation in Ukraine" held in Yalta, Crimea (formerly part of Ukraine, now annexed by Russia) on July 6-7. The aim of the conference included the creation "an international network of support for the movement for the creation of Novorossiia". [60]. The conference was organised by Boris Kargalitsky, a Russian socialist, and with some Russian far right or fascist currents. Many of these are supporters of Strelkov, the "Minister of Defence of the Donetsk People's Republic" [61], a White Guard monarchist who fought in Chechnya and Serbia. Besides the Institute of Globalisation Studies and Social Movements, of which Kagarlitsky is the Director, the conference was organized by the far right New Rus' Coordination and Support Centre, and the Osnovanye Fund. This fund was established recently to support the separatist movement by such Russian personalities as Alexandr Prokhanov and Vladislav Shurygin (editors of the far right journal, Zavtra) or Nikolai Starikov (leader of the far right Party of Great Fatherland). It was attended

from Britain by Richard Brenner of Workers Power and Alan Freeman of Socialist Action, both supporters of the Ukraine Anti-Fascist Solidarity campaign.

Socialists should have stayed well clear of a conference organised in a territory just annexed by Russia and in which deeply reactionary forces participate. It is also an error to invite Boris Kargalitsky to address the NATO counter-summit in Cardiff at the end of the August.

The divisions over Ukraine, and over Syria, have grave implications for the anti-war movement. While rightly setting its priority against NATO expansion and intervention in Ukraine, the Stop the War Coalition has yet to publicly oppose the Russian intervention in Ukraine despite stating that it "oppose(s) all foreign military intervention". [62] The Coalition also refused to agree to a call against all foreign intervention in Syria and for the people of Syria to freely determine their own future.

The Stop the War Coalition, launched in 2001 has played an unprecedented and historic role in mobilising against the invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq. It was launched with three principles: opposition to imperialist intervention in Iraq and Afghanistan, the defence of democracy, and against racism and islamophobia. While it is right for the anti-war movement to focus against the imperialist interventions of our own country, the wars in Syria and Ukraine show there is also in those countries a fight for democracy and against the racism fuelled by nationalism. By not calling for the withdrawal of all foreign forces so that the people of those countries can determine their own future democratically, the Stop the War Coalition is failing.

## Hope in a Hopeless Place

11 August 2014, by Ilya Budraitskis

If there is a point of consensus uniting various social and cultural strata in the new state of war (or pre-war) into which Russian society is sinking all the deeper, then it is in this smothering and eerie consciousness of one's own total powerlessness before the elemental power of interstate conflict. And without even an unstable system of coordinates each separate citizen is overwhelmed by the flow of news. The psyche cannot support the pressure and capitulates to the uncognizable and opaque logic of events, which, it seems to us, is less and less able to obey any concrete will. "Not knowing how to control the war, the war controls consciousness," wrote Lev Trotsky about that war at the beginning of the century which a few timorously remember today.

The unfortunate inhabitants of Lugansk and Donetsk are today on the leading edge of the encounter with the destructive elements of war. Their testimony on the social networks "the exchange of the sparse data on the killed, the photographs of the destruction of artillery bombardment, requests and responses to them of elementary empathy" this is the voice of the victims, the voice of those who have already lost. Here there is no separation of the partisans of "New Russia" or "United Ukraine", they do not await the victory of "their side", but only of peace "no matter from where, on whatever conditions, from whichever power. In place of houses, infrastructure, schools and hospitals, in Eastern Ukraine society is destroyed practically to its foundations. And this means that the winner, able to bring stability even if to smoking ruins, will receive such a level of submission and obedience of which no state in peace time could even dream.

The waves from this barbaric destruction cover the population on both sides of the border. It is already a commonplace to assert that from this March domestic politics seems to have disappeared from Russia. Furthermore, according to the definition of the philosopher Jacques Rancière, it is possible to affirm that politics as "a form of human activity based on disagreement" has quickly disappeared, and conversely, that state policy as "an art of managing

community" has achieved perfection. Anything that diverges even a millimeter to the left or right of the president's line is instantly devalued, forfeiting any hint of independent thought. Those who try to applaud the state louder than the rest are just as politically invisible and powerless as those who set themselves against it. The patriots supporting their state instantly transform into its obedient instrument. The liberals critiquing their state willingly or not begin to speak as advocates of the enemy.

The logic of war unavoidably leads to the identity of the state and the people, their full merger one with another, mercilessly annihilating any marks of "disagreement." This identity is based, despite widespread opinion, not only on the chauvinism quickly impregnating collective consciousness. War's "unity of the nation," to which we are approximately today, draws its strength from the fear of instability, from the expectation of defense from above, from the feeling that subjects and rulers are, in the end, "in one boat." It's hard to describe what an improbably free hand the state has with respect to its citizens in such a situation. This victory of the ruling elite over their own society "at least in the near term" counterbalances losses and sanctions and the shame of international isolation. Today it is impossible to predict how long this state will persist" in any event, the prior successful history of "wartime unity" often has been able to hold the majority in absolute submission for years.

So what is the anti-war movement we need today? One must honestly say that almost never has a civilian antiwar movement, no matter how massive, succeeded in preventing or stopping a war. From the beginning of the First World War more than three years of colossal death and destruction were necessary before the supporters of "peace without annexation or indemnity" transformed from marginalized minorities in their countries to a force able to change the course of events. The well-known movement against American intervention in Vietnam tried to affect social opinion in the West for almost a

decade before a new president, in the face of serious losses, could begin the withdrawal of troops. Finally, in February 2003 in London, the most massive anti-war demonstration in all history (with more than a million participants) against the invasion of Iraq was simply ignored by the government of Tony Blair. But the anti-war movement even then, when it clearly was swimming upstream, had one improbably important function: to speak the truth. State propaganda, demonstrating in the past months its colossal power, lies not only for the sake of lying: in the state of "wartime unity" the lie becomes the direct continuation of military action and stands out as the key means for strengthening the "domestic front." And trust in this lie and sympathy with its spread transforms into civil virtue, into a responsible understanding of "the state interest," of which every citizen begins to feel him- or herself the agent. In the last months many of us have discovered that we can reach the truth only with the help of comparison with the war's lies, issuing from both sides of the conflict. This method today is largely without alternative, however it holds within it an enormous danger: at any moment one of the sides can begin to seem more convincing.

The anti-war moment, if it is really trying to bring disagreement back to society, should hold a "third position." The victims, the defeated and intimidated, everyone whose own voices has been stripped by "wartime unity," should regain that voice in the anti-war movement. Such a movement fundamentally should not determine the greater or lesser degree of responsibility of each side, it should not "understand the point of view" of those who never have taken our point of view. Exactly for this reason, in today's situation the anti-war movement in Russia, speaking out against its own government, can be honest and effective to the end, if it will go together with the same such movement in Ukraine. Both in Moscow and in Kiev we should again and again put into question the right of the state to monopolize the representation of "the nation." This "third position" "barely heard, almost unnoticed" can be easily lost in the humanist pathos of the willing or unwilling

bearers of the lie of “the state interest.” If an analysis of the situation in the Donbas completely excludes the direct interference of Russia and events are interpreted exclusively as a “civil war” in which the Kievan government of oligarchs fights against its own people, then in a second, to the contrary, everything boils down to a hidden Russian intervention and all elements of internal conflict are

consequently ignored, then before us is only the next variation on “the cunning of war.” To speak the truth means not only to unmask propaganda, but also to point out the reasons for military conflict: the fight for military spending, the redistribution of markets and property, the determination to establish complete control on those

below in the interests of the elite. A hundred years ago, such a message, seemingly radical, utopian and naive, in the end changed the world. And this fact, it would seem, could suggest hope in our hopeless place.

*Translated by Adam Leeds and published in English on [LeftEast](#). The Russian original was published on [Colta.ru](#).*

# How BRICS [Brazil-Russia-India-China-South Africa] Became Co-Dependent Upon Eco-Financial Imperialism

11 August 2014, by **Patrick Bond**

The BRICS “are actually meeting Western demands,” as China Daily bragged, “to finance development of developing nations and stabilize the global financial market.” [63]

If BRICS subservience continues, remarked financier Ousmène Jacques Mandeng of Pramerica Investment Management in a Financial Times blog, “it would help overcome the main constraints of the global financial architecture. It may well be the piece missing to promote actual financial globalization.” [64]

Fawning to finance reminds us of the term Brazilian political economist Ruy Mauro Marini coined a half-century ago, “sub-imperialism”: i.e., “collaborating actively with imperialist expansion, assuming in this expansion the position of a key nation.”

Marini described Brazil’s “deputy sheriff” role in Latin America, but the concept also applies to the global-scale imperialist project. As part of the civil society counter-summitry [65], we launched a collection on this theme in the Fortaleza journal *Tensoes Mundiais-World Tensions*, co-edited with Rio de Janeiro political economist Ana Garcia. Two dozen writers including Elmar Altvater, Omar Bonilla, Virginia Fontes, Sam Moyo, Leo Panitch, James Petras, William

Robinson, Arundhati Roy and Immanuel Wallerstein grappled with the BRICS’ contradictory geopolitical location.

By all accounts, the two overarching problems of our time – as the most recent Pew global public opinion survey [66] confirms – are climate change and systemic financial instability. In both, the BRICS suffer what in psychology is termed “co-dependency.” The word “comes directly out of Alcoholics Anonymous, part of a dawning realization that the problem was not solely the addict, but also the family and friends who constitute a network for the alcoholic,” according to Lennard Davis in his 2008 book *Obsession*.

BRICS are friendly-family enablers of Western capitalists who are fatally addicted to speculative-centric, carbon-intensive accumulation. Suffering what increasingly appears to be the neurological impairment of a junkie, officials in Washington, London, Brussels, Frankfurt and Tokyo continue helter-skelter pumping of zero-interest dollars, euros and yen into the world economy. This is a hopeless drug-addict’s fix: maintaining policies of economic liberalization that lower national economic barriers and generate new asset bubbles.

Another fatal Western obsession facilitated by the BRICS is emission of greenhouse gases at whatever level maximizes corporate profits – future generations be damned to burn. (The last time the world’s 1 percent seriously kicked the habit – and momentarily succeeded – was in 1987 when the Montreal Protocol was signed and CFCs banned so as to halt ozone hole expansion. But since that successful Cold Turkey episode, neoliberal and neoconservative fetishes took hold. Half-hearted efforts at the UN and other multilaterals to address global-scale environmental, economic and geopolitical disasters have conspicuously failed.)

BRICS elites are not enemies of the Western economic hedonists, as revealed in the Fortaleza declaration’s exceedingly gentle advice [67]: “Monetary policy settings in some advanced economies may bring renewed stress and volatility to financial markets and changes in monetary stance need to be carefully calibrated and clearly communicated in order to minimize negative spillovers.” (This refers to currency crashes suffered by most BRICS when the West began reducing “Quantitative Easing” money-printing in May 2013 – yet another



example of co-dependency.)

The BRICS repeatedly enable the West's most self-destructive habits during times of acute eco-financial crisis:

- \* the April 2009 G20 bailout of Western banks via consensus on a \$750 billion IMF global liquidity infusion;

- \* the December 2009 Copenhagen Accord in which four of the five BRICS did a deal to continue emitting unabated (they "wrecked the UN," according to Bill McKibben of 350.org);

- \* the 2011-12 acquiescence to the (s)election of new European and US chief executives for the Bretton Woods Institutions, for despite a little whinging, the BRICS couldn't even decide on joint candidates; and

- \* the 2012 agreement to pay over another \$75 billion to the IMF even though it was apparent Washington wasn't going to change its undemocratic ways (the US Congress has refused to allocate the BRICS a higher IMF voting share).

Washington's co-dependents in Delhi and Pretoria are the most blindly loyal. Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) reactionaries and African National Congress (ANC) neoliberals have regular economic, political and even military dalliances with Washington [68], and the BJP is so irretrievably backward that it won't countenance even a parliamentary debate about Israel's Gaza terrorism.

Playing the role of a frosty, distant relative, the other BRICS elites in Moscow, Brasilia and Beijing occasionally fulminate against Washington's internet snooper and the Pentagon's propensity to bomb random Middle Eastern targets. To their credit last September at the G20 summit, they pulled Barack Obama's itchy trigger finger back after the Syrian regime apparently used chemical warfare against civilians. Vladimir Putin instead cajoled Assad's chemical-weapon disarmament. And thank goodness the US whistle-blower spy Edward Snowden is at least safe in Russia. But it's likely that BRICS promises to establish new internet connectivity safe from US National Security Agency data-thieves will be broken.

Another Fortaleza let-down: the refusal by Moscow and Beijing to support the other three BRICS' ascension to the UN Security Council in spite of their repeated requests for UN democratisation, because that would lead to dilution of Russian and Chinese power.

The greatest heartbreak, however, will be the passing of sub-imperialism's financial costs to BRICS citizenries and hinterlands. Before the Fortaleza summit, economic-justice activists hoped the BRICS would decisively weaken and then break dollar hegemony, especially given the inevitability of rising Chinese yuan convertibility and the Moscow-Beijing (non-\$) energy deal a few weeks ago.

But revealingly, both the New Development Bank (NDB) and the Contingent Reserve Arrangement (CRA) [69] announced have this feature: "The Requesting Party's [borrower's] central bank shall sell the Requesting Party Currency to the Providing Parties' central banks and purchase US\$ from them by means of a spot transaction, with a simultaneous agreement by the Requesting Party's central bank to sell US\$ and to repurchase the Requesting Party Currency from the Providing Parties' central banks on the maturity date." That's techie talk for ongoing \$-addiction: a retox not detox.

The dollar is an inappropriate crutch in so many ways, but aside from an excellent article by University of London radical economist John Weeks, few analysts acknowledge that genuinely "inclusive sustainable development" finance would not require much US\$ (or any foreign-currency denominated) credits.

Hard currency isn't needed if BRICS countries - or even future hinterland borrowers - want to address most of their vast infrastructure deficits in basic-needs housing, school construction and teacher pay, water and sanitation piping, road building, agriculture support, and the like. The US\$ financing hints at huge import bills for future mega-project White Elephant infrastructure entailing multinational corporate technology. (Like most of our 2010 World Cup

stadiums.)

Weeks continues, "The suspicion uppermost in my mind is that the purpose of the BRICS bank, as a project funding bank, is to link the finance offered, to the construction firms and materials suppliers located in the BRICS themselves. Certainly, the Chinese Government is notorious for doing this." (For example, a \$5 billion loan from the China Development Bank to the South African transport parastatal Transnet announced at Durban's 2013 BRICS Summit resulted in \$4.8 billion worth of locomotive orders from Chinese joint ventures a year later.)

As Weeks also observes, "the voting proposal for the BRICS bank follows the IMF/World Bank model: money votes with shares, reflecting each government's financial contribution. The largest voting share goes to China, [70] whose record on investments in Africa is nothing short of appalling... The warm endorsement of the NDB by the president of the World Bank suggests enthusiasm rather than tension." [71]

But isn't the CRA a \$100 billion "replacement" for the IMF, as was widely advertised? No, it amplifies IMF power. If a BRICS borrower wants access to the final 70 percent of its credit quota, the founding documents insist [72], that loan can only come contingent on "evidence of the existence of an on-track arrangement between the IMF and the Requesting Party that involves a commitment of the IMF to provide financing to the Requesting Party based on conditionality, and the compliance of the Requesting Party with the terms and conditions of the arrangement."

The neoliberal BRICS bureaucrats who laboured over that stilted language - and over the (self-obfuscating) name of the CRA - may or may not have a sense of how close global finance is to another meltdown, in part because of relentless IMF austerity conditionality [73]. But it does reveal their intrinsic commitment to "sound banking" mentality, by limiting their own liabilities to each other. Current quotas are in the range of \$18-20 billion for the four larger BRICS and \$10 billion for South Africa (though the latter will only contribute



\$5 billion, and China \$41 billion).

Will it matter? According to Sao Paulo-based geopolitical analyst Oliver Stuenkel [74], “arrangements similar to the BRICS CRA already exist and have not undermined the IMF. The BRICS’ CRA is closely modeled on the Chiang Mai Initiative signed between the Association of Southeastern Asian Nations countries as well as China, Japan and South Korea in May 2000.” The initiative is useless, Stuenkel observes, for no one has borrowed from it since. Likewise, he tells me, “The CRA is fully embedded in the IMF system!”

What might that mean in future? The last BRICS-country default managed by Washington was when Boris Yeltsin’s Russia – with \$150 billion in foreign debt – required a \$23 billion emergency loan in 1998. Fifteen years later, four of the five BRICS suffered currency crashes when the US Federal Reserve announced monetary policy changes, and with higher interest rates, hot money flooded back to New York.

An emergency bailout may soon be necessary here in South Africa, where foreign indebtedness has risen to \$140 billion, up from \$25 billion in 1994 when Nelson Mandela’s ANC inherited apartheid debt and, tragically, agreed to repay. Measured in terms of GDP, foreign debt is up to 39 percent and even the neoliberal SA Reserve Bank warns that we are fast approaching “the high of 41 percent registered at the time of the debt standstill in 1985.” [75]

That crisis [76] and an accompanying \$13 billion default split the white ruling class, compelling English-speaking big business representatives to visit Zambia to meet the exiled liberation movement. Less than nine years later, capital had ditched the racist Afrikaner regime, in favour of bedding down with the ANC in what Mandela’s key military strategist Ronnie Kasrils termed the “Faustian Pact”.

SA Finance Minister Nonhlanhla Nene predicted that the first NDB borrowers would be African, to “complement the efforts of existing international financial institutions.” [77] But since Nene’s

own Development Bank of Southern Africa is rife with self-confessed corruption and incompetence, and the two largest NDB precedents – the China Development Bank and Brazil’s National Bank for Economic and Social Development – epitomize destructive extractivism, is this really to be welcomed?

After all, the largest single World Bank project loan ever (\$3.75 billion) was just four years ago, to abet Pretoria’s madcap emergency financing of the biggest coal-fired power plant anywhere in the world now under construction, Medupi, which will emit more greenhouse gases (35 million tonnes/year) than do 115 individual countries. A year ago, as Medupi came under intense pressure from community, labour and environmental activists (thus setting back the completion two years behind schedule), World Bank president Jim Yong Kim could no longer justify such climate-frying loans. He pledged withdrawal from the Bank’s dirtiest fossil fuel projects.

That’s potentially the gap for an NDB: to carry on filthy-finance once BRICS countries issue securities for dirty mega-projects and can’t find Western lenders. For in even the most backward site of struggle, the United States, a growing activist movement is rapidly compelling disinvestment from oil and coal firms and projects [78]. (Here in South Durban, Transnet’s eight-fold expansion of the port-petrochemical complex is one such target of “BRICS-from-below” activists, especially the 2014 Goldman Environmental Prize winner for Africa, Desmond D’Sa [79].)

