

# Palestinians fight on as talks continue in Paris

by our Arab Affairs correspondent

Fierce fighting is continuing throughout the Gaza Strip. The resistance battles in the streets of the Palestinian enclave to stave off the Israeli invaders who now are trying to starve the Palestinians of the Strip into submission. A senior Chinese official told the International Court of Justice that the Palestinians have the right to engage in armed struggle because they live under an illegal Israeli occupation. And Zionist Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu says his government has no intention of relinquishing control of the Gaza Strip after "victory" while his masters, the Americans, say progress has been made in the indirect talks with Hamas in Paris.

General Yoav Gallant, the Israeli defence minister, admitted this week that the Israeli army had failed to achieve any of its goals of recovering its prisoners by force or eliminating the resistance, despite their best efforts. "We are paying a very high price in our ranks...The costs we incur in terms of the numbers of deaths and injuries are very high" he said. "We have not witnessed such a war in 75 years, and this calls on us to approve amendments to the conscription law". Meanwhile the UK-registered *Rubymar* cargo ship that was hit by a Houthi Yemeni missile last



week has been abandoned by its crew and left to sink in the Red Sea.

UN officials say Israel is "systematically" blocking aid from reaching desperate Palestinians in Gaza, warning that at least one-quarter of the beleaguered population is just a step away from famine without urgent action. The warnings came as footage from northern Gaza showed Israeli forces again opening fire on Palestinians gathering to collect food in the area.

The Israeli invasion, now in its fifth month, has killed around 30,000 Palestinians, most of them women and children, and wounded many, many more. The daily air raids and the closing of all but one crossing point into the territory has laid much of the Palestinian enclave to waste and triggered a worsening humanitarian crisis.

This week the chief American war-lord, Joe Biden, said he hoped to have a ceasefire in place by next Monday. But this was down-played by Hamas officials who say the central issue is not about providing aid, but stopping the

fighting and lifting the siege. While a deal for a prisoner exchange and stopping the war before Ramadan is possible the Netanyahu government still dreams of total victory with an assault on the refugee-packed city of Rafah still on the cards. If this happens the Palestinian response will be to launch a prolonged war of attrition to drive them out.

Senior Hamas official Basem Naim says there is "space for flexibility" but there was still a long way to go. Hamas wants guarantee of a total ceasefire and the withdrawal of Israeli troops. The Biden administration's optimistic posture was not "related to the reality on the ground" and has more to do with domestic political considerations in a US election year.

"If the Americans want to be really optimistic, they have to end their game of double standards," he said. "They talk on one hand about stopping the aggression or achieving a ceasefire and avoiding broadening the conflict in the region. But at the same time they are using their veto in the UN Security Council," Naim

said. "They are approving \$14bn for Israel. They are securing Israel with more ammunition".

This week the United Na-

tions special rapporteur on the right to food has accused Israel of committing war crimes by intentionally depriving food to Gaza. Michael Fakhri, told the *Guardian* "Israel has announced its intention to destroy the Palestinian people, in whole or in part, simply for being Palestinian. In my view as a UN human rights expert, this is now a situation of genocide."

This comes as the United Nations is warning that a quarter of all Palestinians in Gaza are one step away from famine. Ramesh Rajasingham, co-ordination director of the UN's humanitarian office, said "And here we are at the end of February with at least 576,000 people in Gaza, one-quarter of the population, one step away from famine, with one in six children under two years of age in northern Gaza suffering from acute malnutrition".

## FUND

Friends and comrades donated £413 to the fighting fund this week pushing the running total to £2,400. We now need £1,100 to hit our target for February. We've got one campaigning weekend to do it.

The massive marches and demonstrations in support of the Palestinian Arabs have shaken the Tory and Labour leaders to the core. Their grovelling to the Americans and the Zionists is being challenged by millions on the streets of London and throughout the country on a weekly basis. They fear and loathe the masses. That's why the Tories and their media lackeys are baying for bans and censorship. But they can't stifle the voice of the oppressed.

We campaign to make sure that the real voice of the communist movement is heard on the street, the factories, the offices and the housing estates throughout the land. But we can only do it with your help. The *New Worker* needs £3,500 a month to keep going. We depend entirely on the support of friends and comrades to keep our presses rolling. So please send your donations to: New Worker Fund, PO Box 73, London SW11 2PQ. Cheques and postal orders should be made payable to the 'New Worker'.

To save a stamp you can also use your credit or debit card to send contributions here:  
<http://newworker.org/ncpcentral/fightingfund.html>

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# THE NEW WORKER

Weekly paper of the New Communist Party

## Hobson's Choice

**The American presidential election is being viewed with increasing trepidation in Westminster and the other chancelleries of Europe. Not surprisingly considering the choice facing the electorate – a senile old man in thrall to the most aggressive and venal sections of the American ruling class or Donald Trump, whose calls for trade wars and tariffs could easily trigger a global slump not seen since the Wall Street Crash of 1929.**

Though Trump is ahead in the opinion polls at the moment that could easily change if the movers and shakers in the Democratic Party dump Joe Biden in favour of a new leader to face the challenge in November. Many favour Michelle Obama, a lawyer and author, whose only claim to high office is that she is the wife of President Barack Obama and served as the First Lady of the United States from 2009 to 2017. Needless to say the views of bourgeois politicians this side of the Atlantic will count for nothing in their calculations.

Gone are the days when British politicians on both sides of the House could pose as equals to their American counter-parts and talk about a “special relationship” with US imperialism. Gone – like the dream of the Franco-German bourgeoisie of an independent European Union that could play off East against West or the nonsensical “Third Way” of the Blairites which, in itself, was just another version of the Keynesian economic model pioneered by Fascist Italy and the Third Reich in the 1930s.

In the old days British imperialism bragged about the Empire on which “the sun never set” while the German imperialists talked of “world domination”. United States imperialism has always been more subtle. After the Second World War it made a bid to control the economic development of the world through the Marshall Plan and its dominance of the fledgling United Nations. This was thwarted by the opposition of the Soviet Union and the new people’s democracies. During the Cold War much of the world was divided between the rival spheres of influence of the United States and the USSR. However the end of the Soviet Union enabled the United States to reinforce its grip on Western Europe.

Western European leaders still pose as equals of the Americans in the NATO alliance but in reality they’ve been forced to accept the model of subservience imposed on Japan by US imperialism after its defeat in 1945.

Dependent on American protection to defend their own global interests they destroyed the Yugoslav federation and the Libyan Jamahuriya at Washington’s behest. They fan the flames of war in Ukraine and the Middle East and prolong the unhappy partition of many countries including Cyprus, Ireland, Kashmir and Korea.

Now all they can do is watch as the drama of the race to the White House plays out. Whether Michelle Obama can mobilise the same rainbow coalition that swept her husband into the White House in 2008 is another matter. Biden’s blanket support for Israeli aggression has alienated Arab-Americans as well as large sections of the Black and Muslim community that has traditionally supported the Democrats in the past. Whether they will return to the fold will ultimately depend on Biden’s departure and a more even-handed approach to the Palestinians in the run-up to the election.

# Hitchens blasts Britain’s support for Ukraine conflict

by Ekaterina Blinova

**Ten years after the Euromaidan coup in Ukraine, a mainstream media outlet has published an op-ed questioning why the West supported violent mobs against elected president Viktor Yanukovich, stressing that the roots of today’s Ukraine conflict lie in the February 2014 regime change operation.**

The *Mail on Sunday* published an op-ed by veteran columnist Peter Hitchens last weekend that raised uncomfortable questions about the ongoing Ukraine conflict and the chain of events in the February 2014 coup in Ukraine.

