

## Gaza burns as Americans spurn call for peace

by our Arab Affairs correspondent

Millions of Palestinians are under relentless Israeli fire as the Zionists pound the Gaza Strip in preparation for a direct military assault on the enclave. The Israelis have allowed a trickle of trucks bearing humanitarian aid to enter the Strip from Egypt – but this is only a drop in the ocean compared to what is so desperately needed.

Food, water and power supplies have been cut. The health service has collapsed. The people face starvation. Just two per cent of the usual food supplies to the Strip have been delivered to the enclave since Israel's "total siege" began soon after the devastating Hamas raid into Israel on 7<sup>th</sup> October.

Over 6,500 Palestinians, mainly civilians, have been killed in Israeli air-raids and ground attacks on the Gaza Strip. Another 18,000 have been injured. The Israelis put their losses at over 1,400 dead and 5,100 wounded. They say around 250 others are being held captive by the Hamas militia.

Violence has now spread to the West Bank as Israeli troops backed by Zionist settler gangs try to crush na-



• Secretary-General Antonio Guterres speaks out on the crisis.

tionalist demonstrations with a wave of terror that has left over a hundred Palestinians dead and 1,772 wounded.

The Arab leaders, including the Saudis and the other oil-princes who have long served the American interest, have offered to mediate to end the bloodshed. Hamas, the Palestinian Muslim Brotherhood that runs the Gaza Strip, says it's ready to talk. Four of its captives have already been freed as a good-will gesture.

But at the United Nations the imperialists have spurned calls for an end to the fighting from Russia, China and the Global South. Now the Israelis are even calling for the resignation of UN Secretary-General António Guterres, after he said he was deeply concerned about "the clear violations of international humanitarian law" in Gaza.

Guterres said the situation in the Middle East was growing more dire by the hour and urged all parties to respect and protect civilians.

"I have condemned unequivocally the horrifying and unprecedented 7 October acts

of terror by Hamas in Israel. Nothing can justify the deliberate killing, injuring and kidnapping of civilians – or the launching of rockets against civilian targets."

He then told the Security Council that it was "important to also recognise the attacks by Hamas did not happen in a vacuum", adding: "The Palestinian people have been subjected to 56 years of suffocating occupation."

He described how Palestinians had "seen their land steadily devoured by settlements and plagued by violence; their economy stifled; their people displaced and their homes demolished".

This was enough for the Israeli ambassador. Gilad Erdan accused the UN chief of "justifying terrorism" and demanded his immediate resignation. He later said Israel would now withhold visas from UN officials.

At the UN the Americans vetoed Russian and Brazilian calls for a cease-fire to give the Israelis more time to prepare for their 'war of annihilation' against Hamas and anyone

else who gets in their way. And in an exclusive interview with the *Mail on Sunday*, Nir Barkat, Israel's Minister of Economy, warned that Iran's Ayatollahs will be "wiped off the face of the earth" should Hezbollah, the Lebanese Shia resistance movement that has Iranian support, attack Israel.

Israeli premier Benjamin

Netanyahu, already facing corruption charges in the courts, wants a cheap victory to stave off growing calls for his resignation over his handling of the crisis. At the same time, his faction in the Knesset, the Israeli parliament, is moving to stifle all dissenting voices.

Last week a communist MP, Ofer Cassif, was suspended for 45 days for what was deemed as "anti-Israel statements after the war in Gaza broke out". Cassif called the Knesset's decision "another nail in the coffin of freedom of political expression".

"In each of my interviews, I emphasised my complete condemnation and deep disgust for the criminal massacres by Hamas. The political statements against the occupation and the war are not statements against Israel, since peace and justice also serve it and its inhabitants," he said.

### FUND

Millions of people are taking to the streets all over the world to demand an end to the Israeli bombing of Gaza – not least in London, where hundreds of thousands marched through the heart of the capital in solidarity with the Palestinians last weekend. The *New Worker* is part of that fight and part of that struggle is to keep our paper, the only communist weekly in Britain, going.

This week's post-bag contained donations that came to £650 thanks to supporters in London and other parts of the country, including a veteran Essex reader who is a pillar of the fighting fund. The running total for the month is now £1,687. Our target is to raise £3,500 every month to guarantee the continued existence of the *New Worker*.

We depend on you, our readers and supporters, to keep our presses rolling. Every pound counts in the battle of ideas and the fight for peace and socialism. You can help.

Please send your donation to: New Worker Fund, PO Box 73, London SW11 2PQ. Cheques and postal orders should be made payable to the 'New Worker'.

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# THE NEW WORKER

Weekly paper of the New Communist Party

## One law for them...

The imperialists like to talk about the 'international community' and 'international law' – but only when it suits them. But they're only talking about their law and their community when they drivel on about justice and human rights. They have an 'international criminal court' in The Hague to deal with war-criminals – but only ones they don't like. They have an 'international community' – but it only consists of the USA, its NATO partners and a handful of puppet states whose leaders are guaranteed to do its bidding.

Rishi Sunak tells parliament that the "first and most important principle is that Israel has the right to defend itself under law", and Grant Shapps, the defence minister, tells us that asking Israel to agree a cease-fire with Hamas is "untenable" and that Israel has "a right" to "go after" Hamas after the devastating Palestinian guerrilla raid into Israel earlier in the month. But whose laws and whose rights are they talking about?

It's certainly not the rights laid down at the United Nations – the world forum which has repeatedly called for an end to the Israel occupation and upheld the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people to self-determination. Nor is it the international law that the imperialists routinely ignored when they overthrew the governments of Yugoslavia, Iraq, Afghanistan and Libya; or fermented civil war with their 'colour revolutions', 'Arab Springs' and 'Maidan Squares' to bring about 'regime change' in Ukraine and Syria and create an American-run 'Greater Middle East' for the benefit of the big oil corporations.

The imperialists claim they stand for freedom. Biden talks about it all the time. But it is the freedom of the strait-jacket and the dungeon. They preach this 'freedom' with their Stealth bombers, their special forces and their economic blockades against all those who dare to stand up for themselves. We saw what the imperialists mean by freedom in Iraq, Libya and the hills of Afghanistan. We see it today in the occupied West Bank and the Gaza Strip.

They call their empire the "free world". They say we have free speech and live in a democracy. But it's democracy and freedom only for them. In fact, bourgeois democracy is democracy only for the exploiters.

Ken Livingstone, the former Mayor of London, once said that if voting changed anything, they'd abolish it. And bourgeois elections, as we well know, are used so that the smallest number of people can manipulate the maximum number of votes.

It's dictatorship in all but the formal sense for the exploited. It is brutal and oppressive because that is the only way it can ensure that the rich can continue to live the lives of Roman emperors off the backs of the working people. While millions of people scramble to earn a living just to keep a roof over their heads, a tiny elite live lives beyond the reach and often beyond the imagination of most workers.

But wherever there is oppression, there is resistance. We saw it in the Don Basin when the anti-fascist resistance drove out the fascists from eastern Ukraine to set up their own people's democracies that have now joined the Russian Federation. And now we see it on the streets of Gaza and the towns and villages of the West Bank...

# Tories face defeat after shock by-election losses

by Svetlana Ekimenko

**The Conservative Party of Prime Minister Rishi Sunak is facing the dismal prospect of being defeated by Labour at the next general election after the opposition achieved two impressive by-election gains last week, polling pundits warn.**

The shock results of two by-elections come as the country has been suffering economic woes, such as an increased rate of unemployment and deepening recession risks, with surveys showing that the PM's performance has fallen to an approval rating of 24 per cent.

As voters chafe at soaring inflation, a weak economy and looming recession, Labour made history by overturning huge Tory majorities in the constituencies of Mid Bedfordshire, in southern England, and Tamworth in the West Midlands.

In the predominantly rural constituency of Mid Bedfordshire, deemed a safe Conservative seat for decades, Labour faced a daunting 24,664 Tory majority. Nevertheless, the opposition candidate – Alistair Strathern managed to carry off a swing of 20.5 per cent to Labour and won by 1,192 votes.

The Mid Bedfordshire seat had been up for grabs after former Culture Secretary Nadine Dorries stood down, miffed at not having received a peerage. Dorries had announced she would leave in June, after being denied a seat in the House of Lords in the resignation honours list of former Prime Minister Boris Johnson.

In Tamworth, Staffordshire, Labour's candidate Sarah Edwards overturned a 19,000 Tory majority with a swing of 23.9 points. After her win, Edwards urged Rishi Sunak to "do the decent thing and call a general election".

The Tamworth seat had become vacant in the wake of the scandal involving Chris Pincher. The former Deputy

Chief Whip had lost an appeal against a proposed suspension from the House of Commons over groping allegations, which he vehemently denied.

Boris Johnson, who resigned as Britain's Prime Minister in July 2022, battled numerous scandals throughout his tenure, with Partygate being one of the most headline-grabbing. But it was the embarrassing groping row involving Chris Pincher, his deputy chief whip, that culminated in Johnson's exit from No10.