Of course there is a need for a genuinely inclusive and sustainable financial alternative, such as the early version, prior to Brazilian sabotage, of the Banco del Sur that was catalysed by the late Venezuelan president Hugo Chavez [80]. Launched a year ago in Caracas with \$7 billion in capital, it has an entirely different mandate and can still be maneuvered not to “stabilize” world finance but instead to offer a just alternative.

To help BRICS elites stop jonesing for the Western model of exclusionary, unsustainable capitalism, a revamped 12-step program will be necessary.

The first two steps of the classic Alcoholic Anonymous program are obvious enough: “We admitted we were powerless over alcohol, that our lives had become unmanageable [and] came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.”

The cleansing power of political-economic sanity absent in the BRICS elites comes from only one place: below, i.e., social activism. For example, just like any rational South African who loved the World Cup and hated its Swiss Mafiosi organizers from Fifa, Brazilian society remains furious about Sepp Blatter’s politically-destructive relationship with Workers Party president Dilma Rousseff [81]. That and other neoliberal tendencies – such as raising public transport prices beyond affordability – mobilised millions of critics, which in turn was met by vicious police repression.

In Russia, activist challenges come as a result not only of Putin’s expansion into Ukraine, but attacks on protesters [82]. Civil society has been courageous in that authoritarian context: a democracy movement in late 2011, a freedom of expression battle involving a risqué rock band in 2012, gay rights in 2013 and at the Winter Olympics, and anti-war protests in March and May 2014.

In India, activists shook the power structure over corruption in 2011-12, a high-profile rape-murder in late 2012, and a municipal electoral surprise by a left-populist anti-establishment political party in late 2013.

In China, protesters hit the streets an estimated 150 000 times annually, at roughly equivalent rates in urban and rural settings [83], especially because of pollution [84], such as the early April 2014 protest throughout Guangdong against a Paraxylene factory [85]. But just as important are labour struggles, such as ongoing strikes against Nike and Adidas [86].

In South Africa, multiple resource curses help explain what may be the world’s highest protest rate [87] [88]. Certainly the labour movement deserves its World Economic Forum rating as the world’s most militant working class the last two years [89].

But South Africa's diverse activists [90], including those who on 1882 occasions in 2013 turned violent (according to the police [91], still fail to link up and establish a democratic movement (though the metalworkers union seeks to change this through its United Front initiative).

In this extraordinary context, critics are opening up two crucial debates:

first, is BRICS anti-imperialist as advertised, or potentially inter-imperialist as the Ukraine battleground portends, or merely sub-imperialist where it counts most: in the ongoing global financial and climate meltdowns?

Second, how can BRICS-from-below struggles intensify and link? The detox of our corrupted politics, a sober

reassessment of our economies and fortification our ecologies - all catalysed by re-energized civil societies - rely upon clear, confident answers to both.

*1 August 2014*

COUNTERPUNCH. WEEKEND  
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## **“Israel prefers a dead soldier over a captured one”: From Protective Edge to Operation Hannibal**

**10 August 2014, by Eli Aminov**

For whatever reason the famous Carthaginian General Hannibal's name was selected for an Israeli military procedure: the Hannibal Protocol. This refers to the directive whose task is to prevent, at all cost, the capture of an Israeli soldier. The protocol determines that the kidnappers must be eliminated, with no consideration for the possibility of harming the soldier; it is clear that Israel prefers a dead soldier over a captured one. According to the Israeli television Channel Two reporter on 1 August, the army has thus far used this directive on three separate occasions, all of which failed.

On Friday 1 August, during Israel's war on Ghetto Gaza, the Hamas fighters succeeded in capturing an Israeli soldier: Second Lieutenant Hadar Goldin, age 23. Immediately following the incident, the Israeli army implemented an expanded Hannibal protocol, i.e. the opening of fire on site and in every possible direction. Amos Harel wrote in Haaretz (3 August): “According to the descriptions, it appears that the army implemented in the most extreme manner ever the Hannibal protocol for disrupting a kidnapping”. And indeed, ground forces, tanks and bulldozers, artillery and planes were immediately set in motion in an attempt to prevent the

soldier from being captured. Amongst other things, the air force used one tonne bunker busters with the aim of killing the captive along with his captors. Operation Protective Edge thus became Operation Hannibal.

The speed and effectiveness of the Israeli response is not simply a result of technological developments or rigorous training, but a protocol tried in the past and studied thoroughly. An attempt was made in the past to implement this directive on Gilad Shalit, two years after his capture. At the time this protocol was hidden under another name given to the operation: Cast Lead. It isn't nice to repeat one's own words, but this is an unfortunate necessity when your country repeats its follies, similar to a dog returning to his own vomit. At the height of that war, on 15 January 2009, I wrote:

“Why has Israel embarked on a war at this time against the huge ghetto in Gaza, killed over 1,000 Palestinians, awakened mass fury in almost all countries, committed war crimes that will supply material to international courts for many years to come and demolished a 360 kilometre strip of land with shelling, phosphorous bombs and bunker busters? Who is the underground enemy sought after by

the war's initiators, Barak, Livni and Olmert? The answer is as simple as it is horrifying: Gilad Shalit.

The Israeli captive, the price of whom they are bargaining over for two years, has become the symbol of their failure and incompetence in everything concerning state leadership. Whether they would free Palestinian captives with ‘blood on their hands’, as they say, in exchange for the freeing of the Israeli soldier, or whether they would continue to refuse a prisoner exchange and leave Gilad in prison, the public - with encouragement of the challenger Netanyahu - would have ripped them to shreds in the ballot box. Their sole choice was between political death or political suicide.

And thus the captive soldier, whose leaders were not willing to exchange him for Palestinian captives, became the common enemy of Livni and Barak. Would Shalit's disappearance from the scene be a side benefit of the war or, no less possible, was it the primary goal of the operation, with the incitement and war atmosphere so loved by politicians merely a side benefit? This question will obviously remain open. With the facts, however, one cannot argue: the government of Israel refused every suggestion for

continuing the calm in the south. Instead of this it sent out its flying hangmen of the air force. Israel was equipped with the same bombs created by the Americans for the holes in which Saddam Hussein did not keep his weapons of mass destruction, and the phosphorous bombs which generate fires and consume the oxygen in basements, tunnels and shelters. So far Gilad Shalit has survived two years in the Hamas prison. Will he also succeed in surviving the bombs sent to complete the Hannibal protocol?"Gilad Shalit indeed managed to survive the attempts of the state in whose army he served to eliminate him. Following a public campaign and five years in captivity, he was exchanged for more than 1,000 Palestinian captives. Unlike Shalit, Second Lieutenant Goldin didn't succeed in surviving the targeted assassination of our forces. So as not to again be in a situation of prisoner exchange, Israel is willing to commit every conceivable crime. In the process of 'verifying and killing' the Israeli captive, Israel caused the "collateral damage" in the form of

a slaughter of more than 120 uninvolved Palestinians, men, women and children. In total in the current war on Gaza, some 1,800 people have been murdered and 9,000 injured, a majority of them civilians.

There is no escaping the conclusion that in the Israeli government there are apparently secret admirers of Stalin, who during WWII treated every captured soldier as a traitor. Stalin at least openly admitted this. His hidden admirers in the Israeli leadership are not only despicable, but also cowards. Every Hebrew mother should know what the possible future of her soldier son could be, when in Gaza a process of genocide is taking place. What will be the fate of the soldiers participating in this process, if they are caught by the enemy, and who then will be the real enemy that will take their lives?

At the stage in which no proof was yet found concerning Goldin's death, when Israel announced it will leave Gaza, many patriots suggested treating the 1.8 million residents of

Gaza as an enemy in time of war. According to the suggestion of Professor Bligh of Ariel University and Major General (ret.) Giora Eiland, Israel must halt the supply of food, electricity and water to Gaza residents, in order to create an overall civil disaster that would force Hamas to return the soldier or his body.

On Saturday night, 2 August, Israel announced to the family of Second Lieutenant Hadar Goldin that a rabbinical committee had determined the death of their son. It forgot to also announce that this is the first victory of the Hannibal protocol, which essentially determines that a dead soldier is better than a captive one. It is now clearer why the code name for this directive was made in remembrance of the warlord of Carthage. In the State of the Phoenicians, there was a custom to sacrifice sons to the local god, Melqart, in order to preserve unity and security of the people.

4 August 2014

<http://www.alternativenews.org/engl...>

## Standing against the counterrevolution

9 August 2014, by **Mahienour el-Massry**

In January, Mahienour el-Massry, an Egyptian revolutionary from Alexandria, was sentenced in absentia to two years in prison for organizing a protest outside the trial of two policemen who killed Khaled Said—the young man whose death bought thousands of people to the streets in a pivotal moment before the 2011 revolution. Mahienour wasn't arrested, but that didn't mean she was safe—the police could have arrested her from her home any day. She refused to go into hiding—attending meetings, travelling to Cairo, sleeping in her house.

Mahienour is a Revolutionary Socialist and a vocal opponent of both the military and the Muslim Brotherhood. After the army took power last

summer, she set up support structures for refugees—especially Syrians and Palestinians—who were persecuted. Active for years on environmental justice struggles, Mahienour had begun organizing with frontline communities in the Nile Delta on climate change.

I spent several months earlier this year trying to interview my friend Mahienour, but each time, she would deflect, encouraging others to speak or arguing that her voice wasn't important. On 20 May, Mahienour attended her own appeal, along with six of her already imprisoned co-defendants. They lost in a farcical court hearing, and Mahienour was arrested.

Since being imprisoned, Mahie has continued to struggle, organizing other inmates in Damanhour Prison and writing letters from her prison cell. During her last court hearing on June 28, she led chants from inside the prisoners' cage. Because of her humility, I was unable to get a long interview from Maheinour, so this is a compilation of several shorter conversations from April 2014.

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**How do you feel about the current context, with Gen. Abdul-Fattah el-Sisi about to be elected as president?**

It's very painful. After all the exhilaration and hope of the last

years, it's difficult to believe that this is happening. At the same time, Sisi can't feed the people. He doesn't have the social or economic solutions to the crisis.

And over time, people won't buy it. Especially the younger generation, who don't believe in the state. Those over 50 lived under Anwar Sadat and Gamal Abdel Nasser—they experienced a strong state. But the state is unable to control young people's minds—its discourses can't hold.

**Now that both the Muslim Brotherhood and leftist revolutionaries face repression, is it time to make up and ignore past differences?**

Definitely not. However leftists interact with the Brotherhood, we must not forget their collusion and cooperation with the state, especially during Morsi's rule.

There was a Muslim Brotherhood lawyer I knew from the first year of the revolution. Last year, when the Brotherhood was in government, he kept accusing us of all sorts of made-up charges. He was colluding with the police, trying to frame us. Now he got in touch, saying he wants to cooperate. I was furious and shouted at him.

**Are you careful? Are you trying to avoid being arrested?**

I'm very careful with what I say on the phone. Before the revolution, we were cautious. We'd take batteries out, put the phone under a pot. But since the revolution started, we dropped the precautions. We didn't feel threatened. That's changed now.

But I'm not trying to avoid arrest. My friends tell me not to use my phone or Facebook, but that's not realistic. I sleep in my house and go to meetings. I'm careful about going to court to support others. I went today, but was careful.

I don't feel like it makes sense to hide. They could arrest me at any point anyway, if a policeman recognizes me, or I'm checked at a checkpoint. And I can't just wait like this, I need to be doing something useful.

**Was your family supportive of your role in the revolution?**

There's a lot of different politics in my family—everything possible. So I'm careful what I speak about at family gatherings.

When I was younger, my father wasn't happy about me becoming politicized. So I used to take my books on the tram around the city for hours, to read Marx. As I became more active, my mother would cover for me, so that I had an excuse for why I was out.

**I've heard about how you travelled throughout the Nile Delta, meeting farmers whose fields were turning to salt. Tell me about what got you engaged with climate change.**

I'm from Alexandria. So I always knew that our city might drown from climate change. We grew up seeing the cement blocks that protect the shoreline.

But it was only while researching climate change and migration with Swedish / Iranian journalist Shora Esmailian that I understood how important this is. I saw the scale of potential destruction, and how the violence of climate change is shaped by class. The poor, the small farmers—they'll be affected the worst and have their lives ruined.

Then I remembered that the cement blocks in Alexandria aren't in poor areas either, like Baheri. All the sea defenses are set up to defend the rich. In other places, it's the same, like Dumyat, Ras el-Barr. Protection is built to defend tourist resorts, corporate factories like the oil infrastructure, and military installations. Not where ordinary people live.

**Does it feel like people are mobilizing for just and radical ways to deal with climate change?**

I hear a lot of people say, "This change is coming from outside, we can't do anything. We just have to put up with it." But there are exceptions. Especially near factories—here people see the role of power and class.

For example, the community of Wadi

Al-Qamar: They live next to a large cement factory, owned by Lafarge and Titan—French and Greek multinational companies. The pollution is heavy, and many of the young children get asthma and bronchial diseases. So the community was fighting for years to get filters installed. Lafarge and Titan refused, and wouldn't provide medical support either. Even though they were getting government subsidies for fuel and electricity.

Workers went on strike in February 2013, demanding medical treatment. The police attacked the protest and set dogs on the workers. Two workers were thrown down two floors, and then arrested. They weren't allowed to see a doctor in prison, despite broken bones. We had to fight hard to get them out.

Now, the Lafarge cement factory is switching to using coal. That means even more pollution and illness, and much worse impacts for the climate, which affects all of us. Especially here in Egypt. So people in Wadi Al-Qamar are organizing to protest.

**Egypt will be fundamentally transformed by climate change in the next 20 years. Nobody knows how exactly, but it's clear that millions will suffer—especially small farmers, fisherfolk and the poor living in the cities. Yet it's easy to feel powerless, particularly with the crackdown in Egypt and the Anti-Protest Law. Do you have any hope, thinking about the future and climate change?**

It depends on how climate change is tackled. Will it be led by the elite? They're not speaking to the people, even when they say they are—when they claim to represent the people. Small fisherfolk and farmers—they will be the most affected. But they're not organized in syndicates or collectively. That makes it difficult for them to exert power, pressure—to demand a different world.

Farmers' co-operatives do exist. But these are mostly for taking fertilizers, buying materials, not for organizing. There isn't space for politics. There is a new farmers trade union, but people in the [Nile] Delta didn't know about it



when I spoke to them.

After January 25, people had hope. Now, people are afraid to face the regime, especially as it's coming back more and more brutal. Activists have to think about the mistakes we made in the revolution, like when we all stuck to big slogans.

We should have divided ourselves more, to cooperate with workers,

farmers, fisherfolk—to grow deeper roots, amongst more people. That could have enabled the creation of a defense front. A defense front that could stand up to attacks by the state, on all those different communities and groups. Instead, we were isolated, and the military and police could pick us off one by one.

We don't have enough roots. I hear people say, "You're taking about social justice—you have the right slogans.

But I haven't seen you before, supporting our struggle. And we've been fighting for a long time." But we must not get stuck in the mistakes. We should think about them to learn what to do better. And then move forward. There is hope. We have to be optimistic—we don't have a choice.

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July, 2014

## What's behind the rise of BDS?

8 August 2014, by **Sherry Wolf**

In the United States, the issue of Palestinian rights has gone from the margins of the Left and Arab and Muslim communities into mainstream discourse and debate. From the corporate media to academic institutions, the discussion of Israel-Palestine has veered away from obscure territorial claims and competing historical narratives, however important those may be, to focus on the three simple demands of the BDS movement. Israel must do the following:

End its occupation and colonization of all Arab lands and dismantle the Wall; Recognize the fundamental rights of the Arab-Palestinian citizens of Israel to full equality; and

Respect, protect, and promote the rights of Palestinian refugees to return to their homes and properties, as stipulated in UN resolution 194. [93]

The 2005 BDS call that emerged from 170 Palestinian civil society groups—including all political parties, unions, refugee networks, NGOs, and organizations representing Palestinians living under occupation, in Israel, and in exile—took its inspiration from the successful South African anti-apartheid movement. Initiators were encouraged by the 2001 World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia, and Related Intolerance that was organized by Unesco in

Durban, South Africa, at which a draft statement opposed "movements based on racism and discriminatory ideas, in particular the Zionist movement, which is based on racial superiority." [94] In 2003, Palestinian academics started by calling for a boycott of Israeli academic institutions and a year later they launched the Palestinian Campaign for the Academic and Cultural Boycott of Israel in Ramallah calling upon Palestinian academics and intellectuals to join the growing international boycott movement. [95] Out of this, a national committee was established that brought together Palestinian civil society groups who agreed to the above three demands, and they launched the BDS movement.

The internationalism that undergirds BDS is a departure from the thinking that dominated Palestinian political leadership circles for decades, which perceived the liberation of Palestine as coming through the mobilization of Palestinians alone. The Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) formed in 1964 and was influenced by the successful anticolonial struggles of that era, especially the guerrilla movement that kicked the French out of Algeria in its war for independence. Though PLO membership was mostly drawn from the impoverished sections of Palestinian society, its leadership was almost entirely comprised of

wealthy businessmen and others from the ranks of the Palestinian elite. PLO leaders tried to graft a guerrilla warfare strategy that they'd seen work in Algeria on a population that was much smaller and dispersed throughout the Middle East and beyond. The financing for this armed strategy came from Arab rulers whom wealthy PLO leaders saw as their natural allies, including King Faisal of Saudi Arabia, Jordan's King Hussein, and Egypt's Hosni Mubarak.

In exchange for arms and money, the PLO under the leadership of Yasser Arafat agreed to a noninterference policy in the domestic affairs of Arab states. As Philip Marfleet and Tom Hickey explain in the British journal *International Socialism*, "They acted in effect as a bourgeoisie without a state, confining their 'own' population to a strictly nationalist agenda. This was congenial to the kings, emirs and presidents of the region, who used formal backing for the PLO as part of a chorus of rhetorical opposition to Israel, the better to maintain their own privilege." [96]

This approach was politically and economically disastrous. Not only were Palestinians easily defeated militarily within Israel, but the vast numbers of Palestinians working in Arab states were abandoned by the PLO to the low wages and absence of rights that constituted working



conditions in Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Egypt, and elsewhere.

The first intifada in 1987 and the second one starting in 2000 were inspiring uprisings of resistance on the part of Palestinians in response to the rapid growth of Israeli settlements in the West Bank and Gaza following Israel's occupation of those territories in 1967. Arab workers in the region initiated work stoppages and other acts of solidarity with the first intifada, but were actively opposed by Arafat and the PLO leadership. When textile workers at Egypt's Mahalla al-Kubra factory launched strikes and other actions that spread to Cairo and Alexandria, they were threatened with violence by Interior Minister Zaki Badr: "I will sever any foot that attempts to march in demonstrations," he warned. [97] Instead of embracing workers' solidarity, Arafat and the PLO leadership discouraged these actions and joined Arab rulers in Algiers at a summit that committed \$330 million to the PLO. [98] The PLO's further collusion with Arab leaders and ultimately the governments of Israel and the United States in the 1993 Oslo Accords has only led to the spread of Israeli settlements on Palestinian land, the establishment of the apartheid wall, and even worse conditions of life for Palestinians in Israel and the Occupied Territories.