“What is Britain’s interest in this conflict? Why do so many in politics and the media cheer for carnage that has devastated Ukraine, the country they claim to love and admire?” asks Hitchens. “What has Ukraine gained from it? What can Ukraine and its people possibly gain from it?” Hitchens also asked why the West supported violence and overthrow of legitimately elected President Viktor Yanukovich.

Laying out the events of November 2013 to February 2014, Hitchens stressed that before Euromaidan Ukraine was “a crude but functioning democracy” which faced both East and West politically. He noted that Yanukovich won the 2010 election fair and square, beating his nearest rival Yulia Tymoshenko, and that in February 2014 Yanukovich was “the lawful head of state, with two years to run”.

He added that what was painted as a peaceful protest at the start was soon hijacked by a violent mob.

“There is much that is murky about these bitter days, including the mysterious shootings of members of the crowd,” Hitchens said of the sniper shooting spree in February 2014. The journalist quoted the leaked — and never denied — phone call between Estonian Foreign Minister Urmas Paet and then-EU foreign policy chief Catherine Ashton. The two discussed “stronger and stronger understanding” that “behind the snipers, it was not Yanukovich, but it was somebody from the new coalition”.

Hitchens pointed out that following the bloodshed, Yanukovich signed an agreement with three senior Euromaidan leaders on 21<sup>st</sup>

February 2014 in the presence of three EU ministers.

“Yanukovich offered a rewrite of the constitution to suit the opposition; a new government; early presidential elections (no later than December 2014); and an impartial probe into the violence (which there has never been). All sides renounced the use of force,” the journalist stressed.

But by the evening of the same day the deal was torn apart by the Kiev mob – “an unelected body with no constitutional or democratic authority” which “certainly did not represent the eastern part of the country,” Hitchens wrote.

The Maidan leaders made no effort to defend the duly-elected president against the violent crowd. In fact, the Ukrainian parliament or Verkhovna Rada moved to remove him in violation of the nation’s constitution.

In the aftermath of those events Yanukovich fled Kiev, but did not resign or leave the country, stressed Hitchens, quoting highly-respected Ukrainian historian Serhy Plokhyy. That “shows beyond doubt that the elected president was still in office and in Ukraine when parliament voted to remove him”.

But what struck Hitchens the most was the reaction of the West to the obviously illegitimate coup d’etat.

“Western nations, including Britain, should have condemned this action. They are normally vigilant defenders of law and democracy all over the world, are they not? But in this case, they condoned the coup,” the journalist wrote, quoting then-foreign secretary William Hague, who he accused of lying when he told the House of Commons on 4<sup>th</sup> March 2014 that Yanukovich was removed “by the very large majorities [in the Verkhovna Rada] required under the constitution.” In reality, the vote was unlawful, since Ukrainian MPs lacked the votes needed to do so under the constitution, Hitchens said.

Hague’s assertion that “it is wrong to question the legitimacy of the new authorities” in fact “seriously misled Parliament” stressed the journalist.

The events of February 2014

irrevocably divided Ukraine and caused “a filthy little war in the east of the country in which (among other tragedies and horrors) many civilians died at the hands of the Ukrainian army” Hitchens continued, adding that the current conflict is only the “second stage” of the Ukraine war which started 10 years ago.

While falling short of accusing USA and EU of playing a direct role in fomenting the 2014 coup d’etat in Kiev, Hitchens still stressed that “the West blatantly betrayed its own principles to condone and forgive the nasty event”. And those who supported the putsch are also responsible for the ongoing havoc.

“Think of that as you listen to all those loud, safe voices demanding that we keep on fuelling this war, in which Ukrainians die daily for democratic principles we do not, in fact, support,” he concluded. Hitchens’ piece in the *Mail on Sunday* indicates that some understanding of Euromaidan and its disastrous consequences has started to manifest itself in the West.

In an interview with US journalist Tucker Carlson earlier this month, Russian President Vladimir Putin openly attacked the West’s readiness to embrace the illegitimate regime change.

Putin pointed out that the coup was completely “unnecessary” given that Yanukovich met all the demands of Euromaidan leaders on 21<sup>st</sup> February. Furthermore, EU representatives were there and backed the deal between the then-Ukrainian president and opposition leaders. The West had a chance of helping Ukraine stay within the legal framework of democratic processes, and yet US and EU leaders squandered it at the time,” he told Carlson.

Putin made it clear that the Euromaidan events led to the bloodshed in eastern Ukraine that did not accept Yanukovich’s overthrow. After exhausting all avenues for ending the internal west-east Ukrainian conflict through the 2014 and 2015 Minsk agreements, Russia launched its special military operation in 2022 to end the Kiev regime’s years-long war against Russian-speakers in the Donbas, the Russian leader said.



## Workers' Notes

**Last week we reported on just how deeply embedded the phenomena of zero hours contracts have become in Britain. This week we look at another form of exploitation which in some respects is the opposite of zero hours contracts: Unpaid overtime. This is the subject of a new Trades Union Congress report that demonstrated that in the course of 2023 no less than 26 billion pounds-worth of free labour was gifted to Britain's bosses by the 3,757,303 workers who carried out unpaid overtime. This tends to affect better paid and permanent workers rather than those in insecure employment. Unpaid overtime is simply not getting paid for hours worked, and is unrelated to the decline in overtime generally which is paid by agreement for unsocial extra hours. In many industries, such as retail, shift work has replaced extra hours.**

### Working for Free

by New Worker correspondent

**For over twenty years the TUC has held a "Work Your Proper Hours" day on the last Friday of February. On this occasion "workers are encouraged to take the breaks they are entitled to and finish their shifts on time" as if this is a very special day or some form of heroic protest. The date was originally established to mark the time from the start of the year when workers start to earn more than they have lost, but now if it were to be strictly applied would fall in early March. That shows how effective**

**the TUC's publicity about the issue has been.**

The TUC also politely requests that: "managers are encouraged to support staff by setting reasonable workloads and putting in place workplace policies to protect against burnout" to say nothing of calling on "Ministers to set an example by reducing unpaid overtime in the public sector". No doubt that message terrified bosses.

### Numbers crunched

Perhaps surprisingly unpaid overtime is more common in the public sector than the private sector with teachers doing more than any other job. No less than 40 per cent of the profession work an average of 4.4 unpaid hours weekly. The report also points out that chief executives, managers and directors do a great deal of "unpaid" work, but many contracts for senior staff allow for this and their enormous pay reflects this. In many cases the extra hours of "work" involves endless discussions lubricated by strong spirits in expensive hotels, so they are perhaps not the most urgent priorities for the labour movement. According to the TUC's figures CEOs and senior officers lost £28,177, but that will be small change to many.

Certainly CEOs make up a very small proportion of the 3.8 million people who did unpaid overtime last year. Overall workers put in an average of 7.2 unpaid hours a week, meaning that they effectively lost an average of £7,200 from what would have been their true salary.

Overall one in six public sector workers did unpaid overtime compared with one in nine in the private sector. Therefore public sector staff gave £11 billion or 10 million hours of unpaid overtime to meet the needs of service users which must be a blessing to the Chancellor of the Exchequer, town hall finance officers and NHS bean-counters.

Taking the case of teachers Patrick Roach, General Secretary of NASUWT - The

Teachers' Union, said "the fact that teachers are losing out on average by £15,047 a year in unpaid overtime is nothing less than daylight robbery. The fact that teachers are at the top of the list of professions working unpaid overtime is yet further shameful evidence of the Government's failure to invest properly in our schools and colleges."

The precise results of NASUWT poll of more than 7,000 teachers from state-funded schools and academies in England were that 60.4 per cent of respondents reported weekly hours between 50 and 69 hours with 20.9 per cent reporting weekly average hours of 60-69 hours and 4.1 per cent doing an incredible 70 hours to 79 hours weekly.