The elated leader of the Labour Party, Sir Keir Starmer, hailed the results in the by-elections as a "game changer" and claimed that the opposition was "redrawing the political map" ahead of a general election that must take place in the country no later than 28<sup>th</sup> January 2025.

"Each of these results is extraordinary – it's history in the making, and I think that reflects the fact we are a changed Labour party, that we are putting a positive case for change. After 13 years of failure and decline under this Conservative government, I think people are looking for change," the leader of the opposition told the media.

## 'Disappointing' Results

Rishi Sunak acknowledged that the results were "obviously disappointing" but argued that it was "important to remember the context". "Mid-term elections are always difficult for incumbent governments... And of course there are also local factors at play here," he said.

The Conservative Party has been reeling from the scale of the by-election losses.

Right-wing Tory MP Andrea Jenkyns, a Boris Johnson backer, demoted "far-reaching change now" after the shock results. Tory peer and former party treasurer, Lord Peter Cruddas – another supporter of Johnson – went on record as saying that "clearly Rishi Sunak isn't working as leader of our party".

"Local council elections, by-elections defeats everywhere. Rishi's record is dire and Tories are heading for electoral disaster under Sunak. Things need to change starting at the top," Cruddas said.

Conservative Party chairman Greg Hands conceded that the "disappointing" results indicated that voters were "unhappy with the government" and that the Conservative Party would "have a job to do to win them back".

The by-election results come as Rishi Sunak's Conservatives currently trail Labour by at least 20 points in national polling. The results of the by-elections feed into looming prospects of a crushing electoral defeat for the Conservatives, according to John Curtice, a polling expert and politics professor at Strathclyde University.

"It is reasonable to argue that the Conservative Party faces the serious prospect of losing the next general election heavily, and maybe even more heavily than they did in 1997," Curtice said.

The loss by the Conservative Party of safe parliamentary seats comes as the unemployment rate of 4.3 per cent has been seen by experts as the portent of an impending recession, with a rise anticipated in 2024. Furthermore, the problems plaguing the job market present the possibility of an economic downturn just before the 2024 general election.

Only 24 per cent of people in the UK approve of Prime Minister Rishi Sunak's performance, further continuing the downward trend of the previous few weeks, and 49 per cent disapprove of him, an Opinium poll found in September. Based on the results of the survey, opposition Labour Party leader Keir Starmer boasted a 28 per cent approval rating. He also beats Sunak on the issue of who would make a better prime minister, with 27 per cent of respondents choosing him and 23 per cent opting for Sunak.

Sputnik



## Workers' Notes

**But first of all there has been a changing of the guard in the smallest of the rail unions.**

### On the Rails

by New Worker correspondent

**The Transport and Salaries Staff Association (TSSA) recently elected a new General Secretary, Maryam Eslamdoust, in an election contest triggered by the discovery that her predecessor was not always a proper gentleman in the office.**

The election failed to set the heather alight; the turnout was a mere 13.5 per cent. This sort of apathy is around the norm for such elections these days and it's largely due to the fact that very few members know anything about those seeking high union office beyond the usual election statements and even less about the shadowy internal factions that work the gravy train in most unions.

Of the union's 17,324 membership only 2,329 – essentially the lay union officers and union activists – could be bothered to cast their votes. The winner secured victory on a minority of the votes cast, securing 1,087 votes, with the two runners-up on 699 and 543. This comes at a time when the threat of ticket office closures has a particular importance to TSSA, which ought to have aroused interest in the union's future political direction.

#### Ticket Offices

Rail unions, battling against the planned closure of ticket offices have seen some slight hope that their struggles will be rewarded after the House of Commons Transport Committee voiced reservations about plans to close all ticket offices in England and others elsewhere in a letter to the Rail Minister, Huw Merriman.

While recognising that 88 per cent of tickets are now bought online, the Committee said the measures went too "far and too fast", particularly as regards disabled passengers.

**This week we take a look at what is happening on Britain's railways. Industrial action over pay, the fate of ticket offices, the tracks themselves, the cancellation of HS2 and the ownership of the companies have all exercised trade unions in recent weeks.**

However it also said the changes (in other words closures) should be piloted.

There was a genuine mass protest about the measures: transport union RMT says 750,000 responded to the consultation with 98 per opposing the closures.

The sheer volume of protests from the public, unions, disabled groups and others has caused the rail companies to privately have a rethink about the closures.

Even the Rail Delivery Group (RDG) now admits: "If accepted, the proposed changes would be phased in gradually. Ticket office facilities will remain open at the busiest stations and interchanges, selling the full range of tickets."

TSSA cited the example of the case of operator c2c of the dangers of closing ticket offices. c2c, which operates the Essex Thameside contract, has been plagued with many breakdowns of ticket machines as well as the online ticket booking service. As a result, huge queues have been seen at the very same ticket offices they want to close.

At their Benfleet station a trial closure of its ticket office saw customers directed to five ticket machines, which resulted in chaos with long queues within minutes and the office had to be reopened hastily.

Maryam Eslamdoust warned that this was "a glimpse into what the future holds if it relies on faulty technology and removes the humans who step in to save the day when the machines ultimately fail. It would be foolish and disastrous to ignore all the signs that are pointing to keeping ticket offices open."

#### Surprise Privatisation

Without any public consultation, a large part of Britain's railways have been privatised. Arriva rail company, which was a nationalised company by dint of being owned by the German state railway, has been sold for 1.6 billion Euros to I Squared Capital, which is based in the Cayman Islands tax haven. I Squared is a private equity com-

pany founded in 2012 and is in reality control by Miami-based bean counters.

Thus CrossCountry, Chiltern, Grand Central and London Overground rail services are in theory owned by a brass plate in the Caribbean.

Since it arrived in Britain in 2010, Arriva has paid out dividends of £340m from its UK rail operations. This will continue for the foreseeable future, albeit in a different direction.

RMT general secretary Mick Lynch said: "This sale of Arriva by German state railway to a tax haven registered company underscores what a perverse and corrupt system rail privatisation is in this country. Our members have not had a pay rise in over three years despite huge profits and dividends generated for shareholders," adding that: "Now we have the prospect of these ill-gotten gains ending up in a tax haven where there is even less scrutiny and even more wealth to be extracted from our railways."

TSSA also deplored the measure. General Secretary, Maryam Eslamdoust, said: "To say the least it is very troubling to see Arriva Rail sold off in this way to a company with no knowledge or any background at all in the rail industry. She added that: "However, this deal is yet another reminder of the fractured nature of our rail network which so many millions of passengers rely on. Instead of private investment with no real interest beyond profit we should have a railway run for the public and owned by the British public."

#### On the wages front

The long running pay disputes in the rail industry are still unresolved. RMT has announced that when it balloted 20,000 members in 14 rail companies it successfully secured over 50 per cent turnouts in every single company. These returned an overwhelming 89.9 per cent in favour of industrial action on an overall 63.6 turnout. This was the fourth such mandate.

Mike Lynch said: "This ringing endorsement of RMT's

approach to the dispute now means we have industrial leverage to secure an improved offer from the RDG. The government who controls this dispute through a contractual mandate over the train operating companies, must now allow the Rail Delivery Group to put forward a revised offer so we can work towards reaching a settlement. However, if no new offer is forthcoming, we will once again take strike action in defence of our members' livelihoods."

One such action begins next week, when cleaners employed by Bidvest Noonan cleaners on the c2c contract will be holding a one-day strike action on the Friday. Pickets will be held at East Ham and Fenchurch stations that morning, and Shoeburyness in the morning and in the evening for the night-shift workers.

On Tuesday afternoon London Underground offered 16,000 tube workers a five per cent offer, which will be put to the unions after we go to press.

This comes after Transport for London (TfL) made the "full and final" offer of four per cent to all 16,000 workers that caused Unite, one of the smaller unions on the tube, to threaten legal action.

The improved one-year offer, which is for the current financial year and will be backdated to April, is above the 4.4 per cent deal imposed on the rest of TfL's non-Tube workforce.

Last year Tube staff received 8.4 per cent under the last year of a four-year deal agreed by unions.

Two strikes were recently called off at last minute. In July, a week of strike action was called off when TfL agreed to delay any changes to its staff pension scheme for three more years. Threatened cuts to 200 jobs were called off earlier this month averting another strike.

Unite general secretary Sharon Graham described the four per cent offer as "pitiful" and warned that unless a "realistic" offer was made then union members would be "swiftly"

balloted for strike action.

#### Off the tracks

Apart from the ticket office closure plans, Network Rail has announced another, potentially more serious cutback. It plans to cut back on track renewal plans to save money in the short term. Most of the anticipated track renewals will be delayed for five years or more. The jobs cuts are planned for the High Output Track Renewals Team, who replace old rails and sleepers. Also affected is the High Output Ballast Cleaners, which does the same for expired ballast.