A new Palestinian generation raised on the legacy of this failed strategy has taken over the reins. This article examines three of the key developments that have fueled the rise of BDS in the United States. Though by no means an exhaustive list, these three causes have been essential to the ideological and organizational shifts that have taken place in a relatively short time.

The success of BDS in the United States is largely due to:

Unprecedented exposure of Israel's brutal treatment of Palestinians, especially of Operation Cast Lead in the winter of 2008-09 and the 2010 massacre of nine unarmed civilians aboard a humanitarian aid vessel in international waters, the Mavi Marmara.

The leadership of what may be called

Generation Palestine [99], mostly young Arab-Americans and Muslims, but also many young Jews and others, who came of age in the atmosphere of heightened Islamophobia and anti-Arab racism in the post-9/11 United States.

The application of methods used in the successful South African anti-apartheid movement that spread to US campuses and reached a crescendo in the 1980s.

Arguably, each of these developments discussed below is a result of and leads to many more, but these appear to be three key catalysts in the rising US BDS movement.

## Israel against itself

Leading figures of Israel along with international defenders of Zionism claim the BDS movement is "delegitimizing" Israel, that is threatening Israel's authority and prestige. Global polls warrant their concern: Israel's daily Ha'aretz reported in May 2013 that of the more than 26,000 people surveyed by the BBC in twenty-five countries around the world, only 21 percent of participants had a positive view of Israel, while 52 percent viewed the country unfavorably. [100]

But a more accurate explanation of the dramatic shift in international public opinion against the self-proclaimed "Jewish state" is that Israel's own horrific acts are helping to create a growing movement that shines a light on Israel's inhumane treatment of Palestinians, and more and more people are repelled by what they see. Israel's delegitimization is, in fact, self-inflicted; the BDS movement merely acts to display, amplify, and oppose Israel's crimes.

Let us be clear: Israel's human rights violations are not new. Israel is and always has been a colonial occupier of Palestinian land, and its birth pangs include the ethnic cleansing of more than 750,000 Palestinians in 1948. Karl Marx's picturesque description of capitalism's roots seems to apply equally well of Israel's, which also came into the world "dripping from head to foot, from every pore, with

blood and dirt." [101] Many previous articles in this journal have detailed this history and taken up the myths of Zionism and Israel's ongoing crimes against Palestinians. But this history and the ongoing repression of Palestinians living in both the Occupied Territories and inside Israel were publicly denied and ignored until recent years, especially in the United States. Today, the denial by Israel's defenders persists, but the inhumane treatment of Palestinians can no longer be ignored.

A key turning point in consciousness about Israel-Palestine that helped shift BDS into higher gear was Operation Cast Lead. For three weeks in the winter of 2008-09, Israel used one of the most deadly military arsenals in the world on Gaza, leaving 1,400 or more Palestinians dead (thirteen Israelis died, nine of them soldiers), and the surviving population of 1.5 million was left trapped behind walls of concrete and high-tech surveillance equipment. The Gaza massacre, code-named Operation Cast Lead, was followed by the reimposition of Israel's cruel war of immiseration that prevents the free flow of goods, services, and human beings in and out of Gaza—a siege that remains in place to this day.

Launched midday when Gaza's children were leaving school, a police academy graduation ceremony was getting under way, and streets were filled with shoppers, Israel's attack was calculated to do maximum damage to humans and infrastructure. On just the first day, Israel killed more than 200 Palestinians and left 700 injured; after that, Israeli forces destroyed water- and sewage-treatment systems, bombed al Quds hospital, blew up stockpiles of UN food and supplies, and universities, schools, and mosques were wiped off the map in densely packed Gaza City.

Even then, vulgar apologists for Israel were aghast at the potential ideological cost of the massacre. A senior correspondent for Israel's newspaper of record, Ha'aretz, Ari Shavit, complained the scale of the attack was "destroying [Israel's] soul and its image. Destroying it on world television screens, in the living rooms of the international community and

most importantly, in Obama's America." Shavit noted that Israel's shelling of a UN facility on the same day the UN secretary was visiting Jerusalem was "beyond lunacy." [102] He had a good point.

Over the years, Israel has launched innumerable military assaults on the Palestinian people. Overwhelming, no-holds-barred violence marks many of these assaults, like the Battle of Jenin in 2002, when 150 Israeli tanks, plus armored personnel carriers and artillery, backed by F-16 fighter jets, laid siege to a refugee camp of less than a square mile that is home to 15,000 people. [103] But with the spread of social media like Facebook and Twitter in the hands of the budding movement, the 2008-09 war on Gaza drew alarm from Americans who'd not previously been particularly sympathetic or even aware of the conditions in Gaza. Across the United States, thousands took to the streets in protest and attended educational events held by small BDS community groups and the growing number of campus chapters of Students for Justice in Palestine (SJP). [104] Activists posted and tweeted images of the deadly attacks, and people were shocked to see pictures of Israeli settlers relaxing over food and wine in beach chairs on a hilltop overlooking Gaza, cheering the bombings and sniper hits as if enjoying an afternoon at a soccer match or a concert.

In the United States, saturated with pro-Israel messages, it is important to note that in the immediate wake of the siege, only 44 percent of Americans supported the assault, versus 41 percent who opposed it, according to Rasmussen. [105] Ordinary Democrats "unlike their party's leadership" were appalled; only 31 percent could muster any enthusiasm for the assault.

The next major turning point came over the Memorial Day Weekend of 2010. The lead ship of the Gaza Freedom Flotilla, the Mavi Marmara, was attempting to break the siege and bring humanitarian aid to Gazans suffering without medicine and sufficient food, but instead was militarily attacked in the middle of the night in international waters. Kevin Ovenden, one of the flotilla organizers

aboard the Mavi Marmara, described Israel's horrifying commando-style attack by air and sea that murdered nine unarmed civilians: "A new phase of struggle is born, but at a terrible, almost unbearable price: Nine of our brothers taken from us, scores more wounded by gunshots, their blood now lapping on the shores of Gaza." [106]

Palestine solidarity activists swung into action and organized protests, speakouts, and educational events with those who'd been aboard the ship describing the horror of suddenly being the target of unprovoked gunfire, exposing Israel's justifications for what they were: lies. Journalist Glenn Greenwald added his voice to the movement and spoke before packed crowds at universities. Within a few months, Frank Gehry, considered the world's most influential architect, joined the boycott of Israeli settlement goods after refusing to design Jerusalem's Museum of Tolerance, planned for construction on top of a Muslim cemetery. Along with pianist and conductor Daniel Barenboim, Gehry added his name to the Jewish Voice for Peace (JVP) statement of 200 Jewish artists and cultural workers supporting the boycott of Israeli settlement goods. [107]

While US polls continue to show clear majorities in favor of Israel over Palestine "hardly surprising given the inundation of pro-Israel propaganda in the US media despite recent cracks" nobody, from veteran Palestine solidarity activists to Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, denies the growing sympathy with Palestinians and suspicion of Israel's human rights violations. At the 2014 conference of the American Israel Political Action Committee (AIPAC), unquestionably the most influential pro-Israel group in the United States, speakers from Secretary of State John Kerry to Netanyahu felt the urgency to deride BDS. In his keynote address to AIPAC, Netanyahu mentioned BDS no fewer than eighteen times. To rousing cheers, Netanyahu called on Zionists to "fight back" against boycott advocates, "to delegitimize the delegitimizers." [108] Many BDS activists rightly took this to be a form of distorted respect from an enemy that previously ignored the

movement's existence. Now that Israel is becoming a global pariah, the BDS movement is garnering greater attention from all sides.

## Generation Palestine takes the reins

How Does it Feel to be a Problem? asked Brooklyn College professor Moustafa Bayoumi in the title of his 2009 book of interviews with Arab-American youth growing up in post-9/11 Brooklyn. The book explores a central life experience in this country for many Arab and Muslim Americans who've come to know the feelings of being targeted and suspected of terrorism for no other reason than their appearance or ethnic-religious background. For many, the US government's dragnet and society's stigma have had the desired silencing effect. But for a rising minority of Arabs and Muslims who've taken the reins of the BDS movement in the United States, defiance of Israel's human rights violations "and institutions collaborating with them" has become the civil rights struggle of their generation. Call it, if you will, Generation Palestine.

If the liberation of the oppressed is inconceivable without their self-activity, as Marxists have always claimed, this development is a crucial one. The movement itself, of course, was initiated by Palestinians living under occupation and in the diaspora, and the growing participation and leadership of Arab and Muslim Americans in the movement is undeniable to even the casual observer.

Remi Kenazi, the popular and talented Palestinian-American poet, moved to New York City just four months before 9/11. Growing up in mostly white Western Massachusetts had conditioned Remi to certain racist experiences, but he recounts in a Jadaliyya podcast interview that the nasty atmosphere against Arabs and Muslims right after the attacks helped propel him toward his poetry writing and spoken word performance

career. [109] As a member of Adalah-NY, the BDS group, and the US Campaign for the Academic and Cultural Boycott of Israel (USACBI), Remi creatively expresses the outrage, hopes, and political vision of a radicalizing generation. In addition to live shows, he's become a BDS cultural hero in his videos "Normalize This" and his latest sendup of campus Zionists, "This Divestment Bill Hurts My Feelings," a collaborative effort with Suhel Nafar, director, animator, and co-founder of the massively popular Palestinian hip hop group DAM whose music has become the soundtrack of the movement.

In email responses to my question about what inspired some leading Arab and Muslim BDS student activists, certain themes reappear in their accounts of their own politicization. They include early Iraq War images that stoked humiliation at the debased treatment of people in the Arab World, like photos of torture in the Abu Ghraib prison, but also terrifying snapshots of their childhood contemporaries in Palestine suffering at the hands of the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF). In 2000, the widely broadcast one-minute film footage of twelve-year-old Muhammad al-Durrah shows a cowering young boy crouched against a wall by his father's side as IDF soldiers shoot all around them until the camera captures the murder of small Muhammad and the heart-wrenching grief of his father, unable to shield him from harm. Many university student activists today would have been about Muhammad's age when he was killed. Added to those images from abroad are the daily racist indignities experienced here in the States, yet another source of both shame and defiance.

The embryonic BDS movement created a magnet for some of them, and a means to express their rage and mobilize their peers into action. One young Yemeni Boston student, Sofia Arias, writes, "But it was Operation Cast Lead in 2008-09, and my rejection of the two state solution, that pushed me to organize around BDS at my university, and the urgency of an international movement in solidarity that got activated out of that. And after that, in the US, you could feel things shift, and you could see the

cracks in Israel's pristine image begin to show." [110]

Tareq Radi, a Palestinian-American student at George Mason University, explains his motivation for getting involved in organized political activity this way:

Before I began organizing, I used to be a Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu competitor, which required me to travel and frequent other training facilities. In December of 2012, I was invited to a gym that had an Israeli flag overlooking the area where I would be training. I respectfully declined the invitation and explained that 42 members of my family were massacred in the name of that flag. To my surprise the owner of the gym, who was Jewish, offered to take it down. Later that evening I received a complaint from my coach, a person I considered as a brother. He demanded that I keep politics separate from my athletic career. It was at this point that I realized wearing a Palestinian flag on my uniform wasn't enough. I needed to contribute to the liberation of my people to the fullest of my abilities. I want to create a space, not just for Palestinians, for all oppressed populations to thrive without sacrificing their identities. [111]

Similarly, Palestinian-American Wael Elasady at Portland State began to see the battle for Palestine as much closer to home through the complicity of American institutions. He asked himself: "Why are universities bringing war criminals to give speeches? Why do they continue to normalize a racist apartheid state by setting up study abroad programs in Israel? Why are student tuition dollars invested in companies profiting off human rights violations of the Palestinian people? Why are our university presidents condemning professors who teach the truth about Palestine?" [112]

The 2011 SJP conference held at Columbia University during the height of Occupy Wall Street in October drew several hundred students, a majority of them Arab and Muslim. In addition to strategic discussions about launching campus-based boycott campaigns, students debated the Arab revolutions, the role of US

imperialism, and the history of Israel-Palestine. The Sunday morning after hundreds of SJPers had joined nearly 100,000 New Yorkers at an impromptu Occupy gathering in Times Square, classrooms were full with students eager to continue the discussions. As a speaker that morning on the myths of Zionism, I'd expected that most students would either sleep in after a heady night of activism out on the town or head back to their own campuses early. Instead, the room was packed, standing-room-only, and many grilled me on an impressive range of issues well past the end of the session. Dozens left the room with a newly purchased copy of Omar Barghouti's book, BDS: The Global Struggle for Palestinian Rights, without a doubt, the primer of the movement.

BDS student activists' political evolution was even more apparent at the Russell Tribunal on Palestine in 2012, an international people's tribunal that came to New York City to place the United Nations and US government on trial for its complicity with Israel's internationally recognized human rights violations. [113] For a frenzied six weeks, dozens of mostly Arab and Muslim students throughout the city volunteered to help organize and promote the event, which featured, among others, Black Power leader Angela Davis, author Alice Walker, and Pink Floyd's Roger Waters as judges. These student activists, who'd been organizing BDS on their campuses, worked tirelessly to build a hugely successful tribunal that drew more than a thousand people each day to watch and listen to the proceedings at Cooper Union's storied Great Hall, the venue where Frederick Douglass read out the Emancipation Proclamation in 1863.

Also noteworthy is the shift taking place among American Jews, especially those under thirty, some of whom are joining and playing leading roles in the BDS struggle. In a well-publicized New York Review of Books article, [114] Peter Beinart wrote, "For several decades, the Jewish establishment has asked American Jews to check their liberalism at Zionism's door, and now, to their horror, they are finding that many young Jews have checked their



Zionism instead.” And there is Time magazine’s piece on “Why Fewer Young American Jews Share Their Parents’ View of Israel,” which cites these stats:

A 2007 poll by Steven Cohen of Hebrew Union College and Ari Kelman of the University of California at Davis found that although the majority of American Jews of all ages continue to identify as “pro-Israel,” those under 35 are less likely to identify as “Zionist.” Over 40% of American Jews under 35 believe that “Israel occupies land belonging to someone else,” and over 30% report sometimes feeling “ashamed” of Israel’s actions. [115]

Those who have been speaking on college campuses about Israel-Palestine for years perceive a striking shift. In the nineties and earlier, the announcement of a public forum even mildly critical of Israel garnered death threats from the Jewish Defense League or similar groups, universities often required metal detectors and guards at our talks, and we were frequently disrupted by large numbers of confident Zionist students. In one memorable episode at NYU, the campus Zionists marched in flying an Israeli flag and singing Israel’s national anthem, Hatikva, as this author rose to speak. At Harvard during the Gulf War of 1991, students stood and threateningly jeered that I was an “anti-Semite” for criticizing Israel and only backed down when the iconic historian Howard Zinn stood and announced that we were both Jews who refuse to be silenced by a mob. Large groups of swaggering Zionists attempting to intimidate isolated handfuls of Palestine solidarity activists are far less frequent nowadays, though their turn to administrative bullying and legal sanctions is a mark of both their grass-roots weakness and the institutional ties Zionists are strengthening to fight a war on campus BDS, detailed in Ali Abunimah’s new book, *The Battle for Justice in Palestine*.

In 2013, the efforts of groups like USACBI brought the question of Palestinian human rights smack into the center of academia. In just a few months, three North American academic organizations voted to

boycott Israeli universities: the Association of Asian American Studies was first, passing a resolution last spring, then the American Studies Association, and soon after the Native American and Indigenous Studies Association. SJP chapters swung into action to defend their professors from the predictable wave of attacks. But the controversy, now reaching the halls of state legislatures, brought the BDS movement even deeper into the mainstream media—the Los Angeles Times, the Washington Post, and the New York Times all carried op-ed pieces in support of the boycott of Israeli universities. It was unprecedented.

The first cracks in the campus bastions of pro-Israel organizing deepened in the winter of 2013–14 as “Open Hillels” formed at Swarthmore and Vassar declaring their intention to work with BDS and other pro-Palestine groups, in open defiance of the Hillels’ mission. Today, the role of JVP in promoting and organizing BDS campaigns against pension giant TIAA-CREF, home carbonation device manufacturer SodaStream, and others has been invaluable. Though as a group JVP focuses only on companies operating in the territories occupied since 1967—not the whole of Israel, as the BDS call targets—JVP has opened itself up to debates about the broader boycott and the question of whether a Jewish state can be defended at all. Many of its members are anti-Zionists, others are more equivocal on that question and just oppose the 1967 occupation. Yet in a movement where charges of “anti-Semitism” are hurled at any criticisms of Israel, having a prominent Jewish organization that connects well over 100,000 Jewish-identified activists is an undeniable advantage in challenging these spurious claims.

Smaller initiatives such as the International Jewish Anti-Zionist Network (IJAN) have joined with American Muslims for Palestine to organize events such as a “Never Again for Anyone” speaking tour with Holocaust survivors speaking alongside Palestinian victims of dispossession advocating BDS. IJAN has spawned Facebook groups like Jews for the Palestinian Right of Return that put out statements signed

by thousands to help amplify the voices of Jews who reject the logic of an ethnically cleansed Jewish state and instead advocate democratic rights for all Palestinians and Jews in one secular state.

Though BDS activists’ early attempts to win university resolutions to divest from companies profiting from Israel’s occupation and apartheid policies were often met with setbacks, the movement has grown more sophisticated. The April 2013 University of California–Berkeley divestment debate and vote expressed the profound distance Generation Palestine has come. For an unprecedented ten hours, speaker after speaker, students of diverse ethnic and religious backgrounds, rose and made eloquent cases for divestment, and the resolution passed. The confidence with which students advocated divestment showed that the BDS movement was transforming campus political culture in many places. BDS activists are beginning to make the question of Palestinian human rights as central to this generation as the issue of the Spanish Civil War was in the thirties or the South African anti-apartheid struggle was in the eighties.

In response to the campus BDS movement’s meteoric rise, Zionists have launched a well-funded and multi-pronged attack. The Israel Action Network began in 2010 with a \$6 million budget with tentacles in more than 400 communities to “serve as a rapid response team charged with countering the growing campaign.” [116] Campus groups have looked to the newly formed Palestine Solidarity Legal Support for help in countering institutional attempts to shut down, silence, and even legally prosecute SJP activists for their Palestine advocacy. The counterattacks from Zionists are raising larger questions among activists about the need for more formal decision-making structures in the national movement, centralization, and political questions about how to best challenge these attempts to discredit their actions. National days of action are now on the agenda for many.