Roach condemned the fact that "the Government's refusal to protect teachers' contractual working hours has helped fuel a "work 'til you drop" culture" and concluded by promising that: "we will not stand by whilst the Government continues to allow our members' workloads and working hours to spiral". He was however noticeably vague about what will actually be done.

To return to the more general picture, unpaid overtime varies across the country. While in England and Wales the average number of unpaid overtime ranges from 6.2 hours in Wales to eight in the North West there is a much greater variation in the percentage of employees affected. This ranges from 11.5 per cent in Yorkshire and Humberside to 18.8 per cent in London with the South East only slightly better on 16.3 per cent. The national rate being 13.2 per cent. One point the TUC does not make that in Wales trade union density is strongest while in London it is lowest. There must be a moral there.

Overall, there is only a small difference between the rates for men and women to the latter's advantage: 7.0 hours for women compared with 7.3 hours for men). This is also an area where BAME benefit with 9.3 per cent of BAME workers, suffering compared with 13.9 per cent

of white workers), but of those BAME who do work unpaid overtime do slightly more than white workers, this will be due to them being in lower paid jobs where the problem is getting enough work. In some jobs such as those involving driving, hours are limited for safety reasons which makes it difficult to demand overtime.

Another recent set of figures on this question, from Canada Life, actually suggests that unpaid overtime is even more common than the TUC figures suggest. Research from this insurance company suggests it is just under 20 per cent nationwide, nearer the London figure across the country.

Perhaps because he is worried about paying out claims from sick workers Canada Life director, Dan Crook, said "well-rested employees are key to a productive working environment, Employers have an active role to play in encouraging - and enabling - their staff to take the time they need to rest and recover from illness and switch off entirely from the daily grind".

He blames the pandemic for the rise in home working which while saving workers commuting time and costs also mean they are expected to be at the beck and call of their bosses out of working hours.

### What Is To Be Done?

While the TUC makes some useful points about the extent of the problem it is less than helpful about solutions. The TUC moans about the weakness of British law which only requires bosses to keep "adequate" recording hours. It points out that European law is stricter, but that did nothing to prevent workers from working for nothing when these laws applied in Britain.

TUC General Secretary Paul Nowak pointed out that "Most workers don't mind putting in extra hours from time to time, but they should be paid for it". Fair enough, at lambing season a farm worker does not knock off at 17:00 when a lamb is on its way.

Nowak correctly pointed out that public services have been run down by Conservative cuts and mismanagement, resulting in public sector workers doing so much unpaid overtime. "They are going flat out to provide the services families rely on. But burnout and staff retention are big problems".

He concluded by saying "none of us can afford to go on like this. The Government must fix pay and conditions for public sector staff, instead of relying on the goodwill of workers who are burning out. That's the only way we can rebuild our public services to the decent standard that we all need." One wonders why he did not spell out in detail what he expects Sir Keir Starmer to do about it.

The fact that those geographical areas with the highest union density have the lowest rates, of workers doing unpaid overtime says it all.

The major problem for many workers is the small print (or lack of it) of their contracts. If there are no overtime arrangements mentioned in a contract, employers cannot force it upon workers, but that does not prevent bosses putting pressure on workers to do paid or unpaid overtime by reminding them of the state of the job market.

While the Working Time Directive states that workers in the UK cannot be made to work for more than 48 hours a week it seems to be a dead letter. When it was introduced there were grumbles from workers, particularly low paid ones, that such a measure deprives them of essential extra hours. That some workers can only see excessive hours as the only means to secure decent wages suggests that the organising departments of trade unions ought to pull up their socks.

At present there is no legal right to get paid for working overtime and there are no minimum statutory levels that define overtime pay. The only legal defence is that the average pay rate of a worker must not fall below the National Minimum Wage.

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## Steel Battles

At the risk of adding to the gloom caused by unpaid overtime it seems that many recent industrial struggles are defensive ones which are seeking to save not only jobs but whole industries.

This is most notable in the steel industry. On Wednesday protests took place at Scunthorpe and Port Talbot which seemed to suggest it was already a lost cause. Unite held rallies in both the north-east and south Wales towns. These were held outside both town's jobcentres in conjunction with PCS, the main civil service union.

The uninspiring venue at Scunthorpe was chosen to make the perfectly correct point that "British Steel's current plans on Scunthorpe would mirror the long-term impacts in former coalfield communities in England and Wales. These include less jobs, increased unemployment, worse health outcomes and a greater reliance on benefits".

The new PCS General

Secretary Fran Heathcote echoed Unite's cheery perspective by saying that "PCS members working in Jobcentres, and their family and friends in Scunthorpe will also be impacted under British Steel's plans. To rub salt into their wounds, it would also mean that these already massively overworked PCS members would have to deal with thousands of additional claimants".

At the same time near identical press releases were also issued with the words "Port Talbot" and "Tata" inserted instead.

The other unions involved, Community, which is the old Iron and Steel Trades Confederation merged with some other small unions, and the GMB are also involved in campaigns to save the industry, but it looks like more coordination is needed. Sometimes they do not seem to even admit to each other's existence, if the unions' own statements are to be taken at face value.

At both Port Talbot and Scunthorpe, home of the last four blast furnaces in the UK, the steel industry is under threat with plans to close them

down on supposedly greenish grounds.

At Scunthorpe British Steel say 2,000 jobs will go when the blast furnaces are replaced with two electric arc furnaces. In theory these represent "a clean, green and sustainable business" which will provide "long-term, skilled and well-paid careers for thousands of employees and many more in our supply chains". However electric arc furnaces can only produce steel from recycled materials which is unsuitable for use in construction, ship and vehicle production. If these furnaces are closed down the UK will become entirely dependent on imports of steel for such essential purposes.

Community is demanding that the Government implement the Trade Remedies Authority (TRA) recommendation to extend the UK's steel safeguarding measure for the next two years. The USA and the EU both have similar measures in place to prevent their equally worn out industries from going under.

Alasdair McDiarmid, Community's Assistant General Secretary, wants the

Government to "develop a comprehensive Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism to protect our steel industry from cheap carbon intensive steel imports... it's time for the Government to show it backs our steel industry and our steelworkers".

The same union is balloting for industrial action at Port Talbot. Launching the ballot

General Secretary Roy Rickhuss said "industrial action is always a last resort but Tata's actions mean we now have to prepare for that eventuality. Recent statements from the leadership of Tata Steel leave little doubt the company is determined to impose its devastating proposals come what may, making a complete mockery of the ongoing consultation process".

McDiarmid deplored the fact that Tata have ignored Community's alternative plans (which are supported by the Welsh devolved parliament) and said the consultation on closing the furnaces was a complete sham. "Whilst the consultation on Tata's plan is still ongoing, recent comments from the senior leadership of Tata Steel have brought that process into disrepute. It is apparent that Tata are no longer considering alternatives to their disastrous plan to install a three million tonne electric arc furnace" he said.

Stephen Kinnock, the hereditary Labour MP for Aberavon, agreed saying "Tata's proposals for the site threaten

that proud tradition and the works' enormous future potential. Their narrow, 'electric arc furnace-only' plan would sacrifice highly-skilled local jobs and leave the UK dependent on dirty steel imports. The Tata deal does not work for decarbonisation, does not work for our economy".

Community demands that energy prices for the steel industry are reduced, for greatly increased investment in green steel production which will include hydrogen replacing coal. This is presently very expensive, but could be reduced. One thing they do not mention is re-nationalisation of the industry. Their call for "responsible ownership" is not enough.

Unite, which claims to represent about a thousand of the Port Talbot steel workers is also balloting for industrial action next week until the beginning of April. If successful this will see industrial action which would start before the end of April.

General Secretary Sharon Graham said "Tata has failed to halt its disastrous and destructive plans for Port Talbot, the Welsh economy and the UK as a whole. Even though Unite has secured significant Investment for the sites from Labour. Tata's actions is one of industrial vandalism and will be fought". Perfectly correct, but it seems a very slow motion emergency given the importance of the issue, not just for the workers, but for the British economy.