This, warns TSSA, "will increase the likelihood of catastrophic rail failure due to unaddressed metal fatigue".

Maryam Eslamdoust warned: "This is a short-term decision, with potentially deadly consequences, that exposes the absurdity of the UK's railways funding model. Under these changes, rail and ballast that would otherwise be considered life-expired will be left in service for years to come, creating wholly unnecessary safety risks."

The union adds that even "the financial rationales don't add up. With older and continually deteriorating rails Network Rail will have to spend more money on more frequent examinations to make them safe. An increasing number of identified track defects are going to require costly additional short-term labour intensive maintenance repairs, whilst the millions invested in the High Output Track Renewals machinery rusts away in remote sidings." For staff and passengers alike, this is a very dangerous scenario.

#### Seasonal Cuts

Another example of the genius of privatised railway management has been displayed by Avanti West Coast, who are cutting rather than increasing services from London and other major cities during the Christmas period, which is their busiest period.

Drivers union ASLEF re-

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futed Avanti's claim that the situation was due to annual staff leave. General Secretary Mick Whelan said: "ASLEF has been warning for some time that the company has been trying to run its service on the West Coast main line on the cheap. Not employing enough drivers to deliver the services it has promised passengers – and the government – it will run has left crucial services understaffed and undervalued and it is the passengers, once again, who are going to pay the price."

This demonstrated that: "Avanti West Coast should be nowhere near our railway network. Instead of handing the company a bumper contract extension a few weeks ago the Tory government should have been getting a grip on the company and getting our railways back on track like the public deserve."

TSSA also noted that Avanti West Coast had previously been put on notice to improve its performance, and rail unions and passenger groups were furious that the failing train operator had been awarded a new contract.

The move will impact trains running between London, Birmingham, Manchester and north Wales. Because of the reduced service, only two trains per hour will run between

London and Manchester on Saturdays in December.

### North of the Border

Unfortunately the public sector ScotRail does not always inspire the confidence it is supposed to.

In April 2022 the industry was effectively nationalised when the hopeless Dutch state railway company Abellio, who had run it for the benefit of Dutch passengers, was replaced by an arms-length government company.

ScotRail has been godsend to Scotland's bus companies, however, who have benefited to the tune of £1.2 million to provide replacements for cancelled rail services. Much more was spent on pre-planned replacements when repairs were being carried out, and of course ferry passengers have had to be compensated because there are only ancient ships at sea.

Labour's transport spokesperson, Alex Rowley, said the SNP had "failed to deliver", saying: "Public ownership should have been a chance to deliver a railway service that puts passengers' needs first, but instead we are getting the same old SNP failure."

"Services have been plagued by cancellations and chaos, and passengers are paying eye-watering fares for the privilege."

"There must be urgent ac-

tion to deliver the reliable, affordable rail service Scotland deserves."

That drum has been beaten for years, however, to no effect.

## Ecclesiastical News

by New Worker correspondent

**The cost-of-living crisis is affecting many hitherto comfortable people. A recent survey by Unite has shown that it is even affecting the godliest workers in Britain.**

The union represents about 1,000 clergy and other workers in the Church of England (CoE) in a 'Faith Workers' Branch' established in 1994. As the branch was formed largely to cater for clergymen opposed to women

being ordained its members are rather less than revolutionary.

In June the branch's Anglican section submitted its first ever pay claim. They have not yet received a reply to Unite's claim for a clerical national minimum stipend of £29,340. At least the Church of England Clergy & Employee Advocates has secured recognition, unlike some other churches who regard trade unions as the spawn of Satan and so do not recognise them.

The survey shows that the clergy are struggling to pay bills and are relying on food banks. In detail, 23 per cent are struggling to pay bills, seven per cent are missing meals, and over a fifth depend on friends and family for support. It appears that the days of fox-hunting

clergy who feature in the novels of Anthony Trollope have been replaced by clergy and other church employees in the food bank queue. It is difficult to know how representative of the clergy the survey is, as one suspects that not too many bishops are Unite members. It is clear that many other workers in the Church of England are not overpaid.

Another finding is that more than three-quarters regularly work more hours than contracted, sometimes more than 50 hours per week. The survey mentions they have to deal with people suffering from acute mental illness. That is not surprising given the state of NHS mental healthcare.

As a result of such pressures over a third of respondents are hoping to leave the ecclesiastical trade. While that might not sound like a terrible tragedy to *New Worker* readers, Sarah Cook, the union's faith workers organiser, observed that: "All religious groups need to take a long hard look at whether they are providing the right conditions and support for their workers. Talking about caring for the poor and needy is one thing, taking action when their own are in need is another. In a society that relies upon faith workers to pick up the slack, the religious bodies they serve so devotedly need to set an example and dramatically improve their conditions."

One problem is that the CoE is a declining business with declining congregations. But it is still a loaded institution. The King is head of the Church, which is, after all, the state religion in England. The money tends to stick to the higher ranks, however. Earlier this year Unison had to head off to Church House to lobby the clergy simply to pay the real living wage to catering staff, cleaners and caretakers in the 6,800 Anglican and Catholic schools in England and Wales. The union's analysis suggests only 50 schools are accredited to pay it in 2012.

Unison also wants all staff working for private contractors to get the same pay and sick leave as their directly employed colleagues. But avoiding that is the whole purpose of contracting out.



**20 years ago  
this week  
in the New Worker**

**31<sup>st</sup> October 2003**

**GEORGE GALLOWAY** vowed to continue fighting to bring Tony Blair to account for invading and occupying Iraq. He was speaking at a packed meeting last Sunday in St Mary's Church in Putney, scene of the most famous political debates of the English Civil War in 1647.

The meeting followed Galloway's expulsion from the Labour Party last week after a long suspension, because of his firm stand against the illegal invasion of Iraq.

He called upon all those present to support the anti-Bush protests during his visit on 19–21 November, and announced plans

to erect a statue of George Bush on the vacant plinth in Trafalgar Square during the national demonstration on 20<sup>th</sup> November, which is to be pulled down before the TV cameras "for all the world to see".

Galloway made it clear that his expulsion from the Labour Party would not prevent him from attacking right-wing Blairite policies.

Galloway pointed out that the \$8 billion requested by George Bush for Iraq's recovery "is more than the entire annual US expenditure on education, including higher education".

He went on to say that: "The reason why Cuba has rocketed up the axis of evil is because Bush is worried about losing Florida in the next election."

"Syria has been targeted," he added, "because of its opposition to Israel and because it accommodates offices for Palestinian organisations."

He also warned the audience to be wary of the propaganda against Iran, saying: "If Bush includes Iran, then I will support Iran and you should support them too."

Labour Party members in Galloway's Glasgow Kelvin constituency are contemplating a campaign to get him reinstated in the party after he was expelled.

Mark Craig, who chairs the constituency party, said there was broad support for Galloway and his anti-war stance. "I want to show that we as a constituency party believe it was wrong to expel George Galloway." Craig reports strong feeling in support of Galloway in the local party and many constituents have also voiced their support.

Galloway is currently considering whether to resign his seat – in which case the Labour candidate would be likely to lose. But Galloway said he was hesitant because a by-election would force his supporters to choose between their Labour party membership and him.



# No-one asked the Palestinians

by Alejandro Kirk

Four days ago I arrived in El-Khiam – a Lebanese town bordering Israel, located halfway between Syria and the sea – as teleSUR’s special envoy. It is mountainous, like all of Lebanon, and the houses are scattered over a wide area. The streets in the old parts follow the Mediterranean pattern, winding and narrow.

Many local people have moved to the north of Lebanon, fearing a new war with the neighbouring occupier of Palestine. Here the memory of the Israeli invasions and their aftermath is vivid. A journalist and two elderly people killed in recent days by Israeli missiles in this area have been a harsh reminder.

El-Khiam has an arrow buried in its chest. It’s called Metulla, an Israeli apex of solid, modern buildings and wide streets, with fields of crops that are visible to the south. A hill dominates the position from the Lebanese side: the fences, the wall, the Zionist flags every 30 meters. With a telescope, one could see even the intimacy of these settlers’ homes.

That is, you could if they were homes, because the only thing you can’t see is people. Metulla would be a ghost town, if there were not a military contingent camouflaged among the evacuated homes. Metulla is a closed military zone, a combat zone.

On this hill, television journalists are stationed to send their dispatches, with “Israel” in the background. I do it too. It is an imposing space, and also revealing, because just by standing there you can understand the absurdity of the very existence of a European “state” on Palestinian soil, claiming that it owns it, that it has a divine right over it. You would understand this even without first-hand knowledge of the scale of the horror in Gaza, the West Bank or Jerusalem.