As in other movements, BDS activists

are influenced by the wider currents in the US Left, though the active collaboration with Israel's government by leading Democrats, including President Obama, creates a robust debate about how and whether to get involved in electoral politics. Most activists are extremely critical of the Democrats, though few have formally concluded that independence from them is key.

## **“Palestine’s South Africa moment”**

It is no coincidence that many of the BDS movement's founders and leaders came of age during the victorious final years of the South African anti-apartheid movement. Omar Barghouti, a founding member of BDS and author of *BDS: The Global Struggle for Palestinian Rights*, was an international student at Columbia University in the eighties, the site of one of the most tumultuous campus occupations in the US divestment battle. That generation cut its political teeth in the solidarity movement's final decade, witnessing the victory of Black South African workers against apartheid. Barghouti often refers to the meteoric rise of BDS as “Palestine’s South Africa moment.” The analogy with South Africa is not rhetorical; it is a conscious acknowledgement of the historical and political links between the two apartheid systems and a reference to the methods being employed to bring down the world's last apartheid state.

The word “apartheid” is Afrikaans for “apartness” or “separate.” In 1948—the same year Israel was established as a state—apartheid became the official policy of the white South African government, referring to the laws, policies, and practices established by that government to maintain the supremacy of the white minority over the non-white majority. In 1973, the United Nations General Assembly adopted the International Convention on the Suppression and Punishment of the Crime of Apartheid, [117] defining apartheid as a crime against humanity, not specific to South Africa. The crime of apartheid is defined by “inhuman acts” committed with the purpose of

imposing racial segregation and discrimination on a targeted group, and establishing domination of one group over another. The Convention specifically prohibits acts “designed to divide the population . . . by the creation of separate reserves and ghettos for the members of a racial group or groups, the prohibition of mixed marriages . . . the expropriation of landed property.” The Convention also prohibits measures that deprive people and organizations of their basic human rights, including the right to work and education, the right to leave and to return to their country, the right to a nationality, the right to freedom of movement and residence.

This describes Israel's political and legal character perfectly. All of these rights are denied Palestinians. Americans know of this kind of formal racial segregation—it was the legal policy of the American South from the late nineteenth century until the 1960s, known as Jim Crow. Though one will never see signs in Tel Aviv or Jerusalem that read: “Jews only” or “Palestinians only,” make no mistake about it: Israel is a Jim Crow state. Israel is an apartheid state, though the workings of the two states' apartheid systems are different in many regards. As Israeli-born socialist Moshé Machover has put it, they are of the same genus but different species. In South Africa, apartheid operated to repress, control, and hyperexploit the indigenous Black population, whereas in Israel apartheid is used to cleanse the nation of its native population.

There is another crucial difference. In South Africa where the overwhelming majority of the population under apartheid was made up of Black workers, their power was capable of landing the deathblow to apartheid. The same cannot be said of Palestine, where the population is not only small but also increasingly disenfranchised. In the case of Palestine, international solidarity from the BDS movement today, and, ultimately, labor actions by workers of the region and beyond, will be decisive in winning Palestinian struggles. Nonetheless, the apartheid analogy applies.

Racial discrimination against the Palestinian people was formalized and institutionalized through the creation

by law of a “Jewish nationality,” which is distinct from Israeli citizenship. No “Israeli” nationality exists in Israel, and their Supreme Court has persistently refused to recognize one as it would end the system of Jewish supremacy in Israel. The 1950 Law of Return entitles all Jews—and only Jews—to the rights of nationals, namely the right to enter “Eretz Yisrael” (Israel and the Occupied Territories) and immediately enjoy full legal and political rights. “Jewish nationality” under the Law of Return is extraterritorial in contravention of international public law norms pertaining to nationality. It includes Jewish citizens of other countries, irrespective of whether they wish to be part of the collective of “Jewish nationals,” and excludes “non-Jews” (i.e., Palestinians) from nationality rights in Israel. Under Israeli law the status of Jewish nationality is accompanied with first-class rights and benefits, which are not granted to Palestinian citizens.

The South African anti-apartheid movement was formally launched in Britain in 1959 as a boycott movement. By the early sixties, the United Nations imposed a partial arms ban; in 1964, South Africa was suspended from participating in the Olympics and banned outright in 1970; the divestment and sanctions movement, however, didn't take off internationally for many years. In 1994, the formal apartheid system was thoroughly dismantled and Nelson Mandela and the African National Congress came to power. Throughout South Africa's apartheid years, Israeli leaders from Golda Meir in the 1940s through Yitzhak Rabin in 1994 were willing to look past the anti-Semitism of South Africa's rulers—some with Nazi pasts—to do secretive arms and trade deals as well as police training with the apartheid state. [118]

The BDS movement unabashedly has taken a page from the successful playbook of the South African anti-apartheid movement. Like Israeli Jews today, the vast majority of South Africa's white population opposed a democratic state and clung to their domination over the Black population until the bitter end. But the domestic resistance of Black South Africans combined with the pressure from the



international anti-apartheid movement led to a total loss of legitimacy of the apartheid regime. Like today, some argued that the boycott would harm the very people the movement aimed to help. Yet then as now, the indigenous population was both the initiator and defender of the call for boycott, divestment, and sanctions. Today, some of the same figures who led the South African movement are speaking out against Israel's apartheid and advocating BDS.

"The same issues of inequality and injustice today motivate the divestment movement trying to end Israel's decades-long occupation of Palestinian territory and the unfair and prejudicial treatment of the Palestinian people by the Israeli government ruling over them," [119] argues South Africa's Archbishop Desmond Tutu. South African anti-apartheid activists Suraya Dado and Muhammed Desai insist a debt of gratitude is owed: "It is our duty as South Africans to stand in solidarity with the Palestinian people [120]

The fake shanty towns that college students set up on their campuses to portray the segregation and misery of life in South Africa's Black slums has an echo in the mock checkpoints BDS activists set up to dramatize daily conditions for Palestinians trying to travel from home to work. The days-long teach-ins of the South African anti-apartheid movement have their match in the annual Israeli Apartheid Week, which celebrated its tenth year this winter. The phony apartheid passbooks identifying people by their race that students made in the eighties have their counterpart in the faux eviction notices passed under dormroom doors to educate students about what the IDF does before violently driving Palestinians from their homes. The examples are growing as an older generation shares its experiences with their young peers in the movement, and workshops on lessons from the South African anti-apartheid movement have become de rigueur at BDS conferences.

What is so striking about the BDS movement today is the rapidity with which it has made advances in just nine years. Not only is Israel

becoming a pariah state in the eyes of growing numbers of people, but the financial losses are taking a greater toll sooner than activists had dared hope. Israel's Maariv newspaper reports that at least \$30 million have been lost so far due to BDS, mostly in the agricultural sector. [121] Top officials in Israel today call BDS Israel's "greatest threat [122]

However, no state, and surely not this closest of US allies, would accept these blows without striking back. Abunimah, Blumenthal, and others have detailed the official and clandestine means by which Israel is trying to "delegitimize the delegitimizers." From multimillion-dollar campaigns that "sabotage and attack" activists to propaganda attempts at promoting Israel's limited LGBT rights ("pinkwashing"), Israel's hasbara (propaganda) efforts are sleek, well-financed, and supported by figures throughout the US establishment. Legislators in New York, Florida, Illinois, and Pennsylvania have put forward bills that attempt to squash criticism of Israel on US campuses in the wake of the recent boycott resolutions. President Obama made sure to join the chorus against BDS at this year's AIPAC conference.

Achieving the ultimate goals of the movement—"ending the occupation and apartheid policies as well as allowing the right of return"—remains far in the future and cannot be won by BDS alone. Though BDS is a magnificent tactic for winning sympathy and drawing activists into solidarity with Palestinians, even landing financial and ideological blows against Israel, it is ultimately a struggle for reforms within capitalism—"an exploitative system that is part of an imperial order.

Socialists must support this rising movement, though not all do. At the very heart of socialist ideals lies international solidarity with the struggles of the oppressed, which BDS surely is. Yet some socialists argue that the movement is either not radical enough in its adherence to a human rights framework or must be opposed because it could hurt Palestinian and Israeli Jewish workers.

First and foremost, as a movement launched and led by Palestinians across the political spectrum—"extraordinary in and of itself given the historic splits"—BDS is an expression of the self-determination of the Palestinians. Its human rights-based framework uses international law to expose the hypocrisy of nations like the United States that claim adherence to such high-minded principles, yet defy them in their collusion with apartheid Israel.

Yet the reformist nature of BDS is not a reason for socialists to oppose it any more than other reform movements. Virtually all social and economic justice struggles, including unionization drives, would be shunned by socialists if that were the case. The movement's limitations instead require socialists to raise broader anti-imperialist and internationalist class solidarity politics within the BDS movement, as members of the International Socialist Organization do as active participants in campus and community-based BDS groups. A strength of the current BDS movement is that conferences and educational events have begun to take up questions and debates about what has worked and failed so far in the revolutions of the Arab world these last years. However, it is a weakness of the movement so far that most groups become so immersed in day-to-day logistical planning that deeper political questions are often sidelined in the interests of expediency. It is a tension in every movement, but one that must be addressed if the ultimate aim of liberation is ever to be achieved. The emboldened global movement for BDS must be won to a clearer analysis of imperialism and the centrality of workers' power, unlikely to happen without the active engagement of socialists inside the movement, developing the ties and political credibility to gain a wider hearing for these ideas as struggles in the Arab world place these questions front and center.

The challenge that BDS might hurt Palestinian workers echoes the arguments made against the South African anti-apartheid movement. Palestinian workers' organizations, like Black workers' unions in South

Africa who supported anti-apartheid efforts, have signed onto the BDS call. So this argument flies in the face of what those presumably most affected are demanding of us. What's more, the notion that Israeli workers might be hurt by BDS may be accurate, but concerns here are misplaced. Jewish Israeli workers, like those the world over, are exploited and oppressed by their own ruling class. But their overwhelming support for the ongoing displacement, occupation, and repression of Palestinians must be confronted, not accommodated. Overwhelming support for the occupation among Israeli Jews, including a whopping 90 percent support for the brutal siege of Gaza, [123]

is further testament to the fact that the vast majority of Jewish workers in Israel have thrown their lot in with the Zionist state against Palestinians.

The handful of Jewish Israelis who defy Israel's policies, most famously Ilan Pappé and Amira Haass, the activists in Boycott From Within, and other small pro-Palestine groups warrant our solidarity, but they are a stark exception to the rule. There is a much-needed update to the 1969 essay on the class character of Israeli society, [124] but the central features of the argument remain intact: the financial subsidization of Jewish Israeli society and the Praetorian Guard role Israel plays for the US Empire in the Middle East distort the "normal" class relations in that country. Until that dynamic is upended, Jewish Israeli workers are not going to break with Zionism en masse.

The focus of the international solidarity movement must therefore remain on those forces inside Palestine and internationally who are willing and able to act. The road to Palestinian liberation continues to run

through the major industrial centers of the region where the potential of revolutionary victories led by the working class of the Arab world lies, from Cairo to Amman. But as the world has seen in these last years, this is likely to be a years-long process.

There have yet to be significant policy changes to alleviate the suffering of Palestinians in the Occupied Territories and Israel. But the ideological tectonic plates beneath Israel's support have shifted, and a new global human rights movement is on the rise. When Israeli officials speak of a "demographic threat" they usually mean the domestic Palestinian population. The BDS movement has shown that the real demographic threat to Israel's stability is the rise of Generation Palestine.

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## **In Response to the US the Supreme Court against Argentina - Don't owe, won't pay: YES to life! NO more vultures!**

**7 August 2014, by Jubilee Debt**

Both decisions are as reprehensible as expected. In a world where human life, the life of nature, sovereignty and the rights of peoples and nations are increasingly undermined by the actions of big business - the financialization and perpetual crisis of the global capitalist economy, the rise of the casino economy, the intensification of its exploitative and predatory power over human labor and natural goods - these decisions exemplify the consolidation of a legal-political institutionality that recognizes no limit to usury and capitalist greed. A veritable architecture of impunity that, starting with the U.S. Foreign Sovereign Immunity Act which in 1976 established that the sovereignty of

nations ends when the market so decides, has been built up over the subsequent years of neoliberal boom through the signing of multiple treaties and agreements of "free trade", "economic cooperation", investment protection, and the waiver of national sovereignty to foreign courts and arbitration forums such as the ICSID.

### **The attack of these hedge funds is not new.**

Notwithstanding the backing they have now received from the US' highest court, it is part of a process of

bloody, illegitimate, and illegal indebtedness whose high cost the people of Argentina have been paying for far too many years. Without going back any further in history, the bonds now in the claws of these vultures can be traced directly to the odious debts accumulated by the dictatorship ('76 - '83) and the debt imposed during the '90s, under the extorsive power of those same debts and the decisive support of the IMF, World Bank, Paris Club, and others. A debt that was found to be fraudulent and arbitrary (Olmos Case, Case No. 14.467, Federal Court No. 2 for Criminal and Correctional Matters, Federal Capital, July 13, 2000) and which is still the subject of ongoing judicial investigations in other Argentine

courts.

30,000 peoples disappeared, the privatization and denationalization of public patrimony, the successive structural adjustments and the economic collapse of 2001 with its horrendous consequences in terms of impoverishment, unemployment, exclusion and the reorganization of the economy, deepening its exploitative and extractive nature so as to be better able to service a debt which, for its proven illegalities, long ago should have been declared null and void. These are just some examples of the human, social, economic, and ecological cost that will only continue to grow if the underlying problems are not addressed.

So far, the Argentine government has tried to “win” the game of debt, playing with the same rules established by its purported creditors. Its aim is to return to international capital markets in order to borrow more and continue its dependency and submission to the domination exercised by those very markets. While the government keeps betting on a “more humane” capitalism however, that same capital keeps reaffirming that its very nature is exploitative and predatory. The results are clear: despite the fact that Argentina has made debt service payments of more than USD 400 billion since the end of the dictatorship in 1983, and more than USD 174 billion in the last decade alone, over that same period the debt has increased from USD 43 billion to more than USD 240 billion. The fact that the partial moratorium on debt payments, after the collapse of 2001, allowed Argentina to begin a process of economic recovery, clearly shows that there are alternatives to paying over and over for a debt that is not even owed.

## **Do not let the vultures continue flying!**

We call on peoples, movements and organizations, governments and institutions of integration, especially

here in our America and throughout the South, to join forces to stop this onslaught and the possibility that the vultures of any ilk, continue to live off us. In particular, we call for support of the demands and actions expressed by numerous Argentine organizations and popular leaders, as in their declaration **VULTURES NEVER AGAIN:**

â€¢ Support the Argentine people in their struggle to stop paying what they do not owe. Whatever measures are taken by the government now, for the people of Argentina the cost of continuing to recognize and pay debts that have been proven to be fraudulent is already too high. Let us unite behind their demand that the Argentine government suspend all payments until a participatory and comprehensive audit of the various claims can be completed, building on the criminal investigations already realized or in process. This would help to separate out those debt claims that are illegitimate and illegal and enable priority to be placed where it should be: on payment of the social debt to the only proven legitimate creditors: the Argentine people.

â€¢ Support the right of the Argentine government to not give into these hedge funds or vultures of any kind, notwithstanding the unfair backing of the U.S. judiciary or wherever. It is important to remember that not all laws are just, and unjust laws should be resisted until they are overturned. The Guiding Principles on External Debt and Human Rights reaffirm that human rights, including in particular economic, social, and cultural rights, take precedence over any commercial agreement or debt contract. They underscore for lender and borrower states, financial companies and investors, and multilateral institutions directly involved in the processes of indebting sovereign nations, that it is the right and obligation of States to take the necessary measures to comply first and foremost with the human rights of their populations, as well as to not pay debts that are odious or whose legitimacy and legality have not been established. They also reaffirm the obligation of all States to fulfill, and enforce, these rights.

â€¢ Call on the Argentine government,

and all governments that want to protect their populations and prevent new vulture attacks, to put an end to the privileges and impunity of such transnationals, by:

Annuling and ending further recognition of the waivers of sovereignty imposed in debt contracts and the extension of jurisdiction to foreign courts and extra-judicial arbitration forums such as ICSID, where other vultures nest;

Denouncing and stopping further negotiations and the signing of free trade and investment protection treaties and agreements which involve the surrender of our sovereignty to big business and the merchants of capital.

â€¢ Call on all governments, particularly in Latin America and the Caribbean and the rest of the global South, on the institutions of integration such as UNASUR, ALBA, CELAC, the G77, to support Argentina in the direction indicated and to advance together in the creation of new policies, instruments and institutions that break once and for all with the neoliberal, capitalist schemes imposed and allow us to build on the basis of what is ours, including for example a South Solidarity Bank and the adoption of national, regional, and international laws and policies of control over capital movements and transnational corporations in general, in order to effectively subject them to sovereignty and respect for all human rights.

The vultures will not find it so easy to continue flying over us if our countries do not allow them to pass. Together we can move forward in the building of new realities of life and bien vivir, putting an end as well to the impunity with which the international economic and financial system works and ensuring that those responsible for the crimes committed make reparations, paying the debts they have accumulated to us.

We don't owe, we won't pay! The only true creditors are the people!

**We invite other organizations to add their support, sending a message to [nuncamasbuitres@gmail.com](mailto:nuncamasbuitres@gmail.com) - You**

**might also consider presenting this statement to the Argentine embassy in your country, your own government and other relevant institutions. Keep us informed of your actions!**

31 July 2014

Regional and global endorsements, as of 31.7.14:

*African Forum for Alternatives, Dakar, Senegal*

Amigos de la Tierra América Latina y el Caribe ATALC  
ARCADE, Dakar, Senegal

BiaÁ'lii, AsesorÁa e Investigación, A.C., México

Centre national de coopération au développement, CNCD-11.11.11. Bélgica

Colectivo Voces Ecológicas COVEC, Panamá

Comité por la Anulación Deuda Tercer Mundo - Abya Yala - Nuestra América CADTM - AYNÁ

Comité por la Anulación Deuda Tercer Mundo (CADTM)

Internacional Development alternatives with Women for a New Era (DAWN)

Diverse Voices and Action for Equality, Fiji

Ecologistas en Acción, Estado espaÁol

Ecuador Decide, Ecuador

Equipo del periódico "El Independiente", El Salvador

Equity and Justice Working Group (EquityBD), Bangladesh

Federación Nacional de Sindicatos Bancarios FENASIBANCOL, Colombia

Foro Social México Global, México

Freedom from Debt Coalition, Filipinas

Global Exchange, EE.UU.