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

**27<sup>th</sup> February  
2004**

*THE PALESTINIAN cause returned to the centre stage as the world court in the Netherlands began its hearings into the legality of Israel's apartheid wall. While the Arab League and the Islamic Conference presented the Palestinian case to the International Court of Justice at The Hague, Zionist fanatics held anti-Arab demonstrations nearby.*

*The Israelis claim that the barrier, built exclusively on stolen Arab land in the West Bank, is intended to halt resistance attacks on Israeli towns and settlements. The Palestinians argue that it's a land grab pure and simple, designed to*

*shift Israel's frontiers further east and drive more Palestinians out in advance of a "final settlement".*

*The hearing follows a decision by the UN General Assembly last December but any ruling can be only advisory to the UN Security Council. The Israelis have refused to attend and their diplomats are actively working to discredit the highest judicial body of the United Nations.*

*This has had some success. Over 30 countries are challenging the court's authority to rule on the barrier headed by Anglo-American imperialism and their puppets together with the Franco-German imperialist and to their shame, the Russian Federation.*

*General Sharon's government in Tel Aviv knows that any adverse ruling calling for executive action will be safely vetoed by Washington at the Security Council but the Zionists fear that if the hearing deems the issue to be within the remit of the International Court of Justice*

*then Israel could find its actions in the Occupied Territories subject to UN oversight.*

*They know that a ruling by the world court in 1971 lead to international pressure on the South African regime to grant independence to Namibia. They fear that a negative ruling could spark off a UN General Assembly demand for an international boycott of Israeli goods if Tel Aviv fails to comply.*

*Though the Israelis can rely on broad support of Anglo-American imperialism they haven't got a carte blanche from Washington and London for everything they do. The construction of the wall that divides farmers from their land and children from their schools increases the hatred of imperialism across the Arab world.*

*Though the Israelis claim it is a "temporary" measure it smacks of back-door annexation designed to pre-empt the final status talks that the American-sponsored "road-map" envisages.*

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# A Global call to honour

by Ed Newman

Almost five months since Israel launched its war on Palestinians in Gaza; at least 132 journalists have been killed in the line of duty while many others continue to live on the edge.

To pay tribute to the fallen journalists and extend solidarity to those who continue to report from the besieged territory under extremely challenging conditions, the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) marked 26<sup>th</sup> February as the International Day in support of Palestinian Journalists. The day has been endorsed by many other international journalist bodies, including the Federation of Arab Journalists (FAJ) and other affiliates.

“The needs of our colleagues working in Gaza have become critical. In the middle of winter, our sisters and brothers and their families lack everything and especially the essentials: clothes, blankets, tents, food, water,” the IFJ said.

The FAJ also expressed alarm over the “poor international coverage” of Israel’s war on Gaza, pointing to the Western media’s disregard for Palestinian lives. “All over the world, we deserve to know what is going on in Gaza. This deliberate denial of the right to report is an abuse of media freedom,” it stated, urging journalists all over the world to mobilise on what will be referred to as the International Day for Palestinian Journalists.

Journalists have been deliberately targeted in Gaza since 7<sup>th</sup> October for unmasking the Zionist regime’s atrocities against Palestinians. Even their families have been killed and their houses destroyed. In its annual report released on 15<sup>th</sup> February, the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) said 72 of 99 journalists killed worldwide



in 2023 were Palestinians reporting on Israel’s war on Gaza.

“In December 2023, CPJ reported that more journalists were killed in the first three months of the Israel-Gaza war than have ever been killed in a single country over an entire year. What’s important to remember about this war is that Gazan journalists are the only journalists able to report on what’s happening inside Gaza. International journalists have not been able to get in, have not been allowed in, except on very, very controlled trips that are overseen by the Israeli army,” Jodie Ginsberg, the president of the CPJ, said.

Many journalists and journalist associations and unions have in separate statements endorsed the idea of marking 26<sup>th</sup> February as the International Day for Palestinian Journalists.

“The Industrial Workers of the World Freelance Journalists Union stands in solidarity with our colleagues in Israeli-occupied Palestine. In the 140 days since 7<sup>th</sup> October nearly 120 journalists have been killed in Gaza and the West Bank: almost one per day,” the World Freelance Journalist Union said.

“The increasingly scant resources available to Palestinians have exacerbated the conditions on the

ground, making Gaza the most dangerous place in the world to be a journalist.”

The union said it is joining the Palestinian Journalists Syndicate and the International Federation of Journalists for the International Day for Palestinian Journalists “to celebrate the bravery and critical work being done to cover atrocities by the Israeli military”.

Pertinently, the toll of journalists killed in Gaza since 7<sup>th</sup> October has even surpassed World War II – 69 media personnel were killed in World War II which lasted from 1939 to 1945. Media organisations have repeatedly protested against Israel’s deliberate targeting of journalists, describing it as a war crime under international humanitarian law.

“We had big dreams but the only dream left now is when we die, let our bodies remain intact and recognisable,” were the final words of Palestinian journalist Ayat Khadoura.

“With their arbitrary air strikes, the Israeli armed forces are eliminating journalists one after the other without restraint, all while their unacceptable comments betray an open contempt for international humanitarian law,” Jonathan Dagher, the head of RSF’s West Asia desk, said in a statement in December.

The Media Entertainment and Arts Alliance (MEAA) has also expressed concern over what it calls the “unprecedented and devastating effects on journalists in Palestine”.

“Local journalists in Gaza continue to risk their lives at the front-lines of the story. Yet like much of the civilian population, they are battling starvation, lack of shelter, and shortages of food and water,” the alliance said in a recent statement, calling journalists “eyes and ears of the world” on the Gaza war.

“Many journalists are living under canvas, shifting from tent to tent as the conflict engulfs more of Gaza, while others sleep in school buildings with thousands of other displaced people.”

Jarni Blakkarly, who works with the MEAA, took to X (formerly Twitter) to denounce the deliberate killing of journalists. “Today is International Day of Solidarity with Palestinian Journalists. Journos in Gaza are being murdered in a blatant attempt to destroy the world’s ability to know what is happening on the ground,” he wrote.

Stella Assange, wife of Wikileaks founder and jailed whistleblower Julian Assange, in a post on X on Monday also extended her support to Palestinian jour-

nalists. “On 21<sup>st</sup> October IFJ President Dom Pradalié visited Julian Assange in Belmarsh prison. Julian expressed his deep fears for the plight of journalists in #Gaza and said that he was concerned about the enormous challenges they were faced to continue reporting,” she wrote.

The National Union of Journalists of the Philippines also joined the call to observe 26<sup>th</sup> February as the International Day for Palestinian Journalists.

The European Federation of Journalists, one of the largest organisations representing journalists in Europe, held a protest outside the Residence Palace, the seat of the European Council, in Brussels.

In London the National Union of Journalists said “on International Day for Palestinian Journalists the NUJ remembers colleagues in Gaza killed since 7<sup>th</sup> October. Join a minute’s silence at noon today and donate to the IFJ’s safety fund providing essential food, blankets & more,” it said.

Meanwhile in Syria journalists in all provinces held a minute’s silence for journalists killed by the Israeli regime in Gaza. Likewise Tunisia’s leading journalists’ union called on all its members to take part in the International Day of Solidarity with Palestinian Journalists and observe a minute’s silence.