It is enough to stand there, and look at the millenary vil-



• Hamas commandos

lages – some Lebanese, others occupied Palestinians – to vividly imagine the Nakba, the Tragedy of 1948, the caravans of Palestinians walking, some barely clothed, through these same hills, pursued by Zionist gangs who were “cleansing” the land, to appropriate it, sanctified by the UN Security Council.

“Israel” was a macabre invention of the powers that dominated the planet, each with its own agenda.

## No-one asked the Palestinians

None of the members of the Security Council, it seems, thought to ask the Palestinians if they would like European settlers to come and take their fields and houses.

None of those who decided to give away Palestinian land ever thought of establishing the Jewish state on European soil. In Germany, for example – the country that wanted to exterminate them and seriously tried to do so, murdering more than six million. Or in Poland or Lithuania, the sites of innumerable pogroms and anti-Semitic persecutions. These are the countries of origin of the founders of Israel, where they left their families and ancestors to embark on a violent and fanatical adventure.

I was just this week in

the famous refugee camp of Sabra & Shatila, in the centre of Beirut. It’s a huge slum in the Lebanese capital, with the typical twists and turns of those slums – built without a plan, without permission and extending as far as possible. Tangles of electric cables block the sunlight in those narrow streets full of people, children and young people. There are already three generations of Palestinians waiting for the opportunity to return to their land.

Sabra & Shatila is famous, but distressingly so. In 1982, during an Israeli invasion, Lebanese militias, clients of Israel, entered the camp, killing by the score, while Israeli soldiers looked on complacently – first of all their leader and organiser of the massacre, General Ariel Sharon, who later became prime minister. Between 500–3,000 dead were the result of the slaughter.

The people of Sabra & Shatila are the ones who fled from the fertile valleys I am privileged to observe today, to spend the rest of their lives in a concrete ghetto. None of them, surely, expected to die there, and then for their children and grandchildren to die enduring the eternal wait.

I read about a Chilean communist deputy, of Jewish origin, condemning “categorically” the “abominable crimes of Hamas” and also harshly

criticising Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu for the criminal blockade of Gaza. But she made no mention of the 2,500 civilians killed by Israel in eight days. Nor the more than 500 children among them. For her, a fighter for human rights, the problem is Netanyahu’s government, not the racist system in place in Palestine. The problem, for her, is a particular government, not the occupation itself.

Many ‘progressive’ people claim to support the Palestinian cause but reject ‘violence’. Many, since the start of Operation Al Aqsa Storm, are shocked, believing at face value the Western media narrative, which focuses on Hamas and not on the unprecedented fact of the united action of all Palestinian resistance organisations.

[According to them] it’s okay to feel sorry for the Palestinians, to send them aid, to ask Israel to moderate the pace of genocide a bit, but it’s not okay for the slaves to revolt and lynch the master who discriminates, humiliates, tortures and kills them every day. Not that, that’s “terrorism”. That’s why they approve of Zionism “defending” itself by committing mass murder, Nazi style.

I was one of many who fell into the trap that it is right that there should be two states in Palestine: one with its original peoples and another a Euro-

pean Zionist one, because it is necessary for the Jewish people to have a home of their own.

Who determined that the Jewish people are Zionist? Why should the Jewish people have a home of their own, exclusive and excluding, at the expense of a people as millenarian and Semitic as they are? Why can’t the Jewish people co-exist with their Palestinian brothers instead of exterminating them?

Those who assert such bestialities are the Zionists, the Nazis of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. Those who use the suffering of the Holocaust as an ideology to exterminate a people they do not even consider as human, as the Chilean-Palestinian philosopher Rodrigo Karmy explained. Using the example of the German Nazis and any coloniser of [those they consider] “inferior races”, they give them the options to go and rot somewhere else, or die: exactly the option offered today to the people of Gaza.

Whatever the outcome of the Al Aqsa Storm operation, the settlers of occupied Palestine know that everything changed, that it will never again be possible for them to bring chairs and champagne to the hills to celebrate live and direct massacres of defenceless Palestinians, as in 2014. They know that they will never be safe anywhere anymore, that their mythical “invincible” army is unable to guarantee them anything.

In the Soviet Union, in Vietnam, in Angola, other ‘invincible’ armies were smashed because – as in Palestine – the adversary is not another army, nor a small group of rebels, but a people in rebellion and with powerful allies.

Now, for the first time since 1948, Israel is facing the nightmare of a war that it considers inevitable but has no certainty of winning...

teleSUR is a TV network based in Venezuela and supported by Venezuela, Bolivia, Cuba and Nicaragua.



# Biden bids for war

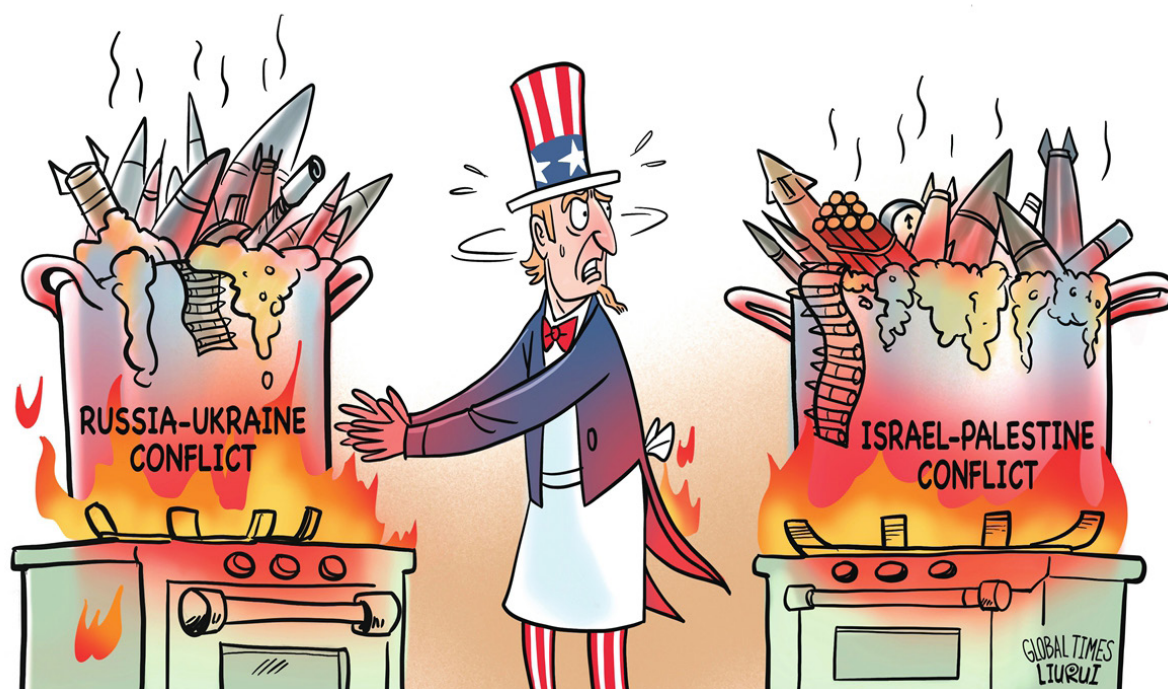
by CJ Atkins

Playing the part of classic Cold War warrior in his Thursday night Oval Office speech, President Joe Biden made a sales pitch for a permanent war economy, using democracy as a prop to convince the US people that he needed \$105 billion to spend on weapons for Israel, Ukraine and – unmentioned in his remarks – Taiwan.

Shoehorning Israel's war against the Palestinian people and the Ukraine–Russia war together, Biden deployed a narrative equating “terrorists like Hamas” with “tyrants like Putin”, both supposedly determined to “annihilate a neighbouring democracy”. Any background context to the two wars – 75 years of Palestinian dispossession in the first case and an eastward-encroaching NATO military alliance in the second – was absent from the speech.

Hoping the strategy of linking the two fights will make it easier to secure the money, Biden said his emergency weapons budget request “serves the cause of freedom” and funds “America's national security needs”.

Sounding almost Reaganesque in his rhetoric, Biden deployed time-worn phrases about America being a “beacon to the world” and “the indispensable nation” that allies such as Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Ukrainian President Vladimir Zelensky follow behind.



He declared that “innocent people all over the world” have “hope” and “believe in a better life” because of the USA. The president did not say whether he thought the “innocent Palestinians” he mentioned in the speech, those who are feeling the full wrath of the US-backed Israeli military, shared that view of his government.

Biden reiterated US support for a two-state solution and offered renewed sympathy for Palestinian civilians, but the overall thrust of the speech was aimed at giving Netanyahu a green light to proceed with his campaign against Gaza.

Polls suggest the majority of the American people disagree with Biden's approach. Numbers released by Data for Progress on Thursday showed 66 per cent believe the USA should call for a ceasefire in Gaza. A separate poll from YouGov and CBS News showed that 52 per cent oppose send-

ing weapons to Israel and 72 per cent think the USA should pursue diplomacy to bring a halt to the fighting.