Grupo Tacuba, México  
Indian Social Action Forum - INSAF, New Delhi, India

Instituto Políticas Alternativas para o Cone Sul - PACS, Brasil

Jóvenes frente al G20, México

Jubilee Debt Campaign, Reino Unido

Jubilee Oregon, EE.UU.

Jubilee South-Asia/Pacific Movement on Debt and Development

Movimiento mundial por los bosques tropicales (WRM)

ONG DesafÁo, Santa Cruz, Bolivia

Otros Mundos, A.C./Amigos de la Tierra México

Pakistan Fisherfolk Forum, Paquistán

PAPDA, HaitÁ

Partido Popular Tekojoja (Vivir en igualdad) del Paraguay

Platform of Filipino Migrant Organisations in Europe

Plataforma Auditoria Ciudadana de la Deuda, Estado espaÁol

Plataforma Ciudadana por la Auditoria de la Deuda PÁblica en Colombia

Plataforma Descam Uruguay

Plataforma Interamericana de Derechos Humanos, Democracia y Desarrollo (PIDHDD)

Red del Tercer Mundo / Third World Network

Rede Jubileu Sul Brasil

REDES-Amigos de la Tierra (FoE), Uruguay

Sanlakas, Filipinas

Transnational Institute, Holanda

Unidad Ecologica Salvadoreña UNES, El Salvador

A Ercelan, World Fisherfolk Forum, Paquistán

Alberto Rabilotta, periodista argentino-canadiense  
Cyril Bowman, Irlanda

Dr. Daniel Ozarow, Argentina  
Research Network, Reino Unido

Dr. Eugenia Correa, Posgrado de EconomÁa-UNAM, México

Dr. Ramiro Chimuris, Uruguay

Fernando Montalbán Blanco, miembro de El Mensaje de Silo de Nuevo

Baztán Madrid, EspaÁa

Francine Mestrum, Global Social Justice, Brussels

Gigi Francisco, DAWN General Coordinator

Gladys Hernández, Centro de Investigación de la EconomÁa Mundial CIEM, Cuba

John Dillon, Coordinador del Programa de EconomÁa Ecológica, KAIROS:

Iniciativas Ecuémicas Canadienses para la Justicia, Canadá

MarÁa Elena Saludas (ATTAC / CADTM - AYNÁ)

Paul-Emile Dupret, jurista, Parlamento europeo, grupo GUE/NGL de Bélgica

Pedro Córdoba Del Campo, CEDAL-PerÁ

VÁctor Regalado, periodista, El Salvador

Europe solidaire sans frontières (ESSF), France

<http://dialogo2000.blogspot.fr/2014...>



# Ending Zionism is a feminist issue

6 August 2014, by **Nada Elia**

As Jadaliyya's Maya Mikdashi asks in her op-ed titled "Can Palestinian men be victims?", if a significant majority of the killed were adult men, would Israel's crimes be lesser?

A different analysis of gendered violence is necessary: one that recognizes that no "proportions" are acceptable because all deaths should be mourned, while providing the tools for a differential understanding of the manifestations of violence.

## Rape calls

The feminist network INCITE! Women and Trans People of Color Against Violence has always understood that state violence is both racialized and gendered.

Zionism is a prime example of that; it is a racist ideology grounded in the privileging of one ethno-religious group over all others.

When a state views a population "as its dispossessed, disenfranchised and occupied indigenous population" as a "demographic threat," that view is fundamentally both racist and gendered.

Racist population control relies specifically on violence against women. So it is not surprising that Mordechai Kedar, an Israeli military intelligence officer turned academic, would matter-of-factly suggest this week that "raping the wives and mothers of Palestinian combatants" would deter attacks by Hamas militants.

Similarly, Israeli lawmaker Ayelet Shaked did not attempt to present the murder of Palestinian children and their mothers as unfortunate, disproportionate "collateral damage" "she openly called for it by asserting that Palestinian women must be killed too, because they give birth

to "little snakes."

This comment reflects an Israeli infrastructure designed to sustain high rates of miscarriages by blocking basic resources such as water and medical supplies, forcing women in labor to wait at military checkpoints on their way to a hospital, and generally creating inhumane and unlivable conditions for Palestinians.

This latest murderous attack on Palestinians in the Gaza Strip has not only taken the lives of hundreds of Palestinians, but it has also increased miscarriages, pre-term labor and stillbirths.

Ethiopian-Israeli women, most of them Jewish, have also been subject to mandatory contraceptive injections without their consent.

Ending Zionism is a feminist and a reproductive justice issue.

## Liberating women?

Of course, gendered violence as a tool for settler-colonialism is not a new strategy; settler-colonialism, patriarchy and official hypocrisy usually go hand in hand.

Nineteenth-century France claimed to be liberating Algerian women even as it torched entire villages and towns. The proverbial colonial white man would have us believe that he was acting on the selfless impulse to save brown women from brown men, even as the colonial power he served impoverished entire countries.

Algerian women were certainly no better off as result of French colonialism; in fact, their circumstances deteriorated significantly.

The George W. Bush administration gave itself a pat on the back for supposedly liberating women in

Afghanistan from the Taliban. Yet we see throughout history, and not just in Afghanistan, Iran, Iraq, Algeria or Palestine, that wars have never liberated women and gender nonconforming people of color.

## New brand of hypocrisy

Today, Israel has developed a new brand of this hypocrisy, as it claims that it is more civilized than the Palestinian people because it is supposedly a more "gay-friendly" country. This is pinkwashing, Israel's attempt to distract from its ongoing human rights violations by pointing to its supposedly better gay rights record.

But that record, once again, is racist.

Any Jewish citizen of Israel can and must serve in the Israeli occupation forces, but these are the murderous forces engaging in the genocide of the Palestinian people.

Does it make for a more moral army if some of its killer soldiers are openly gay? Stop to think of who the purveyor of the greater violence is. Who is denying Palestinian women, children, gays, lesbians, trans people and straight men their most basic rights "freedom of movement, safety, shelter, food, a home, life? One has to acknowledge that the guilty party is "civilized" Israel, not Palestinian heteropatriarchy.

War "militarism" is a hyper-masculinist activity that glorifies and rewards all violence, including gendered violence, and a soldier trained in violence cannot put that violence aside when he or she gets home.

All of Israeli society is trained in violence. And violence is not a pair of



combat boots one can leave at the door; violence becomes second nature (unless it was first nature, in which case it is further aggravated) and the entire community that engages in warfare is a more violent community â€” not just at the war front.

## Joint struggle

This is what we are witnessing today, as we have observed it again and again every time Israel escalates its assault on the Palestinian people.

As for Palestinians, there are no battlefronts, no "war zones." All of historic Palestine is the battlefront as mobs of Israelis take to the streets in violent rampages.

This realization has always been at the very core of INCITE's analysis. We understand that in situations of settler-colonialism, indigenous women, trans people and gender non-conforming people bear the brunt of a nexus of racism and sexism. We are engaging in a joint struggle, from

India to the Arab world to South West Asia, to Africa and the Americas, for the dignity and full sovereignty of indigenous people.

This is why INCITE! endorsed, in 2010, the Palestinian call for boycott, divestment and sanctions against Israel and remains committed to the grassroots struggle against state-sponsored violence against the entire Palestinian people.

24 July 2014

[The Electronic Intifada](#)

# An environmental crossroads in Morocco

5 August 2014, by **Chris Williams**

In many ways, Morocco exemplifies the cultural possibilities of a freer humanity. One meets on the streets, fields, mountains and deserts of this geographically and climatologically variegated country, a population universally fluent in at least two languages, many effortlessly switching, mid-sentence, between Arabic, French and Amazigh, the mother tongue of 50 percent of Moroccans. Hospitality to guests is taken very seriously; meals among friends and family are shared and eaten communally, while a common glass is passed around for drinking water. A large percentage of the land is held in common and administered locally by elected tribal leaders for the benefit of all.

A cradle of cultural intermixing, Morocco sits at the crossroads of empires, past and present. A mere 12 miles from Europe, fringed by the warm waters of the Mediterranean to the north, the fisheries of the Atlantic Ocean to the west, crisscrossed by the snowcapped Atlas mountains, providing the lifeblood for the agricultural areas and floodplains of the coast as rivers descend to the sea, and bordered to the south by the gigantic dunes of the Sahara, fading east toward Algeria, its people are comfortable in many social, ecological

and cultural worlds.

Unfortunately, seldom have Moroccans been able or allowed to decide their own destiny, despite formal independence from the French in 1956. Classified by the World Bank as part of the strategically important MENA region (Middle East-North Africa), a term invented to cover 20 predominantly Arabic countries without mentioning the word "Arab," Morocco replicates the colonial moniker of "Middle East" as a designation foreign to the people who live there, but useful for the people who don't.

Al-Maghrib, the Arabic for "Morocco," translates as "where the sun sets." For the people who called it home, looking out over the vastness of the Atlantic Ocean ("the sea of darkness"), it was the most westerly point one could go by land. Hence, to be reclassified in the middle of somewhere designated "east," brings into sharp relief who was making the new maps, and to what aim.

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Though many countries in MENA share a common language and religion, they are in many ways a heterogeneous and arbitrary

grouping, pulled together by the World Bank on the basis of forming a "market unit." Despite that, distinguished economically for instance, they straddle the dividing line between oil-rich and oil-poor: 55 percent of the world's known oil reserves, 840 billion barrels, are found underneath the OPEC countries of the area, along with 80 trillion cubic meters of natural gas (40 percent of world reserves). Yet, countries such as Morocco and Egypt hold none.

Naturally, this makes countries on either side of this accident of geology, which intersects with linguistic, geographical, historical and colonial factors in the establishment of national borders, have completely different economic trajectories and levels of development.

After the Second World War, the recognition that oil was essential to modern warfare, transportation and the newly expanding petrochemical industry made the region the epicenter of geopolitical intrigue, instability and the power plays of nation-states committed to global and regional dominion.

The creation of the state of Israel out of the partition of Palestine in 1948, the ensuing subjugation of the

Palestinians and subsequent use of the country to further Western imperial interests, most especially control over the huge concentration of natural resources central to the world economy, lies at the center of the region's volatility.

Once they supplanted the British and French, as a means of securing their supremacy, successive U.S. governments have sponsored a long line of assorted, unsavory dictatorships and feudal ruling families, whose commonality has been their distaste for democracy and human rights, so fueling further unrest.

Conveniently omitting the influence of great powers' rivalry, the World Bank described the MENA region as having its "economic fortunes over much of the past quarter century...heavily influenced by two factors—the price of oil and the legacy of economic policies and structures that had emphasized a leading role for the state."

Ever eager to help poor people the world over, the World Bank continues:

With about 23 percent of the 300 million people in the Middle East and North Africa living on less than \$2 a day, empowering poor people constitutes an important strategy for fighting poverty. Through a combination of analytical, advisory, and lending services, the Bank aims to provide poor people with the necessary skills, resources, and infrastructure to improve the quality of their lives.

A constitutional monarchy that is in fact ruled in absolute terms by the king, his family and associated elite, Morocco is a country that has closely followed the prescriptions of the World Bank, yet still finds itself with deep-seated poverty, particularly in rural areas, inequality, and only the barest facade of democratic governance. In Morocco, the small number of people who run the country clustered around the king are known by Moroccans as "Makhzen," which translates as "warehouse," as they collect and store the wealth of the country and its people.

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At the behest of international lenders, between 1985 and 1993, Morocco went through a series of World Bank-mandated structural adjustment programs, which removed subsidies and import controls, and officially joined the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT). As a result, Morocco became subject to the vagaries of the world financial system.

Though Morocco's official unemployment rate is "only" 9.1 to 9.5 percent (because this counts only what the government defines as the "active population"), the real number is closer to 28 percent, with a disproportionately high number amongst the rural, non-literate population, which is disproportionately women.

According to Hakech Mohammed, general secretary of the National Federation of the Agricultural Sector, a member of Via Campesina, even though 70 percent of farms in Morocco are less than five hectares (approximately 10 acres), they occupy only 24 percent of the usable agricultural area (UAA) and account for very little of irrigated land. On the other hand, farmers with over 100 hectares and 0.2 percent of the agricultural workforce, control 8.7 percent of UAA.

The Moroccan government, which in practice means King Mohammed VI, and his entourage, along with the leaders of the army, used the recession of 2008, which saw massive amounts of money flowing into agriculture for land speculation, leading to rapid increases in food costs and rioting across the country, to put in place the Green Morocco Plan (GMP).

The goals of this plan are to increase the productivity of Moroccan agriculture by mechanization, irrigation and other fossil fuel inputs such as fertilizers and pesticides, while cutting down on labor employment and pay, and to produce crops for export markets rather than subsistence.

According to Hakech, the results after five years have been a social and ecological disaster. The number of small farmers has decreased, as larger

farms and international investors have benefitted from the skewing of grants and subsidies their way; there has been an increase in exploitation of agricultural workers to reduce costs, and a depletion of natural resources, particularly water, as ground water has been polluted from the excessive and often unregulated use of synthetic chemicals.

To pay for one year of wheat imports, in a country where voluminous quantities of delicious bread accompany every meal, requires the export of four years of tomato production, the equivalent of exporting vast quantities of water, as traditional techniques for farming are being destroyed.

As Hakech points out, more industrial agriculture, strongly encouraged by the Green Morocco Plan, means an increase in the need for oil, hence making Morocco more subservient to international oil interests. For Hakech, the real solution to issues of water and land, a large percentage of which is held in common, is to remove the elite and the army, who control most of the land, through the rearrangement of social power via a social movement, and redistribute the land with an emphasis on family and small-scale farming that aims to reverse the flow of people from rural to urban areas that is depopulating the countryside, so depleting farming areas of knowledge and labor, and fueling the exponential and unsustainable growth of cities.

Without the distorting bounty of fossil fuels, Morocco imports 97 percent of all its energy: natural gas from Algeria, electricity from Spain and coal and oil by ship. At 35 percent, it has the highest illiteracy in the Arab world, a number that can rise to 95 percent among rural women.

It is a country particularly vulnerable to climate change, with an increasing number of very hot days, which will increase evaporation from the soil, decreased rainfall, with increased unpredictability and increases in the severity of extreme weather events, as extended droughts or torrential downpours and flooding become more prevalent.

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With climate change, an already arid country, one that so lacks rainfall in the south that the country becomes desert, is becoming gradually drier. The MENA region is home to 6 percent of the world's population, but has less than 1 percent of renewable water resources. Countries such as Algeria, Libya, Yemen, Jordan and Palestine are already suffering from acute water shortages (defined as less than 500 cubic meters per person per year).

Just as the rains become less dependable and decrease in amount, a greater and greater amount of fresh water is needed. Irrigation is by far the largest single user of water, at a moment in time when agriculture is being switched to often water-intensive, cash crops for export. In addition, the government is behind plans for a massive expansion of the tourism industry, with the building of giant new tourist resorts.

The government's "Plan Azur" calls for the construction of six tourist "stations," along the Mediterranean coastal area of Saïdia and the Atlantic, covering a total of 7 million square meters. One of the six already under construction, in Saïdia, will "develop" one of Morocco's most important hotspots of biodiversity, the estuary of the Oued Melouia, home to some of Morocco's rarest species, living in and amongst its dune forests.

The project is to set to accommodate 29,000 beds. But according to engineer and agronomist Benata Mohamed, government worker turned local resistance leader, protests against the project began in 2006 because "they waged a war against nature and against the local population," as an entire ecosystem, unique to Morocco, is in the process of being destroyed for short-term gain.

To complement the hotel complex, a new marina was built. Unfortunately, as Mohamed explains, the marina has blocked the movement of sand left and right along the beach, which has not only made the marina inoperable due to siltation, but it is also leading to massive beach erosion: In the four years since construction, the beach

has retreated 25 meters.

This is compounded by the planners who, in order to be more appealing to tourists, want a beach kept free of the local vegetation: exactly the plants that helped keep the beach together in the first place and are essential to the local ecosystem. Hence, within 10 to 20 years, the beautiful beach, one of the main reasons for the original siting of the hotel complex, will be gone.

In the meantime, as their land has been stolen, local people have been concentrated in smaller and smaller areas, the huge increase in demand for drinking water has meant shortages in the nearby city, and a lack of waste treatment and disruption have led to problems with a shrunk bird habitat, once home to over 200 species.

The fact that the project is clearly so short-term and unsustainable is not a concern according to Mohamed because "it was never about development, but making a profit by speculation...this is a project for the rich people to become richer." For example, despite digging a canal to prevent flooding of the new tourist complex, the water table is too high, and so the Barcelona Hotel, which was supposed to be open all year round, has only been open for three months at a time.

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Mohammed had his eyes opened to wider issues when he learned that the whole Atlantic coast of Morocco, along with the central Atlas chain, the primary source of water for Morocco, has been divided up by oil and gas fracking companies for prospective drilling, with the acquiescence of the king.

After seeing the documentary Gasland, he described Josh Fox as his hero because the film is "an extraordinary documentary that woke up the world" and which led Mohamed to organize an anti-fracking conference of all the countries of the Maghreb. Part of the reason for doing so, was because, as Mohamed said, "We need to organize ourselves on the international level, just like the corporations."

The oil and gas corporations that want to operate in Morocco have been granted 10 years of tax-free status and are allowed to take 75 percent of the revenue. If they find something, they have the right to exploit it for 25 years. But Benata Mohamed, and the democratic ecological and social movement of which he belongs, are not about to give up, despite some recent losses and government repression. As he said, "We are required and obliged to defend our national heritage because if we don't, they will destroy everything. Everyday you hear about somewhere in the world where people are resisting, and so we know we can fight."

According to the state energy and water company, ONEE, as Morocco became a middle-income country with annual growth rates of 5 percent, electricity demand, which was a tiny 384 megawatts in 1970, by 2012 had risen to 5,280 megawatts, as electrification took off across the country and many rural towns received their first ever electricity in the 1990s. Between 2000 and 2013 there was an annual increase in electrical demand of 7.3 percent.

Demand is anticipated to double by 2020 and quadruple by 2040. Therefore, the question is: How will this be provided? Can Morocco become more "energy independent" by building more hydroelectric dams and allowing Western oil companies to frack for oil and gas? Will the country engage in a dramatic build out of solar power, and if so, how would it transport the electricity from where it would most easily be generated but is also the least populated, in the south of the country, to get to the agricultural areas and population centers of the north? Or will the country continue to build coal and gas-fired power plants fueled with imported gas and coal?

According to government propaganda, renewables are "at the heart of Morocco's energy plan." However, there is precious little evidence of that, beyond grandiose plans for 42 percent of electricity demand (of a 50 percent larger total) to be provided from renewable sources by 2020, a mere six years away.