*Radio Havana Cuba*

## The NCP badge



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# Yemen: A history of struggle

by Sergio Rodriguez Gelfenstein

**In 2015 Yemen, a country unknown to many in the West, began a war in defence of its sovereignty, which was being threatened by an interventionist alliance led by Saudi Arabia. The Yemenis had to pay with the lives of almost 400,000 of their people to maintain their independence. Many people have wondered how it was possible that a country considered the poorest in the Middle East has been able to resist and defeat a coalition made up of some of the richest countries on the planet.**

Although the conflict continued for almost a decade, it appears to have reached a situation that could lead to its possible cessation. Although a tense situation remains and hostilities of different kinds continue clashes have gone down in recent months. While there is no longer total war, peace has not come either.

Following China's mediation, Saudi Arabia and Iran reconciled, thus paving the way for resolving several conflicts in the Middle East and North Africa. Apparently, the war with Yemen was one of them.

Now, after the Israeli invasion of Gaza, the Yemenis, together with the Lebanese Hezbollah movement and other Arab and Muslim revolutionary forces, have taken an active role in solidarity with Palestine. Once again, Yemen has surprised everyone by making decisions that have not only a local impact but also a regional and global one. Once again, the world has wondered how this could have happened.

In two instalments, I am going to present some elements that allow readers to get acquainted with Yemen and learn about its historical struggle and the heroism of its people. This will help readers to understand the scope and dimension of the Yemeni decision to support, with all the resources at its disposal, the just struggle of the Palestinian people.

The Republic of Yemen is located at a strategic place on the planet, in a region where trade routes connect Asia, eastern Africa and the Mediterranean. Its territory, located on the coasts of the Arabian Sea and at the gate to the Red Sea, dominates the Straits of the Bab el Mandeb, placing it in a privileged place on the globe. This is true especially since the 20th century when, on the one hand, large energy deposits of oil and gas were discovered in the region, and on the other, the enormous economic growth and development of East Asia transformed Yemen into a country astride an essential sea route for much of world trade.

In ancient times, the cities of the territory that is now Yemen were unified into the biblical kingdom of Sheba. From that moment on, the struggle of the inhabitants of the current Yemen for their liberation and independence began, as they had to face the Roman Empire in the first century AD. The Yemenis defeated mighty Rome's attempt at domination.

## Arabia Felix

In the second century the Greek mathematician and geographer

Ptolemy named Yemen Arabia Felix (Happy Arabia). Unlike the rest of the Arabian peninsula, Yemen had prodigious vegetation that provided great wealth to its population through agriculture and the trade it offered. In the course of history the Yemenis had to fight with the Jewish Himyarite kings who ruled the country and persecuted the majority Christian population until the intervention of the Ethiopians in the sixth century.

Islam arrived in the region in the ninth century, beginning to shape a culture based on the merging of knowledge from varied sources and that made great contributions to humanity.

For many centuries, however, Yemen remained outside the cultural and economic development established by Islam. In the 15th century, the territory of today's Yemen began to gain strategic value. In their desire for commercial expansion, the European rulers began the domination of territories throughout the planet. The first European conquerors to arrive in the region came from Portugal. They dominated the country in order to control the sea route, which allowed them to trade spices from Asia to Europe through the Red Sea.

In the 16th century,



the Turkish Ottoman empire, whose capital was Constantinople (now Istanbul), began its conquest with the occupation of places on the Red Sea coast, while the interior of the country and the southern coast remained independent, governed by an imam. Shortly after, the English made their appearance in the area, installing a post of the East India Company in the port of Mokha on the Red Sea.

In the 19th century, the British expanded their presence by occupying the entire southwestern tip of current Yemen, settling in Aden in 1839 — the best seaport in the region. At the same time, in 1872, the

Ottoman Turks managed to consolidate their dominance in the interior of the country, for which they installed a de facto hereditary monarchy in the name of a local imam. This division effectively split Yemen into two countries.

Around 1870, with the inauguration of the Suez Canal and the consolidation of Turkish rule over northern Yemen, Aden acquired new importance for British global strategy: It was the key to the Red Sea and, therefore, to the new canal.

At the beginning of the 20th century, Turkey and Britain marked a border between the territories they controlled, which became known as North Yemen and South Yemen, respectively. In 1934, British imperialism secured control of the entire south of the country, up to the border with Oman.

During the First World War, the Imam of Yemen allied with the Ottoman Empire and remained loyal to it until the end of the war,

when the defeat of the Turks allowed Yemen to regain its independence in November 1918. However, Britain, after recognising the independence of Yemen in 1928, converted Aden into a protectorate and in 1937 into a colony.

Once again, the Yemenis had to resort to an armed struggle for independence. In 1940 the Free Yemen nationalist movement emerged to fight against the control of the country by the imams, who had allied themselves with Britain.

The fighting took separate paths in the north and south. In 1962, the Yemen Arab Republic was created in the north. In the south, the National Liberation Front, created in 1963, took over Aden in 1967 and proclaimed its independence, declaring a socialist revolution.

## People's Democratic Republic of Yemen

South Yemen was renamed the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen (PDRY). It closed all British bases in 1969, taking control of banking, foreign trade and the naval industry while undertaking land reform. In foreign policy, the PDRY maintained a close alliance with the Soviet Union. Likewise, it promoted an openly anti-Zionist struggle and support for the Palestinian people.

In October 1978, at a congress that enjoyed considerable support from the population, the National Liberation Front founded the Yemen Socialist Party. In December of that year, the first popular election since independence was



• People's Yemeni leader Ali Nasser Muhamed visits the Soviet Union in 1971.



held to appoint the 111 members of the People's Revolutionary Council.

From the first years of its existence, the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen faced the permanent hostility of Saudi Arabia, whose monarchy aspired to control parts of the territory — precisely those in which oil deposits had been discovered. Tensions were aggravated by a growing American military presence in Saudi Arabia.

Meanwhile, in the north, the National Democratic Front (NDF), which had brought together all the progressive forces in the country, was developing an armed struggle against Ali Abdullah Saleh, who had ascended to the government in 1978.

Just as the NDF was about to take power, Saudi Arabia intrigued to divert the conflict into a war against People's Yemen. The mediation of some Arab countries led to a ceasefire and an agreement by which negotiations for reunification, suspended since 1972, were resumed.

Finally, on 22nd May 1990, both republics united to form the Republic of Yemen and established that the political capital was Sana'a, the former capital of the Yemen Arab Republic. Aden, the former capital of the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen, was designated the economic capital.

A joint session of the Legislative Assemblies of both states, held in Aden, elected a Presidential Council led by General Ali Abdullah Saleh. Saudi Arabia's rulers were hostile to the unification of Yemen, which is why they began a policy of supporting secession. In May 1994, secessionists proclaimed a Yemeni republic in the south of the country but were defeated by forces

loyal to the government.

## Emergence of Ansarallah movement

Between June and August 2004, a movement emerged that expressed the beliefs of a specific branch of Shia-oriented Islam: the Zaidiyya, whose leader was the cleric Hussein al-Houthi. To honour him after his death in combat in September of that year, the movement assumed the name Houthi or Ansarallah: the supporters of God.

Although this Islamic movement is the expression of a minority in Yemen its history is not recent but dates back to the mid-eighth century. Zaidism is identified by its association with the fight for justice and the defence of Muslim ethics. This ideology, added to the position of marginality to which they were subjected after losing power in 1962, would form the substrata from which Houthi thought would develop in the future.

The Houthis' fight against the pro-Western and pro-Saudi government of Ali Abdullah Saleh was long and bloody. They had to resort to arms on five occasions between 2006 and 2008 in defence of their territory in the north of the country, until they

began to expand their support base and the geographical space under their control. In 2009, Saleh, trying to stop the Houthis, turned to Saudi Arabia for support.

For the Houthis that a country like Saudi Arabia, ruled by those in an extremely conservative Wahhabi (Unitarian) sect, was interfering in their country's affairs was seen as a threat to the sovereignty of the Yemeni nation in general and their own beliefs in particular. From that moment on their struggle, which up to then had a strictly internal character, became a confrontation with foreign intervention.