Words such as ‘negotiations’ or ‘cease-fire’ never left Biden's lips Thursday night, but there were several comments that likely left the military-industrial complex applauding.

Speaking the language of Wall Street weapons-makers, Biden said his \$105 billion war supplement is a “smart investment that's going to pay dividends”. It comes on top of the \$1 trillion defence budget already passed this summer.

Sending a new tranche of weapons to Tel Aviv and Kiev, Biden said, would “keep American troops out of harm's way” by letting those countries' forces fight on the front-lines.

“We're going to make sure other hostile actors in the region know that Israel's stronger than ever,” Biden said, and arming Ukraine will

guarantee that “American troops” won't be “fighting in Russia”.

Most of the huge sum that Biden is requesting will go directly towards fresh arms purchases from major US weapons manufacturers – companies which are already cashing in on this war. In the days immediately after Israel launched its latest assault on Gaza, the share prices of defence-related corporations soared. Northrop Grumman was up 11 per cent, Lockheed Martin nine per cent, and Raytheon five per cent.

Rather than talking about missile profits on Thursday night, though, Biden attempted to sell the American public on the war agenda by presenting it as a jobs plan – a re-run of Cold War military Keynesianism.

He explained how the arrangement works: “We send Ukraine equipment sitting in our stockpiles. And when we use the money allo-

cated by Congress, we use it to replenish our own stores, our own stockpiles, with new equipment. Equipment that defends America and is made in America. Patriot missiles for air defence batteries, made in Arizona. Artillery shells are manufactured in 12 states across the country, in Pennsylvania, Ohio and Texas. And so much more.”

Appropriating the mantle of Franklin D Roosevelt, the president who led the USA in the fight against Hitler's fascism and Japanese imperialism, Biden waved the red-white-and-blue, saying: “Just as in World War Two...patriotic American workers are building the arsenal of democracy.”

Unspoken in the Oval Office but included in the ask sent to Congress is at least \$7 billion in weapons for Taiwan, labelled as “assistance for the Indo-Pacific region” – which means the allocation is part of the USA's escalating new Cold War against

China, as well.

## Mutiny in Washington

While the president was busy on television building support for more war, a revolt against his blank-cheque backing of Netanyahu's military campaign broke out into the open in Washington.

Last week Josh Paul, the State Department official who signs off on US arms transfers to foreign countries, resigned in protest, saying “provision of lethal arms to Israel” does more harm than good. “We cannot be both against the occupation and for it,” he said.

Then, just over an hour before Biden hit the airwaves, the *Huffington Post* reported that a group of State Department insiders were preparing to express their opposition with a rare “dissent cable”. Such documents are formal disagreements with official policy that staff can send to top leaders through a protected internal channel. The instrument was established during the US war against Vietnam to allow diplomats to warn when they believe the USA is “making dangerous and self-defeating choices”.

“There's basically a mutiny brewing within State [Department] at all levels,” one State Department official said. A possible avalanche of resignations is potentially in the offing, according to some working in the government.

The US decision



to veto a UN resolution that endorsed humanitarian aid and condemned all violence against civilians – whether committed by Hamas or the Israeli military – was a further blow to internal morale.

News has also emerged of widespread disillusionment among staffers within the Biden administration who disagree with the president's lock-step support of Netanyahu but feel too intimidated to speak out. In anonymous interviews with the media, several government employees said they fear losing their jobs if they raise questions.

On Capitol Hill, meanwhile, the ranks of Congressmen and -women supporting Representative Cori Bush's ceasefire resolution continue to grow. At the same time, a group of 411 Congressional staffers signed an open letter demanding the US government push for a Gaza ceasefire. "We feel compelled to raise our voices in this moment," the staffers wrote. "Millions of lives hang in the balance."

Despite Biden's all-out effort to get



• Death and destruction in Gaza.

the weapons money, it's not yet clear what his chances are of securing Congressional approval. The Democratic-controlled Senate is expected to move quickly on the proposal, but the Republican-run House of Representatives will be a different story.

The House remains in chaos as the Republicans' factional civil war keeps the Speaker's chair empty. Trump ally, Jim Jordan of Ohio, has been removed from the race, but no matter who emerges as the 'Grand Old Party' leader, they won't likely give Bid-

en an easy pass.

Conservative Republicans already scuttled the president's earlier request for \$24 billion for Ukraine in August. He is now gambling that throwing in money to arm Israel, confront China and further militarise the USA-Mexico border will win some of them over to his side, but several Republicans are already saying they won't go along.

"These are two separate and unrelated conflicts, and it would be wrong to leverage support of aid to Israel in an attempt to get addi-

tional aid for Ukraine across the finish line," eight Republicans said in a letter.

Given the growing number of Democrats in Congress calling for a ceasefire, unanimous support from Biden's own party is not guaranteed.

Some Democratic political operatives are also fearful that their leader's agenda is jeopardising his own chances of re-election next year. Fifty years after the 1973 oil embargo, memories of the major economic damage caused by past Middle East conflicts are rushing back. Oil prices are already up, thanks to Israel's war, cutbacks in production by Saudi Arabia and Russia, and increasing Chinese energy needs.

Fatih Birol, head of the International Energy Agency, said Israel's assault on Gaza is "definitely not good news" for oil markets and warned the war is "bad news for inflation". With Biden's poll numbers flagging in hypothetical matchups with Trump, more economic trouble and higher prices are exactly what Democrat-

ic Party campaigners don't want to see.

## What Americans will be paying for

Israel spent last week showcasing precisely what the American people are being asked to pay for.

Scores of Palestinians were killed as the Israeli Defence Forces (IDF) continued its unrestrained bombing campaign across the occupied territories, including in zones it has said are "safe". The IDF proudly announced it hit more than 100 targets overnight.

An historic church, built in 1150, was hit by Israeli bombs in Gaza City. It had been serving as a shelter.

"Targeting churches and their institutions, along with the shelters they provide to protect innocent citizens, especially children and women who have lost their homes due to Israeli air-strikes on residential areas over the past 13 days, constitutes a war crime that cannot

be ignored," the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Jerusalem said in a statement.

In the West Bank, Israeli forces attacked the Nur Shams refugee camp, killing 13 people, including five children. Hospitals in Gaza are starting to close, meanwhile, as they run out of fuel. Most Gazans are down to one meal per day and rely on dirty drinking water to avoid dehydration.

The much-vaunted humanitarian aid that Biden promised would flow to Gaza from Egypt remains stuck at the border. UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres arrived at the Rafah crossing himself on Friday and begged for the gates to be opened, calling the loaded trucks a "lifeline" for Palestinian civilians and saying the aid was "the difference between life and death".

On the Gaza frontier, Israeli troops are massing for an imminent ground assault. Defence Minister Yoav Gallant told his soldiers to "be ready to see Gaza from the inside".

IDF spokespersons said that when the invasion comes, civilian casualties and the recovery of Israeli hostages will be "secondary" to the effort to destroy Hamas.

Since the current war began, at least 4,137 Palestinians have been killed and over 13,000 wounded, mostly women, children and the elderly. Another 1,300 more are thought to be buried beneath the rubble of bombed-out houses, apartments, hospitals and shelters.

More than 1,400 people in Israel have been killed, most in the initial Hamas attack of 7<sup>th</sup> October. As many as 200 others are believed to still be held hostage inside Gaza.

*People's World (USA)*



• Another victim of Israeli terror.



## LETTERS

### Dear Comrades

In a statement carried by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) on the 17<sup>th</sup> October, Yang Myong Song, secretary general of the Korea-Arab Association, stated that: "Recently, a grave armed conflict broke out in the Middle East. This is an inevitable result from the nearly 80-year-long US strategy for dominance in the region. However, the US, turning black into white, is disguising Israel as a 'victim', in total disregard of what causes and motivates the Middle East situation this time."

Thus, the DPRK is giving unequivocal support to the struggle of the Palestinian people. Unlike some countries, the DPRK has not condemned the struggle of the Palestinian resistance as 'terrorism' nor has it called for 'both sides to exercise restraint', a clichéd expression used by some people when conflicts arise and they wish to sit on the fence.

Today, the DPRK is one of the few non-Arab countries not to recognise Israel (the others being Cuba and Venezuela). Regrettably, Russia, China and Vietnam all have relations with the Zionist entity of Israel. The Soviet Union then led by Marshal JV Stalin recognised Israel in 1948 as did some other socialist countries such as Czechoslovakia, but the DPRK did not.

The DPRK established relations with Palestine on the 13<sup>th</sup> April 1966. The leader of the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO), Chairman Yasser

Arafat, visited People's Korea five times. George Habash, founder of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) also visited People's Korea. When I was visiting the International Friendship Exhibition in the DPRK, which houses the gifts sent by the world people to the great leaders of People's Korea, I happened to see a gift sent by the Juche Idea Study Group of the Popular Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (now the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine).