The Moroccan solar energy agency MASEN has plans to build 2,000 megawatts of concentrated solar power plants at five sites, though \$9 billion is required for the project, money Morocco does not have. Similarly, wind power is set to be developed on 14 sites, also to provide a projected 2,000 megawatts, requiring a \$3.5 billion investment.

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Though more dams are also being built, the existing ones, originally built for flood control and irrigation rather than electricity production, are often below capacity due to changes in rainfall patterns and hotter days. As a lead water engineer responsible for the development of the Mdez dam in the region of Sefrou and the associated river basin told me, the ultimate objective of his job, as described in the 1990s, was to ensure that "not a single drop of water reaches the ocean."

Much of the water that does reach the sea is heavily polluted from industry, agriculture and untreated human sewage, killing off most of the formerly abundant river life. Less rainfall means an increase in the concentration and impact of pollution. Meanwhile, notwithstanding increases to the amount of land devoted to farming, increased irrigation and the ongoing switch to more water-intensive cash crops, increases in drought conditions and higher rates of evaporation mean there is already a built-in increase in the need for irrigation.

Hence, supply is going down while demand is going up for the exact same reason: climate change. A side effect of that process is the increased drilling for well water by desperate farmers. Economics professor Mehdi Lahlou of Mohammed V University in

Rabat, and founder of the Association for the World Contract on Water, notes that 20 years ago it was possible to drill down 50 to 60 meters to find a reliable water source. Today, one must drill down 200 to 300 meters.

The conflict over water and the priorities of "development" are perhaps nowhere better exemplified than in Ben Smim, a village of 3,000 inhabitants high in the Atlas Mountains. When a water bottling company first came to the village in 2001, hoping to take advantage of the pure mountain stream water that had sustained the villagers and their cattle breeding since the 17th century, tribal elder Moulay Tahiri Alaoui organized the resistance.

A union worker and activist since his days working at the hulking tuberculosis sanatorium nearby, built by the French in the colonial period and long-since abandoned, Tahiri knew from the beginning that the people's water would be stolen and their access restricted. He was becoming progressively more worried about the increasing number of droughts and knew that the villagers' way of life would be further threatened should the village's spring be diverted by the Euro-Africaine des Eaux water bottling company.

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Over the ensuing years, the villagers staged a heroic resistance, including occupations, petitions and blockades. Women were at the forefront of the protests because they bear the brunt of water-related activities. The authorities responded with repression, arrests, including of tribal elder Tahiri, and for a period of time, the cordoning off of the entire village from the outside world. The protests reached the king, and some compensation and extra jobs were

promised, along with new roads, to make up for the ones the company was destroying with their trucks.

The combination of repression, arrests, jail terms and bribes, were enough to force the villagers to concede their historical common water rights. Since 2010, when the company completed construction of the plant and began operation, it has created only 10 jobs and withdraws over 300,000 liters of water a day from the communal spring that is now fenced off. As Tahiri predicted, villagers have been forced to ration water for domestic and agricultural use and move to a multi-day rotation system, whereby houses have water only every third day.

Though repression has intensified, especially against members of the February 20th Movement, which emerged in the wake of the Arab Spring and was central to demands for a new constitution that would reduce the power of the king, people across Morocco continue to organize, most recently in the giant trade union march against austerity on April 6, 2014, when members of the February 20th Movement were again arrested and jailed in an unprovoked police crackdown.

As a young female leader of the movement told me, "Before the movement, we didn't have a united front. We were aware of all the injustices—women, destruction of the environment, stealing of land. But before the February 20th Movement, we didn't put all these together."

She continued, "It's not a question of hope or inspiration; it's a question of injustice and oppression. If that continues, then so do we."

July 31, 2014

[Truthout](#)

## How can we protect our clinics?

4 August 2014, by **Madeline Burrows**



A group of elderly men stood outside the clinic, holding giant doctored photos of mutilated fetuses. They accosted us as we entered. "You don't have to do this today!" they yelled. I was so furious that I was shaking. I yelled the first thing that came to my mind: "Stop telling women what to do. You people make me sick." He responded, "We love women! You give life! You are the most amazing creatures in the world!"

Creatures. Not humans. Not people. Not women. Creatures.

Unsurprisingly, I was angry.

As we proceeded into the clinic waiting room, I noticed bulletproof glass. We passed through a metal detector, and I had to dump out my water bottle. Confused as to why this was necessary, I asked the security guard. He explained that this was to protect against liquid explosives used by anti-choice activists. The bulletproof glass was a response to clinic shootings.

According to the National Abortion Federation, there have been 100 reported butyric acid attacks at abortion clinics in the U.S. and Canada since 1977. In one such attack in 1978, an anti-abortion activist entered a clinic in Cleveland, threw flammable liquid in the face of a receptionist, blinding her, and set fire to the interior of the building.

In 1994, anti-abortion activist John Salvi III entered two separate abortion clinics in Brookline, Mass., and opened fire, killing two female receptionists and wounding five other people.

It was not long after this that abortion rights supporters began to push for laws creating a buffer zone around clinics, designed to keep out the anti-abortion fanatics.

But now, thanks to the U.S. Supreme Court's unanimous—unanimous!—decision to strike down the buffer zone law in Massachusetts, anti-choice activists feel even more emboldened and entitled to bring their reactionary message to the doors of abortion clinics.

The ruling has had a noticeable impact on patient safety. According to Marty Walz, chief executive of Planned Parenthood of Massachusetts, the Boston clinic has seen fewer patients and more skipped appointments since the Supreme Court decision in June.

Like many people, I am angry about the Supreme Court's buffer zone decision. I am angry about the subsequent Hobby Lobby decision restricting birth control, which can be summed up by this equation: Corporations > Women and Workers.

Like many people, these decisions reminded me that the Supreme Court is a profoundly undemocratic institution, where an unelected group composed mostly of aging white men has the power to make decisions that effect all of our lives.

Like many people, I have been glad to see the angry response to these anti-woman decisions. I was glad to see my Facebook feed overwhelmed by outrage after the decisions. I was even more glad to see demonstrations, including a large rally in Boston organized by NARAL, which brought out over 600 demonstrators—by far the biggest local demonstration around women's rights in years.

Since the Supreme Court decision, there has also been a renewed conversation surrounding the crucial question: "What do we do to stop these attacks?" As in any healthy social movement, there is a debate about what kinds of tactics our side should use. I want to argue for why we need protests and clinic defenses, not new legislation that expands the power of police and the state.

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A week after the Supreme Court decision, Massachusetts Citizens for Life unveiled two massive four-story billboards near City Hall in downtown Boston. One billboard read, "No New Buffer Zones: Protect Free Speech. Right to Life." The other shows a stock photo of a woman of color and her baby, both smiling, next to the words, "Hope. Help. Love. Let Us Care for Pregnant Women."

Anti-choice protests in the days after

the ruling drew some 70 people outside Boston Planned Parenthood, significantly more than in years past.

At one such protest, anti-choice activists followed patients up to clinic doors, handing them "fliers that pictured an ultrasound with the words, 'How could I ever have thought of aborting this baby!'" according to a *Los Angeles Times* report.

This is harassment and intimidation, not "sidewalk counseling." It attaches a moral stigma to a basic medical procedure, it interferes with a woman's human right to control her own body without exception—and it needs to be challenged.

In response to anger over the buffer zone decision, Massachusetts Gov. Deval Patrick and state Attorney General Martha Coakley introduced SD 2106, "An Act to Promote Public Safety and Protect Access to Reproductive Health Care Facilities," known as the Safe Access bill. The bill would allow police to order the immediate dispersal of groups of protesters if they block access to a facility, and move them back 25 feet if necessary. If a person doesn't abide by the rules, they could be subject to a fine.

This focus on police relies on a similar logic to the Supreme Court decision outlawing the buffer zone. As conservative Chief Justice John Roberts argued in his opinion against the buffer zone, "The police appear perfectly capable of singling out lawbreakers."

As with the buffer zone legislation, one major problem with the Safe Access bill is that it uses a broad brush against protesters of any political stripe. Who is to say that the Boston police will distinguish between pro-choice and anti-choice demonstrators?

Furthermore, what kind of implications could this have for expanding police power in other contexts? At a time when the movement against racist police violence and mass incarceration is growing, and in the wake of the Occupy movement, where police were part of a nationally coordinated effort

to destroy the movement, does giving police more rights to disperse protests symbolize a step forward or backward?

While I am absolutely sympathetic to the need to expand patient and provider safety, I don't believe that expanding police power is the solution. We need a different strategy than the one currently being waged in the courts. Activist clinic defenses must be part of that strategy

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Some reproductive health care advocates disagree with holding clinic defenses, arguing that any kind of demonstration—whether pro-choice or anti-choice—creates chaos, confusion and intimidation for patients.

I understand and sympathize with this concern, but I disagree.

When I encountered that group of anti-choice men protesting outside Planned Parenthood and lobbying humiliating and degrading comments at myself and my teenage friend, it would have made a world of difference to see reproductive rights activists standing in opposition to their bigotry and lies.

We yelled back at them as we entered the clinic, but we were alone. We entered that clinic shaken up emotionally. Despite knowing that these men were wrong, despite the deep anger I felt that they had the gall to tell me and my friend what to do with our bodies, despite being an unapologetic feminist, they got to me. I felt dirty and exposed.

This is the kind of isolation and shame that so many women experience when they attempt to assert their right to reproductive health care and bodily autonomy, and it is an isolation that exists for political, not medical, reasons.

The fact that pro-choice clinic defenses have become virtually obsolete in recent years, while anti-choice demonstrations have persisted, means that when you think about an abortion clinic today, one of the first things that comes to mind is anti-abortion protesters spewing judgment outside.

Left unchallenged, this stigma has contributed to a political culture where it has become acceptable and even "moderate" to support a ban on abortion after 20 weeks, parental consent laws and state funding for the right wing's fake crisis pregnancy centers.

In the time that our side has been absent from outside the clinics, the anti-choice movement has grown more confident. In the process, we've lost the public battle over abortion rights.

Anti-choice protesters are the ones who make abortion clinics unsafe. Their side makes reproductive health care facilities into political battlegrounds, not our side. Their side isolates abortion from mainstream medicine and imbues the procedure with a false sense of controversy.

As long as they do this, we need to be there to defend the right to abortion and all reproductive health care. As long as they hold signs with photoshopped bloody fetuses, we need to be there to block their images. As long as they approach women with roses, scientifically inaccurate literature and manipulative ultrasound images, we need to be there to intercept them. And as long as they yell and chant, or deliver sermons and press conferences outside abortion clinics, our side needs to be there to drown them out with words of support for the patients and providers accessing and providing health care.

Unlike the anti-choice movement, we are not there to judge, to manipulate or to offer "salvation." We are there to support—and to win back the basic idea summed up in the words of the late Dr. George Tiller: Trust women.

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I trust pro-choice activists to organize clinic defenses that support patients and don't contribute to chaos and confusion. After all, we aren't separate from the patients who walk into clinics every day. Many of us are Planned Parenthood patients and staff. Many of us have had abortions. Many of us wish we had encountered voices of support outside the clinic when we entered. I certainly do.

We are all affected by the climate of fear, intimidation and violence that threatens reproductive health care inside and outside of clinics. We are all affected by the legislative attack that closed 20 clinics in Texas last year alone (leaving as few as six by September 2014) and that keeps the ban on Medicaid coverage for abortion intact on a federal level through the Hyde Amendment.

Abortion rights are in a state of emergency, and we should do everything we can to turn back the tide. This includes educating a new generation of activists about the history of clinic defenses and grassroots protest that defined abortion rights activism for decades.

One important moment in our history is the successful mass clinic defense in Buffalo, N.Y., in 1992. When the anti-choice domestic terrorist organization (no, I'm not being hyperbolic) Operation Rescue (OR) targeted abortion clinics in Buffalo, promising mass civil disobedience until they shut down, pro-choice activists launched a huge grassroots response. Thousands of people mobilized to Buffalo to counter OR and defend the clinics.

In the end, pro-choice activists outnumbered and demoralized OR, which ultimately ended its action two weeks early and left town, while the clinics remained open.

This is one story among many important victories from our side. Large-scale clinic defenses in the 1990s not only defended clinics. They also countered the stigma and isolation surrounding abortion and gave our side a sense of confidence.

We need to bring these stories to light and educate our side about the grassroots movement that held its ground for decades in the face of anti-choice opposition. And we need to do more than read history. We need to act. We need another Buffalo.

In Boston, Seattle, Denton, Texas and more, activists are organizing clinic defenses to counter anti-choice mobilizations. We should support these actions, not dismiss them. Clinic defenses are a necessary component to winning back the ground we've lost

on reproductive rights and fighting for a future where demonstrating outside

of clinics is no longer necessary.

[socialistworker.org](http://socialistworker.org)

July 31 2014

# One-fourth of Gaza's population displaced by Israel's violence

4 August 2014, by **Rami Almeghari**

On Sunday, 55 Palestinians were killed in multiple airstrikes across Gaza, according to Bethlehem-based Ma'an News Agency.

Ten members of the al-Ghoul family in the Tel al-Sultan neighborhood of Rafah in southern Gaza were slain when their home was hit by Israeli fire on Sunday. One of two identical twin baby boys born during the assault was immediately killed by the strike and the other was reported to be fighting for his life.

From dawn to evening on Saturday, more than seventy Palestinians, the majority of them from Rafah, were killed and scores were injured.

The weekend's killings brought the death toll of Israel's assault to at least 1,810 Palestinians and the number of injured to nearly 10,000 since 7 July, according to the Gaza health ministry spokesperson.

Eighty-five percent of Palestinians killed in Gaza were civilians, according to the Palestinian Centre for Human Rights.

Sixty-four Israeli soldiers have been killed as well as two civilians and one foreign national, according to the United Nations.

## Health disaster

Israel's unabated attacks on the Gaza Strip have inflicted the widespread destruction of thousands of structures including hospitals, mosques, universities, governmental and nongovernmental facilities and factories.

On Saturday, the UN warned of a "rapidly unfolding" health disaster in Gaza as Palestinians face "deteriorating" access to hospitals and clinics and as basic medicines and medical supplies run critically low.

The UN reported that one-third of all hospitals across Gaza as well as 14 primary healthcare clinics and 29 ambulances have been damaged or destroyed, "and at least half of all public health primary care clinics are closed."

Israeli shells hit Rafah's Abu Yousef al-Najjar hospital on Saturday. Reports from Rafah indicate that hospital crews fled the scene due to the continued Israeli strikes and that all recovered casualties were redirected to smaller facilities in town.

Ashraf al-Qidra, spokesperson for the Gaza health ministry, called on international organizations to help paramedic crews return to the evacuated al-Najjar hospital.

## "War crimes"

Three leading rights groups in Gaza — the Al-Mezan Center for Human Rights, the Palestinian Centre for Human Rights and the Al Dameer Association for Human Rights — held a joint press conference on Saturday at Gaza City's al-Shifa hospital.

The groups called for accelerating procedures to bring Israel to justice for what the three groups termed "horrible war crimes." They also condemned the UN Secretary-General's denunciation of the armed resistance in Gaza.

"The Secretary-General condemns in the strongest terms the reported violation by Hamas of the mutually agreed humanitarian ceasefire which commenced this morning," a statement attributed to Ban Ki-moon was issued on Friday.

The Secretary-General's statement came after the Israeli military claimed that Hamas had captured an Israeli soldier near Rafah on Friday morning as a 72-hour ceasefire was set to begin.

"United Nations' Secretary General Ban Ki-moon's condemnation of the given Palestinian right to resist an occupying power is unacceptable," Raji Sourani, director of the Palestinian Centre for Human Rights, said at the press briefing.

"Ki-moon equals between an occupier and the occupied, the oppressed and the oppressor, and therefore he plays down the Palestinian people's right to defend themselves," he added.

The alleged capture of the soldier was condemned by US President Barack Obama and used as a pretext for Israel to kill at least 110 Palestinians in Rafah since Friday morning. On Saturday evening, Israel acknowledged that the soldier had been "killed in combat."

## Mass displacement

Meanwhile, Palestinians in Gaza continue to be displaced.

"I have been told by the International Committee of the Red Cross that my house will be shelled by Israel,"

Muhammad al-Rifai, a 62-year-old resident of the Maghazi refugee camp in central Gaza, told The Electronic Intifada on Friday.

Al-Rifai is father to six daughters and a son, and a grandfather of several children. Many of them live in the same cinderblock home. A few days ago, al-Rifai received a phone call from the Israeli army warning him to leave his house ahead of an imminent airstrike.

Thousands of homes have been destroyed or damaged by Israeli airstrikes and shelling. The UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs states that "up to 25 percent of Gaza's population may now be forcibly displaced, of whom 270,000 are hosted in UNRWA shelters alone."

In many of those strikes, families were inside their homes and were killed or injured. In the Maghazi refugee camp alone, three houses were shelled with people inside. The latest attack came on Saturday morning, when Israel shelled a house belonging to the Qandil family, killing three.

As of 30 July, at least 76 families had lost three or more members in a single

Israeli strike, according to UN figures.

## University targeted

Israel's airstrikes and destruction on Saturday included an attack on the Islamic University of Gaza. Israel claimed the school is affiliated with the Hamas party and that it targeted a "weapon development" center inside the university.

At the time of publication, Ma'an News Agency had reported that Israel announced a seven-hour unilateral humanitarian ceasefire to take effect at 10am Monday morning.

A Palestinian delegation in Cairo, including Hamas representatives, came to a joint position on Sunday calling for "a ceasefire; Israeli troop withdrawal from Gaza; the end of the siege of Gaza and opening its border crossings."

Hamas insists that any ceasefire deal should include lifting the Israeli blockade of Gaza, now in its seventh year, and the release of Palestinian

prisoners.

## Nowhere safe

Witnesses in southern and northern Gaza told The Electronic Intifada that hundreds of families from those areas began returning back to their homes on Saturday after Israel announced that it was withdrawing ground troops in some areas.

Seven members of one family were killed in an airstrike on their home in Jabaliya in northern Gaza on Sunday one day after the army said it was safe for residents to return, Ma'an News Agency reported.

"Israeli officials said Saturday that it was safe for residents of the northern Gaza Strip, with the exception of Beit Lahiya, to return to their homes," the agency added.

The reality on the ground is that nowhere is safe for Palestinians in Gaza as Israel's relentless bombing enters its fifth week.

4 August 2014

[The Electronic Intifada](#)

# Israel withdraws from Gaza without achieving objectives

4 August 2014, by **Sergio Yahni**

The Israeli military withdrew the majority of its ground forces back to staging areas outside of Gaza on Sunday. The air force, however, continues to strike targets in the coastal strip. Alongside the reorganization of its troops, which may lead to the establishment of a buffer zone wider than the one in existence before the current offensive, the Israeli army also started preparations toward future indictments against it for war crimes.