Although the Houthi fighters at first suffered heavy defeats, including (as mentioned before) the fall of their top leader, they grew stronger over time and from 2011, under the new leadership of al-Houthi's younger brother Abdul Malik, began to inflict significant setbacks on the enemy. The anti-imperialist and anti-Zionist rhetoric was strengthened by identifying Saudi Arabia as the partner of the United States and Israel and executing their plans in the region.

The so-called "Arab Spring" had a special influence on the growth of support for Houthi thought in their fight against Saleh's repressive government. In

Yemen, the earthquake that shook an important part of the Arab world had a much more organised response than in neighbouring countries.

Faced with the strength of the protests, Saleh fled the country and took refuge in Saudi Arabia. He was replaced by his vice president, Abdo Rabu Mansur Hadi, who tried to restore order in the country by reaching an agreement with factions opposed to Saleh "to change everything in order to change nothing" leaving the Houthi movement out of the government.

At the end of 2014, the Houthis began an offensive on the capital. In this context, Saleh — surprisingly in an attempt to regain power — established an alliance with the Houthis to confront Hadi. The Houthis, who had not supported the peace agreements signed by Hadi, allied themselves with their greatest enemy to take the capital.

## Saudis enter Yemen's civil war

The Republican Guard, a force loyal to Saleh, favoured the entry of the Houthis into Sana'a. Hadi fled to Riyadh, the Saudi capital, from where he theoretically runs the territories not

yet controlled by Ansarallah. In reality he is a puppet of the House of Saud.

Once in power, the Houthis formed a Revolutionary Committee to run the country. Likewise, they were forced to fight simultaneously with the terrorist forces of Al Qaeda and with Saudi Arabia, which protects them.

Saleh considered that the Houthis had not fulfilled the agreements which, according to him, meant that he should assume power again. With Saudi support, Saleh turned against the Houthis. When the betrayal was consummated, the Houthis attacked Saleh's house, executing him on the spot.

From Riyadh, Hadi called for Saudi intervention in Yemen. Faced with this request, the Saudi monarchy organised a Sunni-majority coalition that in 2015 launched the "Decisive Storm" operation, structured around air attacks on the main enclaves controlled by the Houthis, which resulted in thousands of deaths.

This action was planned as a definitive offensive to take control of the country in order to launch a second operation, called "Restore Hope," focused more on a diplomatic rapprochement. In reality, the fighting did not cease at any time. On the

contrary, the alliance's land, air and maritime actions were reinforced by a naval blockade that prevented the entry of international aid.

These actions plunged the area into what became the worst humanitarian crisis in the world, until the current Zionist actions in Gaza were unleashed. Both crimes had explicit support from the United States.

The Houthis, making use of a wide margin of manoeuvre, supported by greater and better knowledge of the terrain and using guerrilla warfare tactics, inspired — according to them — by the liberation struggle in Vietnam and the resistance movements in Latin America, demonstrated great capacity to hit an invading army that has low morale and lacks a drive for combat and discipline.

Likewise, the broad origin of the soldiers in the Saudi-led coalition, which has included the participation of a very large contingent of mercenaries hired by private companies, has reduced the alliance's combat capacity.

Riyadh received forceful blows, even in its own territory, when Ansarallah's combative operations moved deep into the Saudi area through an advanced attack system using drones and long-range missiles. They hit Saudi barracks, oil refineries and critical infrastructure at distances far from the common border.

*The author is a consultant and international analyst, a former Director of International Relations of the Presidency of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela and Ambassador to Nicaragua. The second part of his report will appear next week*

*Workers World*



• Commemorating victims of imperialist aggression in Sana'a.



## LETTERS

### Dear Comrades

The act of a US serviceman sacrificing himself for Palestine is the highest sacrifice and honour, and a poignant message to the US administration to stop its involvement in the aggression.

The Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine affirmed that the act of Aaron Bushnell, from the US Air Force, by setting himself on fire in front of the Zionist embassy in Washington DC, in protest against the war on Gaza, in which he called for the "liberation of Palestine" confirms the state of anger among the people in the U.S. due to the official U.S. involvement in the Zionist genocide war being waged on the Gaza Strip.

It also indicates that the status of the Palestinian cause, especially in US circles, is becoming more deeply entrenched in the global conscience, and reveals the truth of the Zionist entity as a cheap colonial tool in the hands of savage imperialism.

The Front expresses its full solidarity with the serviceman's family and all the US sympathisers who took a honourable stance and whose struggle and pressure to stop the genocide on the Strip have not ceased, confirming that the act of a US serviceman sacrificing his life to draw the attention of the American people and the world to the plight of the Palestinian people, despite its tragic nature and the great pain it involves, is considered the highest sacrifice and the

most important poignant message directed to the US administration, that it is involved in the war crime in Gaza and that the people in the USA have awakened and are rejecting this involvement, calling on the administration to stop this support and bias for the Zionist entity.

The Front sent a message to the Arab soldier to take this American serviceman who sacrificed his life for a noble cause like the Palestinian cause as an example and role model, and to leave the trenches of waiting, incapacity, and move to the trench of confrontation in support of Palestine and its people who are being slaughtered, besieged, and starved in full view and hearing of the world and just a few kilometres from the Arab lands and borders.

Palestine will be victorious as long as it has deeply engraved itself in the consciences of the world, and history will record in golden letters the names of all the sympathisers and free people of the world who stood with it and sacrificed their lives for its sake.

**Central Media Department**  
**Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP)**

### Dear Comrades

Through hard work, study, innovation and with the good guidance of its Communist Party, People's China has experienced phenomenal economic development for many decades. The nation has risen from general poverty, now contributing almost 20 per cent of the world's GDP and still it continues to make rapid progress. China seeks mutual cooperation with all nations on a win-win basis with business deals, investment projects and people to people contacts. Those potential

business partners in the USA who favour more trade and investment are disappointed that both the Republicans and Democrats, two virtually identical political parties, believe that the USA and China should now decouple.

Former American president Donald Trump and President Joe Biden advocate degrees of decoupling. Their stated aim is to reduce dependence on Chinese products and supply chains for national security reasons. An American Senator, raising suspicions that he may have been a vampire, has even announced that he wants an investigation into Chinese garlic which he claims to be an existential emergency that poses grave threats to health, security and prosperity!

The real reasons are of course to eliminate honest competition and to destroy China's economy. The USA has managed to coerce some of its more dim-witted Western allies into joining the bandwagon that can only lead to economic suicide and recession.

A good example of how the policy has failed can be seen with attempts to smash Huawei. The Americans imposed a micro-chip ban, forced the Dutch company ASML to suspend the supply of certain advanced UV photolithography machines and ended software usage. They even arranged with their willing stooges in Canada to arrest Meng Wanzheu, the company's chief financial officer.

Huawei did not buckle. They fought back. They have produced in China their own 7nm chips and are expanding research into alternative technologies. The result is that Huawei are back as class leaders for excellence and value while their 'princess' has been released and is back home.

Selfish and reckless US

policies have resulted in casualties. ASML may now struggle to find customers in the large Chinese market. Chip factories in the USA, Japan and south Korea face the prospect of falling sales. The ongoing debacle has not stopped the mythical headlong rush of bourgeois lemmings over the cliff to disaster.

In the final analysis however it will be the workers who have to carry the burden and suffer the consequences of Western folly and incompetence with falling wages and job losses. We need to wake up and realise they are being conned and that the future must be a socialist one. Compare the progress and optimism in the socialist countries with the the austerity and despair of capitalism.

**John Maryon**  
**Suffolk**

### Dear Comrades

This weekend the Formula 1 season starts in Bahrain. Racing in Bahrain implies serious human rights risks. Last year activists called for lessons to be learnt from earlier races. Unfortunately there is little evidence of any positive influence from F1 management in the field of human rights. While international car sports is failing to address human rights risks related to their events, and the issue of sportswashing, human rights activists remain behind bars.