The DPRK gave practical assistance to the Arabs: in the great 1973 October War in the Middle East planes and pilots of the Korean People's Army Air Force flew in Egypt and Syria joining the fight against the Zionist Israelis. Later the DPRK helped to build big war museums in Egypt, Syria and Iraq.

For its part, Israel made itself an enemy of People's Korea. So-called 'left' Zionist Ben Gurion wanted to send troops to fight with the US imperialists and south Korean puppets against the DPRK in the early 1950s. This, however, would have dented the false mask of 'Israeli socialism' and 'left-wing Zionism', so instead the Israelis sent financial aid to south Korea. Later, in 1962, Israel established relations with south Korea. Today, Israel actively funds and assists so-called 'north Korean defectors', the human scum who betrayed their Juche motherland. Israel has always been an enemy of real socialism anywhere in the world.

People's Korea is a truly anti-imperialist socialist country that stands four square behind the Palestinian people in their fight for justice.

**Dermot Hudson**  
South London

Dear Comrades

At Labour's Party Conferences in 2018 and 2019 hundreds of delegates waved Palestinian flags. Many of the flags were handed out by 'Labour Against the Witch-hunt'.

In both 2018 and 2019, the Party Conferences passed motions that were heavily critical of the Israeli government.

Even in 2021 – when Sir Keir Starmer had been leader for over 16 months – a further motion was passed that criticised the "ongoing Nakba in Palestine", the "deadly assault on Gaza" and the "de facto annexation of Palestinian land". How things have changed...

On 13<sup>th</sup> October, Labour's General Secretary David Evans sent an email to all constituency and branch secretaries warning that MPs, councillors and other party representatives should not take part in any of the pro-Palestine demonstrations. He also stipulated that no Labour Party banners should be taken on any demo.

Moreover, Evans warned against the passing of any motions critical of Israel. These will be "ruled out of order". And he has encouraged people to snitch on any Labour Party members who have "breached our rules".

**Alan Stewart**  
Wakefield

### Dear Comrades

The *Morning Star* has hit rock bottom in today's editorial (weekend edition 21/22 October). It lists Russia's action in Ukraine as "state terrorism"!

**John Maryon**  
Suffolk

### Dear Comrades

The ongoing Zionist war on Palestinians has intensified the polarisation in the political map in Bahrain. The daily demonstrations by the Bahrainis in support of the people of Palestine is contrasted by the pro-Israel stands of the Khalifa

family's dictatorship. The last week witnessed unprecedented protests by the people against the declared policy of the regime calling it treachery, betrayal and a war on humanity. The exposure of the Khalifi dictator and his clique as enemies of the Palestinian cause has angered the regime and caused it to commit more crimes against the Bahrainis.

The daily protests have covered most towns and villages. Mosque Imams have declared their pro-Palestinian stands openly. Senior religious leaders have been open about their stand from the beginning.

First there have been the statements of support for the Palestinian victims of the Israeli killing machines. Ayatullah Sheikh Isa Qassim has been vocal in his principled stand, lambasting the Zionist attacks on the civilian population. The senior scholars inside Bahrain issued statements of support for the people of Palestine and called for the expulsion of the Israeli ambassador. The foreign minister of the Khalifi regime has been disowned by some members of his tribe for supporting the Zionists.

What has startled many, however, is the reaction from the prisoners of conscience. From their torture chambers they issued statements expressing solidarity with the people of Palestine and calling on the regime to expel the Israeli ambassador. The senior jailed figures of the Revolution have also issued a statement of support of the Palestinians. The Khalifi regime has been angered by these statements that have exposed how isolated are the khalifis and how they are totally at odds with the people in their perceptions and alliances.

**John Hughes**  
Bahrain Freedom Movement

## Diary

### Check websites of the Palestine Solidarity Campaign and Stop the War Coalition for emergency Gaza protests.

#### EVERY SATURDAY

Committee to Defend Julian Assange: Protests: 12:00–14:00, HMP Belmarsh, Western Way, London SE28 and 16:00–18:00 at Eros statue, Piccadilly Circus, London SW1.

#### UNTIL 14 DEC

Townsend Theatre Productions: *The Ragged-Trousered Philanthropists*. Neil Gore's one person adaptation. Nationwide tour, see TTP website for venues.

#### UNTIL 30 DEC

Working Class Movement Library: *That Impudent Little Party: The Independent Labour Party 1893–1975*. Exhibition, Wed–Fri afternoons, WCML, 51 Crescent, Salford M5 4WX.

#### SAT 28 OCT

Cuba Solidarity Campaign: Latin America Solidarity Day – Resurgence of the Left! 10:00–16:00, Unison Regional Office, 24 Livery St, Birmingham B3 2PA.

#### MON 30 OCT

*The Mistake*. Anti-nuclear play by Michael Mears at the Canterbury Festival.

#### SAT 4 NOV

Newport Chartist Convention. 9:30–16:00 St Woolos Cathedral, Newport, Gwent. Tickets from Newport Rising website.

#### SAT 4 NOV

Palestine Solidarity Campaign: Acknowledging Israel's Apartheid. Conference. 9:30–15:30, Temple of Peace, Edward VII Ave, Cardiff, CF10 3AP.

#### SAT 4 NOV

Join Scottish CND: Festival for Survival, Renfield Centre & Adelaide Baptist Church, 260 Bath Street, Glasgow, G2 4JP.

#### WED 8 NOV

Society for Co-operation in Russian and Soviet Studies: Colin Turbett on *A People's History of the Cold War: Stories from East and West*. Zoom Online Talk 19:00–20:00. Book via SCRSS website.

#### THUR 9 NOV

Marx Memorial Library: Book launch: *Unite History Project – a new resource for trade union education*. Hybrid event, 19:00 MML and online.

#### WED 15–21 TUE NOV

Havana Glasgow Film Festival: at CCA Glasgow and GFT. Details and bookings at <https://hg-filmfest.com>.

#### THUR 16 NOV

Marx Memorial Library: Andy Friend on Diego's Apprentices – Jack Hastings, Clifford Wight and the making of the Marx House fresco. Hybrid meeting 19:00. MML and online.

#### THUR 16 NOV

Working Class Movement Library: Greig Campbell on *Giz a Job: a history of the 1981 People's March for Jobs*. 18:30–20:00, WCML. Book on WCML website.

#### SAT 18 NOV

Merseyside Marxist Book Fair, The Casa, Hope Street, Liverpool, L1 9BP.

#### SAT 18 NOV

Marx Memorial Library: Popular Front: Resistance to Fascism: Learning the Lessons. International Online symposium. 10:30 Register on MML website.

#### THUR 30 NOV

Marx Memorial Lecture: Lessons of the 2022–2023 Trade Union Offensive. Panel discussion, Hybrid meeting 19:00. Book on MML website.

## CONTACT US...

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Scottish Political News

by our Scottish political affairs correspondent

The new Israeli offensive against the Palestinians, and in particular Sir Keir Starmer's total backing for whatever Israel does, has resulted in in no less than 15 Labour officers in Scotland resigning over the recently imposed party rules about discussing events in Gaza. The centre of the revolt is Glasgow Kelvin. No less than nine officers of the constituency party have stood down from their positions. One of those is Baroness Pauline Bryan of Partick, whose ancient title dates back all the way to 2018. The chair Jim Mackechnie and sometime *Morning Star* contributor Vince Mills are among those leaving their posts in protest.

Their offence had been to submit a motion demanding that Scottish Labour leader Anas Sarwar call for the cessation of Israeli military action, a humanitarian corridor and the release of hostages, a common demand. Although this was banned by the Scottish HQ, Sarwar has told the BBC that Israel was in "clear breach" of international law in Gaza and there was "no justification for the withholding of essential supplies" from the people of the besieged Gaza Strip.

The young members representative on the Scottish Labour Executive Committee put his head above the parapet and said on BBC Radio's *Good Morning Scotland* programme that the Labour leadership was out of step with the British public, after a recent poll showed more than 70 per cent supported a ceasefire.

"I think the UK Labour leadership have failed continually to show leadership

in this situation to oppose the UK government in their outright support for Israel as it launches an inhuman offensive against the people of Gaza," Coll McCail said.

He pointed out that that Sarwar had already departed from the Starmer prohibition by sending an official Labour representative to a demonstration in Glasgow last Saturday, making the ban on discussion even more absurd. This will all make McCail's re-election extremely unlikely...

Wild-catting in the Cairngorms

Scotland's biodiversity is improving. Nineteen Scottish wildcats were recently released at a secret location in the Cairngorms National Park. Most are thriving, although the challenge of winter is yet to come. Another 13 kittens might be introduced to the wild next year, with many more in future years. This is bad news for baby bunnies in the area...