The withdrawal of the majority of

ground forces has allowed divisions to rest soldiers and allow a significant part of the troops to return home for a brief respite from the fighting. The military began withdrawing its forces on Saturday and began preparing a "temporary security strip".

Hamas spokesman Sami Abu Zuhri stated the Palestinians would not be bound by any unilateral decisions made by Israel.

"If the occupation unilaterally withdraws, the battle field would decide the response. We're not going

to be obligated to anything," he said.

Israeli military commanders assume the Palestinian resistance will not accept the terms of the Egyptian ceasefire initiative and is not ready to surrender, despite the widespread destruction imposed by Israel.

Ynet, an Israeli news portal, quoted a senior military officer saying "What we are doing in the field right now is based on the lack of an agreement; it is possible an understanding will not be reached".



Despite the withdrawal, Israeli troops continue activities in the southern city of Rafah. According to Palestinian reports, Israeli airstrikes and shelling killed 37 people, including 10 members of a single family, on Sunday morning.

Another 10 Palestinians were killed when Israeli troops shelled a UN school in Rafah, where thousands of people were sheltering from the ongoing Israeli offensive. At least 30 were injured in the strike.

UN spokesman Chris Guinness stated the school had been housing thousands of displaced people.

The United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, Robert Serry, expressed, in a statement Sunday, dismay “at reports of an Israeli strike in the immediate vicinity of an UNRWA school in Rafah sheltering 3,000 displaced, which caused multiple deaths and injuries.”

“The Special Coordinator condemns the loss of innocent civilian lives,” said the statement.

“It is simply intolerable that another school has come under fire while designated to provide shelter for

civilians fleeing the hostilities. The Special Coordinator repeats the call of the Secretary-General that all parties must respect the inviolability of UN premises and protect civilians.”

“The past 48 hours have seen renewed escalation and unbearable further loss of civilian lives, particularly in the Rafah area,” said Serry.

The strikes brought Sunday morning’s death toll in Gaza to 50.

In order to face growing international criticism, the Israeli army is putting together a team tasked with shifting blame for civilian deaths on to Hamas.

With a United Nations Human Rights Council probe already in the works to investigate the high civilian casualty rate due to Israel’s offensive against Gaza, Israel seeks to prevent a repeat of the “Goldstone Report” that found the army guilty of carrying out war crimes during Israel’s 2009 offensive on Gaza.

The military also fears that in the current conditions, senior Israeli officials may be indicted for war crimes by the International Criminal Court at The Hague.

The team established by the Israel military will be headed by Maj.-Gen. Nimrod Sheffer, and it will be assigned with the task of collecting evidence of Hamas using Palestinian civilians as human shields.

The team will also include officials from the military advocate general’s office, southern command, the Gaza division and the air force, as well as officials from the foreign and defense ministries.

According to a report in the Hebrew-language daily Israel Hayom, the team is not only charged with preparing Israel’s defense before the UNHRC investigative commission, which could potentially lead to formal charges in the ICC, but also with organizing a diplomatic and public relations offensive.

According to the Palestinian Ministry of Health in Gaza, the total death toll stands at 1,739, with nearly 10,000 injured and a quarter of Gaza’s total population of 1.8 million displaced.

Sixty-four Israeli soldiers and three civilians have died since the start of hostilities on July 8.

*03 August 2014*

## Descent Into Butchery, Part 2: An Update on the Gaza Massacre

**3 August 2014, by David Finkel**

Even if that’s true—which, in part at least, it probably is—it simply puts Israel and Hamas on the same moral level in their indifference to civilian life. That conception roughly marks the outer margin of permissible discussion in the more liberal sectors of the corporate media, as when New York Times columnists Nicholas Kristof, Thomas Friedman, and Roger Cohen lecture how “extremist” elements and bad political leadership on both sides reinforce each other.

Nothing like this moral equivalence, of

course, will be found in the discourse of the United States Congress, where gridlock has given way to joyful bipartisan complicity in mass murder. The Senate, echoing a previous House of Representatives resolution, voted 100-0—yes, including the “progressive” Democrats and Bernie Sanders along with all the rest—to endorse Israel’s “self-defense” against “unprovoked” (!) rocket attacks and to demand the dismantling of the unity government that Palestinian factions had recently formed.

Subsequently, as her office proudly announces, “U.S. Senator Barbara A. Mikulski (D-Md.), Chairwoman of the Senate Appropriations Committee, today announced Committee passage of the fiscal year (FY) 2015 Department of Defense spending bill, which includes \$621 million for U.S.-Israel Cooperative Missile Development Programs, an increase of \$117 million over FY2014 levels. This includes \$351 million to support the Iron Dome Missile Defense System, which doubles the Administration’s

FY2015 budget request for the program.”

Can we please have our dreaded gridlock back?

The Israel-Hamas moral equivalence argument itself, however, is sustainable only in abstraction from the real-life catastrophe and historical context. To understand this, we have to step back for a moment from the immediate headlines, where each day’s atrocities blur the memory of the previous one. It’s not only that the Israeli state with full U.S. backing has overwhelming firepower and technological advantage to inflict carnage. We have to deconstruct the Biggest Lie about Gaza, which gains credence through endless repetition. It goes like this: “Israel withdrew from Gaza, pulled out all the settlers, left it to develop freely and peacefully, and what it got in return was rocket fire.”

The truth is that Gaza never had a single week of peace. From the day of Ariel Sharon’s “withdrawal” in 2005, Israeli planes flew overhead deliberately creating sonic booms. Since 2006 Gaza has been essentially blockaded by Israel ; its port forbidden, most of its exports blocked, its boats unable to access fishing grounds, its population reduced to utter dependency on UN aid. Farmers shot working their own land near the border. Kids shot down by Israeli snipers. Targeted assassinations became a feature of daily life, even in

times of “quiet,” let alone Israel’s previous military invasions in 2008-9 and 2012.

Long before Netanyahu, it was the sainted Yitzhak Rabin who said his desire was “that Gaza would sink into the sea.” The unforgivable crime of Gaza’s population lies in failing to fulfill that wish (as if they really had a choice). Occupation had forced Israel to assume some minimal responsibility for social services, and the heavy burden of security for its settlers. Its unilateral “withdrawal” has allowed Israel to turn the Occupation into a kind of medieval siege conducted with modern warfare and surveillance technology. Penned in, without clean water, crowded and stressed beyond endurance, Gaza today lives in conditions as bad as those of any Jewish ghetto in Europe outside the Nazi period. And inside the Israeli Jewish population, overtly genocidal attitudes are gaining ground.

It is ultimately for Palestinian society to judge its own leadership, whether that’s Hamas, which constructed truly impressive underground tunnels for its militants but not civil defense for its people, or the corrupt Palestinian Authority that colluded with Israel and the U.S. CIA in a failed coup (2007), after Palestinian society had succeeded in organizing a genuine democratic election whose outcome Tel Aviv and Washington disliked.

That judgment might well be harsh, but the fact is that today, despite their

unimaginable daily horrors, most people in Gaza don’t want the resistance to stop without the beginning of solutions to the slow death of the siege. The cease-fire terms demanded by Hamas—to open the borders, to allow fishing and commerce and the release of the hundreds of prisoners rearrested by Israel on the pretext of searching for the murdered Israeli teens—are entirely reasonable.

It’s the political and moral collapse of the Obama administration that blocks the road to a viable truce. It’s for us to judge “our own government’s” leadership, and to face straight-on the deadly consequences of this episode. There can be no fantasy that anything happening now opens the way to either a “two-state solution” or a “single democratic state.” No solution is possible until Israel’s own behavior makes it more of a strategic liability than an asset for Washington, and until global grassroots outrage and BDS (Boycott/Divestment/Sanctions) make Israel an international “pariah state.”

Until and unless that happens, Palestine will become the image that George Orwell portrayed in 1984: “If you want a vision of the future, imagine a boot stamping on a human face — forever.”

[Against the Current](#)

*July 25, 2014*

## Gazafying Dissent

**3 August 2014, by Bill V. Mullen, Tithi Bhattacharya**

Western politicians and media have a long history of ignoring the horrific conditions under which Palestinians live under Israeli Occupation while paying universal homage to Israel as the “only democracy in the Middle East.”

This mythology has now exploded. As Paul Mason has pointed out, since

Israel began its July 8th attack on Gaza, there has been a “massive change in the balance of power between social media and the old hierarchical media channels we used to rely on to understand wars.”

For the first time, the world has access to real-time images, voices and narratives of the people of Gaza

themselves. Deepa Kumar correctly surmised that this has led to a “crumbling” of Israel’s propaganda war, and even Israel stalwarts like the New York Times have been forced to report the catastrophic effects on Palestinians produced by Israel’s massacre.

Even on the military front, questions

are being asked about the assumed invincibility of Israel's might. Hamas has proven again that it is not a pushover and is prepared to withstand Israel's far advanced weaponry and manpower.

Thus, despite the killing and destruction Israel has inflicted in Gaza, the Israeli state is not emerging as the victorious 'white knight' of democracy whose image for many was once invincible.

The question arises, then: what is a state to do in the face of a widening gap between its previous status as an icon of 'democratic exceptionalism', and its new role as global bully? What, in short, to do when facing a real crisis of 'legitimation'?

Fortunately, Israel has friends in high places.

As the death toll rises in Gaza, and anger mounts around the world, Israel and its allies have adopted a new tactic.

They have largely abandoned attempts to recover Israel's democratic legitimacy. They have resorted instead to the outright criminalization of all dissent. And even to kill for it.

"In the West Bank, Israel shot dead more than ten protesters against the massacre in neighboring Gaza. At a July 12 anti-war rally in Israel, police stood by as fascist thugs attacked non-violent protesters. Palestinian Member of the Israeli Knesset, Haneen Zoabi, pictured above, has been banned from all parliamentary activity, except for voting, for six months. Netanyahu has called for all pro-Palestine protests to be banned across Europe.

"France has criminalized pro-Palestinian protests. 1,500 French riot police were deployed against a pro-Palestine protest in Paris on July 26th.

"In Calcutta, India, Special Branch forces (India's equivalent of the FBI) demanded the cell phone number of Kunal Chattopadhyay, a professor, at a public meeting in support of BDS. In New Delhi, pro-Palestine protestors at the Israeli Embassy were viciously attacked by local police.

"In London, Ontario, Canada,

protesters wanting to talk to the Tory MP Susan Truppe, were removed by police.

"In Manchester, England, a pro-Palestine protester was hurled to the ground by metropolitan police during an apparent arrest.

- In Los Angeles, prominent Palestinian journalist, activist and the founding editor of Electronic Intifada, Ali Abunimah, was brutally assaulted by the LAPD for filming a pro-Israeli protest.

"In New York, long-time Israel critic Norman Finkelstein was arrested for peaceful disobedience by NYPD, perpetrators of the notorious Stop and Frisk racial profiling program and spying programs against Muslims.

"In Chicago, the authors were part of a protest during which Chicago police put snipers on rooftops. Kirsten, a member of Students for Justice in Palestine and Jewish Voice for Peace, was injured by police at an action on July 17th. She told us she "was not participating in... civil disobedience" but was "live-tweeting and photographing the arrest of my partner, when an officer pushed me from the curb, causing me to roll and badly injure my ankle."

Also in Chicago, pro-Palestinian activists Rima Kapitan and Faten Dabis were at a counter-protest at the Israeli Consulate in Chicago on July 22nd. Here is Ms. Dabis's account of the incident:

During the protest, we crossed the street and distributed fliers against the Israeli attack on the Gaza Strip....while we were across the street, I participated in a chant with the counter-protesters. Upon hearing me, Sergeant Shoshi (badge #1460), admonished me loudly, telling me to go across the street. In response, Ms. Kapitan asked him what I was doing wrong. He said I was chanting, and she replied that I was...exercising my First Amendment right. Sergeant Shoshi then grabbed Ms. Kapitan's arm, leading her to the side of the building, telling her that she could be fined for distributing fliers illegally.

"In Indianapolis, Sireen Zayed, a

Palestinian student, was denied entry and escorted out of the Jewish Community Center by security when she peacefully tried to enter to hear a presentation by the Israeli Midwest Ambassador. JCC representatives said Zayed was on "private property" and security forces told her "your kind is not wanted here."

"The International Cricket Council has banned Moeen Ali, the English cricketer, from wearing his 'Free Gaza' wrist band during the test match with India;

It is clear that Israel, and the governments that back it, have a two-pronged strategy:

(a) In Palestine, Palestinians have to abandon all attempts at self-defense and accept gratefully the murderous occupation of their land and the illegal siege of Gaza. This is Israel's idea of "truce".

(b) For the rest of us, we have to lay down our placards, silence our voices and close our eyes as Israel kills children in their sleep. If not, elected democratic governments are prepared to send in the police to attack us or silence us.

Even if we leave aside Israel, which has never been a democratic society for anyone of non-Jewish descent, why has the butchering of democratic expression in other parts of the world become so commonplace?

Because Israel's crisis of legitimacy is not a crisis for Israel alone, but for the entire edifice of Empire, whose architects live in places like Washington, London and Paris.

There is much at stake for our world leaders if the global protests for Palestine continue to grow. What if they spark a third Intifada in Palestine? What if they spark a new Arab Spring? After all, if you start to withstand truncheons for opposing Benjamin Netanyahu, why not Abdel el-Sisi or Bashar al-Assad? What if the cry of "Free Free Palestine" is echoed in New Delhi as "Free Free Kashmir"? or the voices demanding to pull down the Apartheid Wall in Palestine are joined by the voices wanting to pull down the border fence between US

and Mexico? What if gaining confidence by the protests against Boeing and Caterpillar's role in funding Israel, workers at these companies start demanding their rightful wages and pension?

Palestine today lies at the heart of humanity's universal sense of justice. This is why leaders across the world want to stamp out all talk of Palestine.

And this is precisely why we cannot put down our Free Palestine placards.

Instead, we should start taking them everywhere—in to our communities, workplaces and schools.

[Mondoweiss](#)

July 31, 2014

## The vulture funds that corner Argentina also comes for Spain

2 August 2014, by **Fatima Fafatale , Jerome Duval**

The vulture fund NML Capital that, together with others, has Argentina on the edge of suspending payments, is already devouring the rotting flesh of the Spanish market. Elliott Management, the opportunistic fund of the serial U.S. speculator Paul Singer, has already pocketed a billion euros of Bankia's failed credit and 300 million euros of Santander. It is estimated that it has paid hardly 50 million for both these portfolios, according to Auraree.com [125].

In March 2013, the Spanish financial press informed that Elliott had acquired from the Santander Group a portfolio of 300 million euros of defaulting credit of Santander Consumer Finance with a discount approaching 96%. The price that was paid was laughable: about 12 million euros, according to Cinco Dias.

Elliott had acquired from the Santander Group a portfolio of 300 million euros as defaulting consumer credit of Santander Consumer Finance.

In August of the same year, 2013, Bankia, the nationalised entity that most benefited from the rescue of the Spanish banks, which had considerably raised the public debt, informed that three portfolios of bad credit had been sold for a total debt volume of 1,353.9 million euros. In the relevant communication to the CNMV (National Stock Market Commission), it was not mentioned to whom the loans had been sold to or at what price. Despite the evident lack of

transparency, the financial press has put names and numbers to the operation, which it is estimated "may have a discount of 95%". The buyers of the three portfolios were the vulture fund Cerberus, which is advised by José Maria Aznar Jr, the son of the former President, Elliott and the Norwegian recovery business, Lindorff. "The portfolio was valued at 1,354 million but only forked out 68," according to Finanzas.com.

We have been in contact with Bankia for confirmation from the other side and its response has been that "for confidentiality" they never give the number and "the buyers who do not want to be identified".

A few months later, it emerged that Elliott bought the household debt recovery firm Gesif to convert it into his operational base for the Spanish market. Its director-general was Melania Sebastián, who was in charge of information management at the Banca Comercial de Caja Madrid, who will continue with the moneylenders of Gesif. It is worth noting how a former director of Caja Madrid acts as the intermediary between the nationalised Bankia and Elliott's vulture fund.

### What happened in Argentina

The vulture funds make money taking advantage of countries in difficulties, like Argentina during the crisis of

2001, to buy debts cheap. Later they wait for an opportune moment to oblige them to buy them back at a much higher price with court orders, including deferred interests and judicial costs.

This is how they speculate on public debts, endangering the social spending that benefits the great majority of the population. These vultures went for lawsuits after having refused to form a part of the 93% of creditors who accepted the exchange with the government. Now the New York district judge, Thomas Griesa, has prioritised the payment of the vulture funds, which opens the door to an avalanche of demands that could result in the suspension of payments in Argentina on July 30. As Julio C. Gambina puts it so well, "nobody precisely knows where the demands of the creditors could reach of the unpayable debt" [126], but we know that the cost for the Argentinean people could be catastrophic.

Who are behind these vulture funds? NML Capital is a subsidiary of the inversion fund, Elliott Management Corporation, registered in the fiscal paradise Cayman Islands. It is the empire of Paul Singer, the multimillionaire champion of the U.S. Republican Party and close to the ultra-conservative Tea Party.

Elliott speculates, among other things, with public debts, violating the sovereignty of the states and its peoples. But he also speculates with



private debts and in 2011 came to possess two million dollars of Lehman Brothers.

Singer was the major financier of the presidential campaign of George W. Bush in 2004; he also contributed to Mitt Romney's campaign in 2012 and to that of the New York mayor, Rudolph Giuliani. Moreover, he is the major private financier of the New York police. As one of the principal financiers of the Republican Party, he plays an important part in the U.S. politics and, therefore, also in international politics.

The foundation that bears his name, The Paul E. Singer Foundation, praises him for his philanthropy, his leadership in the expansion of free trade, his contribution to the U.S. national security and for the "future of Israel". Moreover, Singer is president of the conservative think tank, Manhattan Institute for Policy Research.

Regarding the Argentinean case, NML is the principal financier of the

organisation, American Task Force Argentina (AFTA) [127], a lobby that influences the Congress and the U.S. justice, harming Argentina. To give ourselves an idea of the power of these vultures, NML could even embargo the Argentinean frigate, Liberty, in Ghana in October 2012 [128], demanding the Argentinean state for about \$370 million for unpaid bonds.

What is happening in Argentina is emblematic of what Greece is starting to feel where vultures like Dart Management operate, with its headquarters in Cayman Island and which also operates in Latin American countries. In 1999, NML achieved, through a ruling in the United States, the payment from Peru of \$58 million for a debt that the fund had bought for \$11 million. It also did business with the Democratic Republic of Congo.

## International solidarity for sovereignty

The behaviour of the vulture funds in Argentina has unleashed a wave of indignation throughout the world against speculation that plays with the sovereignty and the life of the great majority of the indebted people. [The Citizens' Debt Audit Platform \(PACD\)](#), has published a communiqué in solidarity with the Argentinean people, expressing that "Argentina should disobey the sentence of judge Griesa, (...) as, in accordance with international rights, it has the obligation of satisfying the needs of its population before the payment of a debt". As the communiqué makes it clear, what is happening is not only an Argentinean problem but also, even more, a conflict in which the superiority of the financial powers is at play above the sovereignty of the people.