The F1 management have ignored calls to stop racing on martyrs' blood in Bahrain. A few years ago three women were incarcerated for opposing holding the race in Bahrain. Najah Yousuf, Nafisa Al Asfoor and Raihana Al Mousawi spent up to three years in jail for opposing the F1 race in Bahrain.

**John Hughes**  
**Bahrain Freedom Movement**  
**London**

## Diary

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

#### UNTIL 16 MARCH

10 To 4 Productions: *Cable Street*. A New Musical at Southwark Playhouse Borough, 77-85 Newington Causeway, London SE1 6BD. Book on Southwark Playhouse website.

#### UNTIL 31 MAR

Martin Parr Foundation: *Photographs from the Miners' Strike 1984-5*. Paintworks, 316, Arno's Vale, Bristol BS4 3AR.

#### SAT 2 MARCH

Free Julian Assange weekly London protests: 11:00-13:00, Woolwich Market SE18: 13:30, HMP Belmarsh, Western Way, SE18: 16:00-18:00 at Eros statue, Piccadilly Circus, SW1

#### SAT 2 MARCH

Women Against Pit Closures: 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, 12:30 Dunelm House, Elvet Riverside, Durham DH1 3AN

#### WED 6 MARCH

End Fuel Poverty Coalition: Budget day protest 12:00 College Green, Westminster, London SW1.

#### THURS 7 MARCH

*Morning Star* Readers & Supporters: Strikes (Minimum Services) Act Defiance not Compliance. Rally, 18:30, Hamilton House, Mabledon Place, London WC1H 9BD. Book on Eventbrite

#### SAT 20 MARCH

Miners' Strike 1984/85 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration. Assemble 10:30 at Dodworth Miners Welfare, Barnsley S75 3RF

#### SAT 2 MARCH

Stop the War Coalition: The World at War - A Trade Union Issue, 10:00-16:30, Mander Hall, Hamilton House, Mabledon Place, London WC1H 9BD

#### WED 6 MARCH

Marx Memorial Library: Mary Davis on The Labour Government of 1923-4: a constitutionalist takeover of a working class party. 19:00. Hybrid event. Register on MML website.

#### SAT 9 MARCH

1984-85 Miners' Strike commemoration, Broadway Hotel, Dunscoft, Doncaster DN7 4HB. 09:30-11:00, march to Hatfield Colliery for rally.

#### SAT 9 MARCH

Essex County Association of Trades Councils: Essex and the 1984-85 miners' strike. 10:00-15:00, Friends Meeting House, Chelmsford CM1 2QL.

#### SAT 9 - FRI 22 MARCH

ScreenCuba: Festival of Cuban cinema. Garden Cinema, 39-41 Parker Street, London WC2B 5PQ. Details at screencuba.uk

#### THUR 14 MARCH

Marx Memorial Library: John McDonnell MP on The Labour Governments 1974-76: challenging the rights of capital. 19:00. Hybrid event. Register on MML website.

#### SUN 17 MARCH

Marx Memorial Library: Annual oration at Karl Marx's grave at Highgate Cemetery by John Hendy KC. 13:30, Highgate Cemetery, London, N6 6PJ

#### TUE 19 MAR

Abingdon Peace Group: 'Revealed: Military Influences on UK Nuclear Power Decisions'. 20:00-21:00. Zoom: ID: 913 1513 4101 Passcode: 015836

#### THUR 21 MARCH

Marx Memorial Library: Ravi Raham on *Global Labour and Peripheral Capital*. 19:00. Hybrid book launch. Register on MML website.

#### FRI 22 MARCH

Medical Aid for Palestine: Irish Musical Night for Palestine, 19:00. Cock Tavern, 23 Phoenix Road, London NW1 1HB Tickets, £10 from www.tickettallior.com

#### TUES 19 MARCH-24 APRIL

Marx Memorial Library: British Labour History 1780-1990 Labour Race and Empire. Online weekly course. Book in MML website

#### SUN 25 MARCH

Scottish *Morning Star* Supporters: Conference on military and social spending. 12:00-16:00 STUC 8 Landressy Street, Bridgeton, Glasgow G40 1BP.

#### WED 10 APRIL

Marx Memorial library: Albano Nunes on the Portuguese Revolution 50 Years on. 19:00 Online lecture. Register on MML website.

#### SAT 13 APRIL

Marx Memorial Library: Booksale. 11:00 at Library.

#### WED 24 APRIL

Cuba Solidarity Campaign Merseyside: Cuba Vive - medical aid fundraiser. 19:30, The Casa, 29 Hope St, Liverpool L1 9BP.

#### SUN 28 APRIL

Workers Memorial Day. See TUC and STUC websites for local events.

The editor welcomes letters from our readers. If you have a contribution to make please make sure it reaches us before Wednesday. You can send your letters to: PO Box 73, London SW11 2PQ, or email party@NCP.clara.net



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Scottish  
Political  
News

by our Scottish political  
affairs correspondent

The simmering row over the handling of the Gaza debate in the London parliament is not going away and it's spreading beyond the Westminster bubble despite the best efforts of Rishi Sunak and Keir Starmer to sweep it under the carpet. Edinburgh students have occupied a building in protest against the university's "investment in Israeli arms and apartheid". The SNP have accused the Westminster system of "failing the people of Gaza" after the Speaker denied the party an emergency debate on calls for an immediate ceasefire. Their leader, First Minister Humza Yousaf, is demanding an investigation into Islamophobia in the Tory party and his party is calling on the Speaker of the House of Commons to allow them a second substantive and binding debate and vote on a Gaza ceasefire.

At the UN Security Council the British government has abstained on several proposals to end the fighting in Gaza that were vetoed by the Americans. But in London the leader of the SNP bloc in the Commons denounced Rishi Sunak for not backing demands for a permanent end to the fighting at the United Nations.

Stephen Flynn, the SNP Westminster leader, told the Tory leader that "abstentionism is not leadership" during Prime Minister's Questions in the Commons chamber. Flynn said: "We're now approaching five months since this conflict first began and in that time this House has equivocated and this Govern-

ment, on three occasions at the United Nations, has abstained when it could have voted for a ceasefire. Abstentionism is not leadership. So can I ask the Prime Minister should this matter now come before the United Nations, with a ceasefire potentially in sight, will he use his Government's vote in order to deliver that ceasefire?"

Sunak said an immediate ceasefire was "not in anyone's interest".

The Prime Minister said "we support the United States' draft resolution that was discussed with colleagues at the United Nations last week, but just calling for an immediate full ceasefire now which collapses back into fighting within days or weeks, and indeed does not release hostages including British hostages, is not in anyone's interest.

"We must work towards a permanent ceasefire and that starts with an immediate humanitarian pause to get aid in and hostages out. I agree with [Flynn] about the suffering of the people in Gaza, and in this country we should be proud of everything we are doing to help them and provide them the life-saving aid that they deserve"

Flynn also asked Sunak if he believed that there could be a ceasefire next week. The Aberdeen MP said "30,000 people dead, 70,000 injured, 1.5 million sheltering in Rafah, 300,000 living in what is considered to be feral conditions in northern Gaza and of course 100 hostages still tragically held by Hamas. It is the horror of those numbers that demands that this House have its say, just as it is the horror of those numbers that show that this House should demand an immediate ceasefire.

"Now, President Biden has indicated that the ceasefire may take place as from Monday,

does the Prime Minister share in his confidence?"

Sunak said his government had consistently called for an immediate humanitarian pause which would allow for the safe release of hostages, including British nationals, and more aid to reach Gaza.