There has been controversy over the 'Highland Tiger', which was declared to be on the verge of extinction four years ago by the International Union for Conservation of Nature. This is largely over the distinction between 'pedigree' wild cats and those who are the off-spring of wild cats and ordinary ferals or strays. Although the pure-blooded Scottish or European Wild Cat has distinct stripey fur and is often slightly bigger than the domestic feline, both are, at the end of the day, just cats who easily inter-breed. The major distinction is in their hunting behaviour, much to the dismay of bird-watchers and bunny lovers amongst us.

Another positive development is the successful return of beavers to Scotland. NatureScot say there are already 1,500 and numbers could reach 10,000 the end of the decade.

Despite looking cuter than wildcats, the return of beavers has not been

welcomed wholeheartedly. The National Farmers Union complains that: "Beavers in the wrong areas are proven to cause significant and costly agricultural damage so where mitigation and trapping measures fail, dam removal and lethal control must remain an option to prevent serious agricultural damage before it occurs."

Golden eagles, pine martens and red squirrels are all making a comeback, but further south, in Glasgow, the SNP council has greatly enhanced urban biodiversity. This has benefited the rodent population – but not all citizens are delighted at the growing plague of rats. Even refuse collectors, no strangers to unpleasant sights, have declared some streets no-go areas on account of the massive upsurge in the number of neighbourhood rats.

The GMB convenor for the city's cleansing workers said: "I've been raising this issue for years and we're still waiting on something being done. Our members' health and well-being would be at risk because the area is over-run by huge rats."

The credit for this state of affairs is due to the policy of only emptying bins once every three weeks.

discovered that many civil servants working for the Scottish Government have expressed their enthusiasm for the impact of SNP rule by getting as far from Scotland as possible.

A Freedom of Information request by the *Sunday Post* shows that 32 civil servants spend all their time working remotely from abroad 18 months after the last of the COVID restrictions were lifted.

Further down the food chain, in local government, 40 Edinburgh City Council workers have been remotely working from locations such as Gran Canaria, Italy, Japan, India, Greece, France, Portugal, Spain and South Africa, all of which are sunnier places than their home city. Shetland Islands Council has two employees based permanently in Australia.

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All right for some...

Meanwhile it has been

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# Stand by the people of Gaza!

by New Worker  
correspondent

Last Saturday, over 300,000 people marched in solidarity with Gaza on the streets of London – making it by far the biggest ever demonstration for Palestine in British history. In fact, according to police estimates it was the 10<sup>th</sup> largest march in British history on any issue.

The demonstrators marched through the heart of the capital down Park Lane, via Hyde Park Corner, Piccadilly and Trafalgar Square to reach Whitehall and Parliament Square.

Labour Party branches have been banned from discussing the conflict and elected representatives “strongly advised” not to attend pro-Palestine demonstrations. But many Labour supporters ignored the call and joined the protest.

Sir Keir Starmer seemed to suggest that Israel had “the right” to withhold energy and water from Gaza when speaking on LBC London radio last week. But angry voices from



Labour’s rank-and-file have provoked a backlash against the Zionists, especially amongst the Muslim community.

A number of Labour councillors have resigned over what they described as Starmer’s “horrific” comments that were “endorsing a war crime”. Labour has now lost control of Oxford City Council after the eight Labour councillors resigned the whip in protest. Twenty councillors more across the country have followed suite, threatening to bring down Labour administrations of two

more councils.

Starmer now claims what he meant to say was that Israel has the right to defend itself and retrieve the around 200 hostages being held “within international law”.

Meanwhile, Palestine Action campaigners chanted “Labour Party, blood on your hands” and “No more money for Israel’s crimes” during a protest outside the party’s London headquarters over its stance on Israel and Gaza, while other targeted Labour MP’s offices throughout the country.

London Palestine Action activist, Alia Malak, told the media that: “The atrocities in Gaza are taking place with the direct support of the UK government, a position which Labour has supported.”

“It is absolutely urgent that Labour changes its position and joins calls for an immediate ceasefire now and an end to the arms trade with Israel.

“Both the UK Government and the Labour opposition have offered unwavering support for Israel’s bombing campaign in the name of

‘Israel’s right to self-defence’”.

Now a petition has been launched in support of a London Tube driver who has been suspended for leading a Palestine chant over the train’s speaker system during the big demo in London. Over 760,000 people have signed the petition calling on Transport for London (TfL) to reconsider disciplinary action.

The driver chanted “free, free” several times over the system while Tube passengers shouted back “Palestine!”. He then told passengers to “keep all those people

in your prayers” and “hope you all have a pleasant day, look after yourselves” to the cheers and applause of the passengers – mostly demonstrators getting out at Marble Arch.

The petition says “[The driver’s] actions were an expression of his personal feelings about the humanitarian crisis in Gaza and a plea for peace.

“Unfortunately, this act of empathy and solidarity has put his job at risk, as it has allegedly violated company guidelines or policies.

“It is vital to uphold the principles of freedom of expression, compassion, and empathy for people enduring conflict, irrespective of personal beliefs or affiliations.”

An Israeli embassy official said: “It is deeply troubling to see such intolerance on London’s tubes. Transport for London’s public transport should be a place of safety and inclusivity for all.” But as maverick London Labour MP Diane Abbott put it: “Would this have happened if he was chanting ‘Free Ukraine’?”

## Defend Democratic Korea!

by New Worker  
correspondent

Despite bad weather the Korean Friendship Association (KFA UK) picketed the BBC HQ last weekend. London comrades and Korean solidarity campaigned protested at the ongoing bias of the BBC outside the heavily guarded Broadcasting House in central London.

Dermot Hudson, the KFA Chair, denounced the BBC for making a programme in connivance with the south Korean ‘Daily NK’ far-right website pointing out that: “If the BBC were right about the DPRK, by now everyone in the DPRK would have starved to death in the DPRK not once but several times over!

“The BBC does not have reporters inside

the DPRK. In fact the borders of the DPRK were closed in January 2020. So the BBC has no access to people in the DPRK.”

He added that the DPRK has free healthcare, free education and free housing, but abolished taxation. He pointed out that the DPRK is an anti-imperialist socialist country that is on the side of the people of the developing world.





# Reflections of a Great Silk Road

by John Maryon

East-west trade routes were first established between Europe and China during the Han Dynasty in the second century BC. Columns of camels, ideally suited to the formidable terrain, carried silks, spices, tea, silver, gold, salt and sugar along the 4,350 mile road. Trading posts and markets were established that enabled trade between diverse cultures. The Silk Road remained in existence for over 1500 years, linking the civilisations of Europe and China.

The Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) was proposed by China's President Xi Jinping in the autumn of 2013. Within 10 years it has grown into the largest infrastructure and investment project ever undertaken. A total of 172 countries and international organisations have signed over 200 co-operation agreements with China. Sour grapes claims by Western leaders that it is running out of steam, is a debt trap and allows China to dominate others have been debunked as over 2,500 delegates, including presidents, prime ministers, bankers, technical experts and government officials, arrived in Beijing for the Third Forum of the BRI. It was a dramatic demonstration of the building of a new multipolar world order based upon mutual co-operation. It will enable smaller and weaker nations to resist US hegemony while forming a platform for green, sustainable development.

December 2021 saw completion of the China-Laos 1,035 km High Speed Railway (HSR) connecting Kunming in south west China with the Laotian capital city

of Vientiane. The flagship project was fully in line with the policy of Laos to develop from a land-locked country to a land-linked one. Since it opened it has carried some 3,270,000 passengers and each day moves 8230 tonnes of freight. The previous four-day journey has been cut to just 10 hours. Increased employment and entrepreneurial opportunities have been created for residents along the line. Tourism has increased rapidly and many opportunities created for people-to-people contact. Such projects are essentially long-term investment ventures and the route is expected to make a profit in 20 years.

BRI for land-locked central Asian republics is creating important opportunities through infrastructure projects. Roads, rail links, pipelines and power grids act a catalyst for further developments that boost trade and economic development. China has been able to use the expertise gained, from lifting 800,000 of its own people out of severe poverty, to enable others also to enjoy increased prosperity. As poverty is eliminated the attraction of violent extremism becomes reduced. The regions' new long-distance

railways facilitate trade between Europe and Asia – a new Silk Road is being created for today.

BRI extends into South East Asia. Indonesian President Joko Widodo's arrival at the Forum coincided with the first passenger services on the Chinese built Jakarta-Bandung HSR. The 147 km line links the capital with the country's financial centre.

BRI dovetails with Mongolia's Steppe Road programme. One objective being to upgrade the Trans-Mongolian rail corridor in association with its neighbours. Proposals have been made for pipelines that would not only transfer Russian gas to China but enable Mongolia to develop its own oil and gas resources. New highways are being built and facilities created to speed up custom clearance. New opportunities are being created to boost exports of minerals, cashmere, meat, wool and coal. As with all its BRI partners, China abides with local laws and customs.