[Source here](#)

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[Translation by Supriyo Chatterjee](#)  
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# Podemos Manifesto

## 1 August 2014

Just as with other moments in history, we see today a European continent submerged in perplexity. Whilst the majorities look back with nostalgia on the past that is lost, certain powerful minorities, with no criterion other than their own survival, show that enrichment is their flag and impunity their horizon. Never in Europe have there been so many people discontented with their loss of rights, and, at the same time, so few perspectives for challenging this outrage through a voting option that excites while at the same time, shows the capacity to represent the majorities under attack and a capacity for committed and efficient administration that makes the best possible options become real. Many find it intolerable that in the greatest

crisis in the system since the crash of 1929, those forces that claim to be progressive are at their weakest point, thereby condemning the majorities in our countries to a kind of melancholy that leads to resignation and political depression. But we have gone through worse times and have been able to overcome the difficulties. Why should now be any different?

The elections to the European Parliament will be held at a time of a profound crisis of legitimacy for the European Union. In our case, we are faced with the greatest loss of credibility for the regime born out of the 1978 Constitution. Movements of political outrage such as the 15M connected with a clear popular will: against the sacrifice of rights on the

altar of markets driven by speculation and plunder. The impotence or abdication of responsibility by governments, the voluntary ineptitude of government political parties, the conversion of parliaments into bureaucratic organs deprived of political power and the stupor of the unions have left citizens abandoned to their own fate. As in so many other countries, the confusion is being used to turn private debts into public ones, for the transfer of common goods developed over decades to private interests, and to dedicate what remains of public resources to the funding of narrow and private business interests. We are faced with a financial coup d'état against the peoples of the south of the Eurozone. Those who are in charge are selling



off the country and our future in pieces. The rise in repression (with more authoritarian laws, the rise in fines in a situation of economic impoverishment, and even, obstacles to the exercise of civil and political rights) is the final element of a landscape dominated by the deepening of social and gender inequalities and increased plunder of natural resources. It is not strange to see the apparent pessimism and defeatism among sectors who, however, would need only a spark of excitement to exit the trap of despair.

The citizen safety laws (which turn the forms of protest inaugurated by the 15M into offences), the return of the repression of women's freedom, the curtailment of democracy at the local political level, the greater control over communications media and the control of the judiciary seek to create a scenario where fear suspends democracy. Forms on the pathway to authoritarian regimes wrapped up in electoral processes ever emptier of content. Does it make sense that the 90% of the population suffering the brunt of these policies should have no access to tools to create a brighter future?

But it is not true that we are consigned to defeat. Despite their efforts, we can see that this wall is not unbreachable, and that, from below, it is possible to put a stop to these processes that are dismantling our democracies. Today our demand for a politics that goes back onto to the streets, that talks like the majority of people who have had enough, is a reality. Our demand for a greater generosity from representatives, for a greater horizontality and transparency, for a return of the republican values of public virtue and social justice, for the recognition of our plurinational and pluricultural reality is more real than ever. It is decades since our desire for making our own decisions and answering our own questions was so real. The caste is driving us into the abyss for their own selfish benefit. It is only from the citizens that the solution can come, as happened with the protection of jobs, the defence of families through the blocking of evictions, or the guarantee of public services: small but meaningful victories. Popular

mobilisation, civil disobedience and confidence in our own abilities are essential, but so too is the forging of keys in order to open the doors that they want to close on us: to bring to the institutions the voice and the demands of this social majority that no longer recognises itself either in this EU or in a corrupt regime that has no possible regeneration.

In the next European Parliament elections there needs to be a candidacy that offers itself to the wave of popular indignation that astounded the world. We are glad to see the advance of the forces of the left, but we are conscious of the need to do something more in order to set in gear the changes we need. It is a time for courage and for not allowing the closure of the window of opportunity that the commitment of so many good people has opened. We need a candidacy of unity and of rupture, led by people who express new ways of relating to politics and which will entail a real threat to the two-party regime of the PP and PSOE and those who have taken our democracy hostage. A candidacy that in addition to stewardship of what is public, proves able to involve the majorities in the configuration of their own future. A candidacy that responds to the young people who are invited to get out of the country, to workers who day by day see their rights diluted, to women forced to go back to demanding what should obviously be theirs, to older people who are finding it was not enough to have struggled and worked for a lifetime. A candidacy that advances from spaces already conquered and manages to go beyond the present paralysis. A candidacy that makes the move that turns pessimism into optimism and discontent into popular will for change and democratic openness.

1. A candidacy for the recovery of popular sovereignty: it is the citizens who have to decide, not the selfish minority who have brought us here. People's needs come first. Austerity and cutbacks are choking the economy and our lives. There must be a derogation of article 135 of the Spanish constitution and a moratorium for a citizen debt audit that determines what parts of the debt are not legitimate; the illegitimate

debts will not be paid. Alternative policies are needed in order to establish a tax on financial transactions and controls on the movement of capital, along with the nationalisation of the private banking sector. Those administrations in our country that have adopted the prescriptions of austerity are proof of how useless they are for resolving people's problems. We want a candidacy that therefore opposes the cuts that are being applied in the name of austerity by the Government of the Partido Popular in the State but also by the PSOE and other parties in different Autonomous Communities. We want another Europe, one that is just, the Europe of rights and democracy, not that of plunder and contempt for the peoples.

2. A candidacy that, faced with governments in the service of the 1% minority, calls for a 'real democracy' based on the sovereignty of peoples and their right to decide their future freely and in solidarity. Democracy holds no fear for us democrats; we are delighted that Scottish and Catalan people can talk and say what future they desire. As such, one that supports the consultation called in Catalonia for the 9th of November.

3. A candidacy that defends decent wages and pensions, a progressive tax regime so that those who have the most pay the most, one that goes after tax fraud, that rejects redundancies in profitable firms, and that stands for the sharing of all jobs, including domestic work and unpaid care work. It is essential to defend decent labour conditions for young people condemned to eternal precarity or exile.

4. A candidacy for the right to decent housing. There must be a programme to build public housing, as well as a model of decent and affordable rents. The human drama of evictions can and must be ended, by suspending every single one and by approving retrospective surrender of houses by way of payment, as demanded by the Mortgage Victims' Platform.

5. A candidacy that rejects every form of privatisation of public services and common goods: education, health,

justice, transport, information, housing and culture, that stands for its reversal in all of these and opts for their democratic management. They are rights and must be under public control. A candidacy that stands for a radical democracy where binding referendums and popular legislative initiatives form an important part of a new legal order following a constituent process.

6. A candidacy that combats against gender based violence and defends the rights of women over their own bodies, and as such, the right to decide if they want to end their pregnancy or not. And that also defends freedom of sexual orientation and identity against every form of discrimination and homophobia. A candidacy for the unbreakable right to be and to love as one wishes.

7. A candidacy that seeks a change in the productive model so that it is at the service of people, through an ecological reconversion of the economy, through the nationalisation and socialisation of energy firms, and through food sovereignty.

8. A candidacy that defends citizen rights for everyone and demands derogation from immigration laws. A candidacy for a country in which everyone is a citizen and no-one is invisible, prisoner of over-exploitation, persecution or marginalisation due to institutional xenophobia.

9. A candidacy that rejects military interventions, that stands for an exit from NATO and is a firm defender of relations of solidarity between peoples.

10. A candidacy that is the result of an

open participative process for citizens, in the elaboration of its programme and in the composition of its list, based upon the criteria of the presence of social, political and cultural activists, with role rotation and income equivalent to the average wage. A candidacy with commitment to transparency and accountability, with financial resources independent from the private banking sector and from lobby groups.

Those of us signing this manifesto are convinced that now is the time to make a step forward and that by making it many more will join us. Those at the top tell us that nothing can be done except resign ourselves, and, at best, choose between the same colours as always. We think it is no longer time for giving up but for making a move and pulling together, by offering tools to outrage and the desire for change. In the streets "S   se puede" ("Yes, it can be done") is repeatedly heard. We say: "Podemos" ("We can do it").

Signatories  
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Alberto San Juan (actor)

Marta Sibina (editora de la revista Caf   amb Llet)

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# Palestine solidarity, antisemitism and the French pro-Israel camp

1 August 2014, by **Julien Salingue**

Since the beginning of the Israeli offensive against Gaza, the pro-Israel camp in France has continuously

attacked the Palestine solidarity movement, accusing it, more or less directly, of antisemitism. It is often however those very people who denounce the conflations between, on the one hand, Israel, and on the other, Jews in general, who are actually the worst offenders in such very conflations, thereby fuelling antisemitic reactions. Roger Cukierman, President of the Conseil Représentatif des Institutions juives de France (CRIF) (which claims to speak for all French Jews) and Vice President of the World Jewish Congress, is a prime example. Julien Salingue, a political science scholar and specialist of the Palestinian question, here addresses an open letter to him.

## Roger Cukierman's dangerous conflations (an open letter)

Monsieur Cukierman,

I have been paying close attention to your statements for a number of days, both with regard to your open support of the current Israeli offensive (over 600 dead in Gaza in two weeks; a child killed every hour, on average, on the 21st and 22nd July), and to your well-informed comments on the incidents and acts of violence which have taken place on the fringes of certain demonstrations held in solidarity with the Palestinians.

The aim of this text is not to respond to the questions of form and content raised by your declarations in their entirety, but simply to make you aware that you sometimes speak thoughtlessly, and that it would be wise for you to come to your senses. As to whether this is possible,

I doubt it.

## The conflation of Jew with Israeli

You wish to defend Israel, its politics and its military offensives? You have every right to do so. In that case,

however, stop claiming to speak in the name of the Jews of France and stop upholding a dangerous conflation of Jewish people, on the one hand, with Israel on the other. Let us recall, therefore, as an example, your words on Radio France Internationale (RFI) on the 21st July:

*"We claim to represent the Jews of France and we feel an affection towards the State of Israel. In the same way, French citizens of Italian origin feel a sympathy towards Italy, and it's the same for the Spanish, or for those of any other nationality or dual nationality who might live in France."*

Of which "nationality" or "dual nationality" are you speaking? Does a Jewish nationality exist in the same way as an Italian or a Spanish nationality does? This is actually the case in Israel, but not in France. So to what "nationality" are you referring? It must, logically, be either to an Israeli "nationality" or to a Franco-Israeli "dual nationality". In all logic, this "we"(who feel "affection" towards the State of Israel) is therefore a we which encompasses the Israelis of France and the Franco-Israelis. But if so, why are you speaking in this way while putting yourself forward as a "representative of the Jews of France" and not as "representative of the Israelis of France"? Do you think that being Jewish and being Israeli is the same thing?

In introducing this confusion, you are upholding a dangerous conflation which you, however, have not ceased to condemn over the last few days. Need I remind you of your words from June 2010, on the precise subject of this conflation? I believe that I do, since you seem to have a short memory: "The conflation of Jew with Israeli is a seductive one, and encourages people to smack Jews around". You would be well advised to take this remark into account...

## "It was a bit like Kristallnacht".

You have moreover seen fit, in commenting on incidents and acts of violence which have taken place at the

fringes of some demonstrations, to raise parallels which, although they are probably supposed to be striking, are no less dubious, scandalous even. You have stated accordingly, with reference to the confrontations which took place on July 13th, on the Rue de la Roquette in Paris: "It was a bit like Kristallnacht [the Night of Broken Glass] and we barely avoided a veritable pogrom."

"The Night of Broken Glass". A "pogrom". Nothing less.

Let us call to mind, for the sake of memory, what the Night of Broken Glass was, by referring to the Encyclopaedia Universalis:

*On November 9th [1938], just before midnight, the Gestapo commander Heinrich Mueller, sent a telegram to every police unit informing them that "in a very short time, actions against the Jews, and in particular against synagogues, are to take place all over Germany. Nothing must hinder these operations." On the contrary, the police were to arrest victims. Fire brigades set themselves up beside burning synagogues, having received explicit orders to let the buildings burn. They were only to intervene if neighbouring "Aryan" properties were threatened by fire.*

*In the space of two days and two nights, more than 1000 synagogues were set fire to or damaged. Rioters ransacked and looted approximately 5700 Jewish businesses, murdered at least 91 Jews, and vandalised Jewish hospitals, houses, schools and cemeteries. The attackers were often neighbours of the victims. Some 30000 Jewish men between the ages of sixteen and sixty were arrested. In order to incarcerate such a large number of new arrivals, the Dachau, Buchenwald, and Sachsenhausen concentration camps were made bigger.*

Are you really referring to this tragic historic event? Did you dare compare the incidents on the Rue de la Roquette to a gigantic, murderous unleashing of violence and hatred, organised by the State itself, and seen by many historians as a prelude to the deportation and genocide of the Jews? It would seem so.

Let us put aside the fact that the initial reports of violence on the Rue de la Roquette were refuted by...the chairman of the synagogue itself, who stated, in an interview with the news channel i>Télé, that: "We were not in physical danger at any point".

Let's go back to your high-flown rhetoric and what it leads to: in comparing the events of the 13th July to the Night of Broken Glass, you are relativizing, to put it mildly, the reality of the latter event. In fact, in wishing to crudely exaggerate, you lead one to understand that the Night of Broken Glass could be seen, in the end, as a demonstration which turned nasty and degenerated into violence. Would you allow me to note that your statements could easily be described as revisionist?

And the same holds for your allusion to "pogroms", just as misplaced, if not to say outrageous, as the reference to the Night of Broken Glass.

Let us cite the Encyclopaedia again:

Pogrom: Russian Term describing an attack, with looting and murders, by one part of the population against another, which entered international use to describe a massacre of Jews in Russia. (...) They arose during a political and economic crisis and were carried out thanks to the neutrality (on occasion also due to the tacit

support) of the Russian authorities and army. (...)It is not easy to establish the toll of the pogroms: some 887 major and 349 "minor" pogroms can be counted, which could have caused more than 60000 deaths.

In using the term "pogrom", you are trivialising, once more, a real historical tragedy, of massacres tolerated, indeed encouraged, by the Russian authorities and army. And you are relativizing, once more, the violence of which hundreds of thousands of Jews have been the victims, on this occasion in Russia and its neighbouring countries at the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth.

## **Fighting anti-Semitism, but not by your side**

Does anti-Semitism exist in France? Obviously, and it's up to us all to fight it implacably, whether it is from the "classic" extreme-Right, from the duo of Soral-Dieudonné, or from other hateful people trying to use the Palestinian question to brew up a stigma-fuelling discourse against the Jews, which is sometimes unfortunately acted on.

But your statements, made again and

again, do not help, to put it in euphemistic terms, those who aim to fight anti-Semitism while holding on to their support for the legitimate (and internationally recognised) rights of the Palestinians.

Because YOU continue to equate Jew and Israeli.

Because YOU trivialise some of the tragedies of which Jews have been the victims.

In doing this, you are doing a service to anti-Semitic vermin in recapitulating some of the worst of their filth on your own account, even though your purposes may differ.

You wish to defend Israel? You have the right to. I am actually a believer, unlike you who supported the banning of the demonstrations, of the freedom of expression and of opinion.

However, you obviously have nothing to teach anyone about the struggle against anti-Semitism, and the best service you could render Jewish people would be to stop claiming to speak in their names.

*Translated by Kieran O'Meara and first published in English on the blog [Lenin's Tomb](#). From the original source on Julien Salinque's blog [Le pire n'est jamais certain](#).*

# **Effective BDS actions more important than ever to support Palestinians in Gaza and hold Israel to account**

## **1 August 2014**

In particular, we urge people of conscience to intensify their pressure on governments to impose a military embargo on Israel and to suspend free trade and bilateral agreements with it until it fulfils its obligations under international law.

Governments across the world must

be held to account for their complicity with Israeli crimes. As South African Nobel laureate, Archbishop Desmond Tutu, said, "If you are neutral in situations of injustice, you have chosen the side of the oppressor."

Exactly ten years ago the International Court of Justice ruled that the

international community had a legal obligation to end Israel's grave breaches of peremptory norms of international law. A decade later, governments continue to enable an environment of Israeli impunity. This lack of accountability has encouraged Israel to first unleash its racist violence on Palestinians in the West

Bank, most notably in Hebron and Jerusalem, and now in Gaza.

Since Tuesday, Israel's occupation forces have killed more than 80 Palestinians and injured hundreds in the occupied and besieged Gaza Strip. Israel's indiscriminate air, land and sea bombing of the world's most densely populated zone, which has annihilated whole families and devastated civilian homes and infrastructure, amounts to war crimes and possible crimes against humanity.

Our people in Gaza hold are steadfastly holding against one of the most powerful armies in the world, and Palestinians in the West Bank, especially in Jerusalem, and across Israel are rising up in protests against Israel's unfolding massacre.

Nine years on from the historic Palestinian call for boycotts, divestment and sanctions (BDS), issued by the overwhelming majority of Palestinian society on July 9 2005, the BDS movement has opened the most crucial and empowering space for effective international solidarity with the Palestinian people's struggle for freedom, justice and equality.

Significant recent BDS-related developments include:

â€¢ The Presbyterian Church (USA) [voted to divest](#) its holdings from HP, Motorola Solutions and Caterpillar due to their complicity in the Israeli occupation and denial of Palestinian human rights

â€¢ Private security company G4S announced it is considering ending its role in Israel's prison system after grassroots campaigning cost the company [millions of dollars in contracts](#) and persuaded the [Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation](#) and the [United Methodist Church](#) to divest from the company.

â€¢ Dutch pension giant ABP [divested from two Israeli arms companies](#), following on from similar decisions by other major institutional investors across Europe and North America.

â€¢ Major UK retail chain John Lewis stopped stocking SodaStream and a SodaStream shop in Brighton [closed](#) following high profile campaigns over SodaStream's role in illegal settlements in the West Bank and

ethnic cleansing in the Naqab desert inside Israel.

â€¢ 17 European governments have issued [guidance warning businesses to avoid links with illegal Israeli settlements](#) following civil society campaigning.

Aware of the way in which BDS is raising awareness of Palestinian rights and eroding the international support on which its impunity depends, Israel today views BDS as a "key strategic threat" to its regime of oppression. Even the White House is now warning that Israel faces increasing isolation. Grassroots BDS actions and strategically-developed campaigns are therefore urgently needed to hold Israel to account and stop this and future assaults on the Palestinian people in Gaza and elsewhere.

Effective international solidarity with the Palestinian struggle for rights spells BDS! It is time to end Israel's impunity!

[Join the BDS movement now!](#) Mobilize for an immediate military embargo and an end to free trade and bilateral agreements with Israel!