Speaking in 2022, Chinese foreign minister Wang Yi encouraged Afghanistan and Pakistan to jointly build the BRI. He said China and those two countries should advance

co-operation on economic and political development, counter-terrorism and security issues. An important project in Pakistan is the Karot Hydropower Station that will play an important role in ensuring the country's energy security. A new road is being built between China and Pakistan that will form part of the China-Pakistan Corridor.

The spread of BRI far exceeds the limits of the original Silk Road as it spreads worldwide. Hungarian Prime Minister, Viktor Orban, attended the Beijing Forum and had talks with his Chinese counterpart. He was the only EU leader to attend the milestone event. Hungary was the first European country to sign a BRI co-operation agreement with China. Current projects in Hungary include the construction of the 350 km railway linking the cities of Budapest and the Serbian capital Belgrade. China is to build a huge car plant that will produce electric vehicles in Hungary. The country's positive approach is in sharp contrast to the collapsing and dysfunctional EU whose weak leaders have been led into a dependence trap by the USA.

Many world leaders

attended the BRI Forum in Beijing. President Putin of Russia was the guest of honour at the celebration event. In his speech, Putin spoke of forming closer links with the Eurasian countries and outlined railway developments linking his vast country with the world. He said that the world today is experiencing revolutionary changes as more countries seek to build a new architecture of international relations that is fairer and based upon mutual respect and mutual benefit.

Smiles all round as Putin was warmly greeted by Xi Jinping when the two leaders met at the Forum. Co-operation between the two great nations has never been better. Cross-border infrastructure projects such as the Tongjiang river bridge will further help boost trade. Work is underway to connect China's Northeastern rail network with Russia's Siberian railways. Emphasis was placed on work to link BRI with the Eurasian Economic Union.

The involvement of BRI in Africa and the Middle East has seen remarkable progress. A total of 62 States in the region have joined the initiative, most of which have low income and are eager to

escape the poverty trap. A number of key construction projects are starting to have a positive impact. Five years ago only 40 per cent of Africans had access to electricity and only 33 per cent paved roads. BRI is starting to change all that. The main focus of Chinese investment has been transport and energy. It is estimated that 10,000 Chinese firms operate in the region. A typical project is the Addis Ababa-Djibouti Railway linking landlocked Ethiopia to the sea. To the north, in the Middle East, Syria is joining to participate in creating a corridor linking it to Iran via Iraq. The opportunity exists to bring prosperity and hope to a whole region destroyed by US imperialism.

In 2015, NATO member Turkey signed a Memorandum of Understanding. Trade with China is expanding and work is underway to construct rail links to Central Asia and beyond.

To Washington's dismay, 21 other states in the Americas have joined the BRI. In Argentina, the 1310 MW Santa Cruz River Hydroelectric Station is being built with 70 per cent finance from China. Construction will allow local workers to acquire new skills. On completion 5,000 direct jobs with a further 15,000 in associated industries will be created. Brazil, the largest economy in Latin America, is not a member but co-operation grows stronger each passing day. China and Cuba have vowed to deepen practical co-operation. Joint trade and development initiatives are being pursued in the telecommunications, mining and energy sectors. The successful growth of the BRI takes place as US influence declines.





## USA vetoes UN action on Gaza

by Elizabeth Borrego  
Rodriguez

**While the escalation of violence in Gaza seems to have no end, the eyes of the planet look today to the UN Security Council.**

After almost two weeks of conflict and four meetings, the highest security body of the United Nations has not yet issued any draft resolution, despite warnings about the expansion of the conflict that began on 7<sup>th</sup> October.

The only body on the planet in charge of maintaining international peace and security has discussed two drafts demanding a ceasefire – presented first by Russia and then by Brazil. But both failed in their first attempts.

Last week Russia tabled its proposal with an

express call for a humanitarian cease-fire in Gaza. The draft, which was also backed by China, the United Arab Emirates, Gabon and Mozambique, did not gather the necessary nine votes within the 15-member body.

The USA, UK, France and Japan opposed the text, while Albania, Brazil, Ghana, Malta, Switzerland and Ecuador abstained.

Moscow's permanent representative to the UN, Vasily Nebenzya, lamented the outcome and the "selfish intentions of the bloc of Western countries".

"This is the only reason why (the Council) could not send a clear, forceful and collective message aimed at reducing tension; we are talking about the most serious explosion of violence in recent decades," he stressed.



The whole world was waiting with great expectation that the Security Council would take measures to put an end to the bloodshed but the delegations of the Western countries have basically trampled on those expectations, the Russian diplomat said.

For her part, the US representative, Linda Thomas-Greenfield, justified the American position with the absence in the text of a condemnation of

Hamas, which she described as "terrorist".

Two days later, the USA vetoed another draft prepared by Brazil that called for humanitarian pauses for the entry of aid to the Gaza Strip.

The US ambassador said the decision was due to the absence of any mention of "Israel's right to self-defence".

Thomas-Greenfield also recalled that President Joe Biden was in Israel, so any

diplomatic action at the UN would have to wait.

The decision, strongly criticised, wrecked the second option a day after hundreds of Palestinians were killed following the attack on the Al-Ahli hospital.

The meetings seem to confirm the warnings about the divisions within the Security Council and the need for reform, but the urgency of the conflict demands immediate answers.

The solution could lie in the presentation of a third draft or a meeting and vote on the General Assembly. Urgent global discussions can lead to collective action by the global forum, or as the UN says "in the case of an ongoing conflict, such action can include helping to stop the bloodshed,

establishing a ceasefire and alleviating the suffering of civilians on the ground". In the meantime, UN efforts are focused on appeals to allow vital aid into besieged Gaza.

Secretary-General António Guterres has flown to Egypt to raise two urgent demands: the release of hostages held by Hamas and the crossing of trucks carrying humanitarian aid. Civilians in Gaza are in desperate need of basic services and supplies, and this requires rapid and unimpeded access.

"We need food, water, medicine and fuel now, we need them on a large scale and we need them to be sustained," he said. "We know that the longer this goes on, the greater the risk of violence spilling over."

*Radio Havana Cuba*

## US paper fingers Ukrainians for Daria Dugina's murder

by Andrei Dergalin

**Over a year has passed since the assassination of Daria Dugina, a journalist and the daughter of the renowned Russian philosopher Alexander Dugin. Recently, a surprising admission about the culprits of this heinous crime was made by a US newspaper.**

While the Kiev regime has so far denied its involvement in Dugina's murder, the *Washington Post* says that the assassination was orchestrated by Ukraine's Security Service (SBU).

The newspaper's sources also allege that the CIA had invested a lot of money and effort since 2015 to turn

Ukraine's intelligence services into "potent allies against Moscow".

Commenting on this development, retired CIA intelligence officer and State Department official Larry Johnson suggests that the timing of the *Washington Post* revelation may not be coincidental.

"You have to ask yourself, why was this published now? Because this was not just created on a whim. There is a purpose behind this. I take it as an indication that the CIA realises that the war in Ukraine is lost and that it's not going to succeed," he said. "Therefore, they're starting to put out their story about, hey, look,

here's all the good stuff we tried to do. And it's not our fault. The Ukrainians sometimes went off the reservation and did bad things."

According to Johnson, the CIA should probably seek to distance itself from the crimes committed by the SBU and Ukraine's Main Directorate of Intelligence, who seem increasingly focused on assassinating people they brand as enemies of Ukraine.

"If you've got people that are doing things that you see as counterproductive to your policy and in this case actually murdering journalists, that is a violation for the CIA. But again, the CIA has their persons within the ranks

who find ways to excuse that, justify and say that it's okay," he says.

Referring to the part of the newspaper's report that broached the subject of the CIA providing training to Ukrainian intelligence services, Johnson wondered aloud what exactly did this training involve, seeing how the techniques mentioned in the article – for example, the way the bomb that killed Ms Dugina was smuggled into Russia – have little to do with actual intelligence work.

"The goal of intelligence is to recruit people from the other side who have access to information you want and cannot get through any other means. And you want to recruit them and have them

provide that information without tipping off the other side that you have access to that information," he explained.

Johnson also said that he thinks "Russia has far better human intelligence on what Ukraine is going to do than Ukraine has on what Russia is going to do".

Regarding the potential risks Ukrainian intelligence services may present to those who support them, he described them as minimal, noting that the problem may arise "if members of the GUR or SBU feel that they were betrayed by the West".

"And then there's always the possibility that they could try to seek

revenge out of that. But again, I think this decision to publish this story is all about, I think, the end game of US policy in support for Ukraine. It's not the flag in a problem per se, but it's just the CIA basically saying, here's what we've tried to do and it's not our fault," he surmised.

Daria Dugina was murdered on 20<sup>th</sup> August 2022, when a bomb planted in her car detonated. An investigation conducted by the Russian authorities established that the bomb was planted by Ukrainian national Natalia Vovk who worked for the Ukrainian special services, the masterminds behind Dugina's murder.

*Sputnik*