"We welcome progress on a deal, as (Flynn) said there has been progress, and urge everyone on all sides to seize the opportunity and I have been clear that we must seize the momentum from this terrible tragedy to find a lasting resolution to this conflict which delivers on the promise of a two state solution and ensures that Israelis and Palestinians can live in dignity and security."

The Scottish  
Budget

Meanwhile in Edinburgh the SNP's Scottish government's budget passed its final vote at Holyrood by 68 to 55. The only redistributive elements in it were raising the very top rate of tax, on incomes over £125,000 from 47 to 48 per cent and a new tax band of 45 per cent for those earning between £75,000 and £125,140. The SNP hope that this will raise an extra £1.5 billion to help pay for their £59.6 billion spending plans.

Now Scotland will have six income tax bands compared with three south of the border. The Scottish Fiscal Commission calculate that only anyone earning over £28,500 will pay more in tax than in England. Finance Secretary Shona Robison declared that: "We are choosing to make our income tax system more progressive in order to help fund our vital frontline services."

Ironically this came a week after her boss denounced Labour's pro-

posals for a windfall tax on North Sea oil and gas companies as an outrageous attack on the industry, so SNP ambitions for redistribution are clearly much more modest than they claim.

Michael Marra, Labour's finance spokesman said the budget was "chaotic and incompetent" in particular saying its view of local government funding was "seriously misleading" and accused them of actually imposing a real terms cut on the NHS. While the SNP claim they have increased investment in the NHS by £550 million to £132 billion, capital spending on infrastructure such as new health centres is being frozen.

Other goodies are an increase in the Child Payment from £25 to £26.70 and £1.5 million specifically to cancel school meal debt. Police Scotland will get £1.5 billion.

The budget included a massive £200 million cut for social housing. On the very same day it was announced that the number of continuing homelessness cases was at a record high of 30,129, a ten per cent increase from the previous quarter. While 15,625 households in temporary accommodation is bad enough there was a fivefold increase in the numbers being denied even that protection. An increasing number had experienced sleeping rough.

Several councils have declared housing emergencies, such as Glasgow, Edinburgh and Argyll and Bute. Alison Watson, director of Shelter Scotland lamented that: "The Scottish Government can't claim to be determined to fight poverty while presiding over record homelessness, repeatedly deprioritising housing in its spending choices, and ploughing ahead with a strategy which today's figures once again clearly show isn't working".

FROM THE  
NEW COMMUNIST PARTY

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NCP Lit. PO Box 73, London SW11 2PQ.  
(cheques to New Worker)



# China's path for peace and socialism

by New Worker correspondent

**NCP leader Andy Brooks took part in a seminar with other communists, academics and businessmen at the Chinese embassy in London last week to celebrate the Chinese New Year and engage in in-depth discussions on China's socialist path and the global significance of building a community with a shared future for humanity.**

The Chinese ambassador, Zheng Zeguang, delivered a keynote address in which he pointed out that building a global community with a shared future is the core tenet of Xi Jinping Thought on diplomacy. It is the Communist Party of China's answer to the question of what kind of world we should build and

how to build it. It is also the noble goal pursued by China in conducting major country diplomacy with Chinese characteristics in the new era.

He pointed out that this has developed from a conceptual proposition to a scientific system, from a promising vision to substantive actions and from a Chinese initiative to an international consensus that has become a glorious banner leading the progress of the times.

Over the past year China's economy grew by 5.2 per cent, contributing about one-third of the global economic growth. China's rapid green and low-carbon transition propelled global sustainable development. And China shared more development opportunities with the world through expanded high-level opening up.

China made active



• Zheng Zeguang opens the seminar.

efforts to improve relations between other major countries, successfully mediated a historic reconciliation between

Saudi Arabia and Iran, and played a constructive role in addressing regional hotspots such as the Palestine-Israel conflict

and the Ukraine crisis, making new contributions to world peace.

China actively contributed to the UAE Consensus at the COP28 UN Climate Change Conference, enhanced solidarity of the Global South, promoted the historic expansion of BRICS and gave support to the African Union in joining the G20, playing an important role in improving global governance.

Ambassador Zheng said People's China is calling for an equal and orderly multipolar world and a universally beneficial and inclusive economic globalisation.

"We will work with all countries to build a community with a shared future for mankind. We call on all countries to uphold dialogue and cooperation and oppose rivalry and confrontation,

uphold peace and stability and oppose conflict and war, uphold openness and inclusiveness and oppose "decoupling" and suppression, uphold mutual learning and oppose clash of civilisations, and uphold true multilateralism and oppose unilateralism and bullying" he declared.

China's commitment to interpreting and promoting building a community with a shared future for mankind through its actions serves as a model for the international community. Western disinformation cannot hide this truth as China's proposal and practice are being welcomed and endorsed by a growing number of countries and their people. The participants expressed their readiness to strengthen exchanges and dialogue with China, and make unremitting efforts to build a better world.

## Stop NATO's war in Ukraine!

by New Worker correspondent

**Simultaneous protests were held in London, Berlin and Paris on Saturday to draw attention to the links between NATO aggression in Ukraine, Gaza and Yemen. The London protest took place in Parliament Square and attracted support from many passers-by and international tourists, several of whom actually joined the protestors.**

While Western governments, now with the greater involvement of Britain and France, have supported Kiev regime with billions in weapons

and money, they have done nothing to stop Israel committing open genocide in Gaza, with hospitals and civilians deliberately targeted over 10,000 children killed, and chaos,

disease and starvation affecting Gaza's million people.

Britain, France and the US are still sending weapons to Israel, and while they condemned

recent Russian missile strikes in Ukraine, they have looked the other way while Israel deliberately targets civilians in Gaza.

The whole world is witness to Israel's war

crimes, and the hypocrisy of Western governments who support, arm and finance both Ukraine and Israel, who unilaterally bomb Yemen with no UN or other international

sanction, and say nothing when Israel repeatedly carries out air strikes and assassinations in Lebanon and Syria.

International Ukraine Anti Fascist Solidarity (IUAFS) has been campaigning for six years in solidarity with anti-fascists in Ukraine, thousands of whom have paid with their lives, torture or prison for resisting the regime installed in 2014 with the support of Britain, the US and the European Union. Its activists have participated in every protest since 7<sup>th</sup> October in solidarity with the people of Palestine and the Gaza Strip.





# There Is No Place for the Palestinians of Gaza to Go

by Vijay Prashad

On 9<sup>th</sup> February 2024, Israel's prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu said that his army would advance into Rafah, the last remaining city in Gaza not occupied by the Israelis. Most of the 2.3 million Palestinians who live in Gaza had fled to its southern border with Egypt after being told by the Israelis on 13<sup>th</sup> October 2023, that the north had to be abandoned and that the south would be a "safe zone".

As the Palestinians from the north, particularly from Gaza City, began their march south – often on foot – they were attacked by Israeli forces, who gave them no safe passage. The Israelis said that anything south of Wadi Gaza, which divides the narrow strip, would be safe, but then as the Palestinians moved into Deir-al-Balah, Khan Younis, and Rafah, they found the Israeli jets following them and the Israeli troops coming after them. Now, Netanyahu has said that his forces will enter Rafah to combat Hamas. On 11<sup>th</sup> February Netanyahu told NBC news that Israel would provide "safe passage for the civilian population" and that there would be no "catastrophe".

The use of the word "catastrophe" is significant. This is the accepted English translation of the word "nakba," used since 1948 to describe the forced removal that year of half of the Palestinian population from their homes. Netanyahu's use of the term comes after high officials

of the Israeli government have already spoken of a "Gaza Nakba" or a "Second Nakba." These phrases formed part of South Africa's application to the International Court of Justice (ICJ) on 29<sup>th</sup> December 2023, alleging that they are part of the "expressions of genocidal intent against the Palestinian people by Israeli state officials." A month later, the ICJ said that there was "plausible" evidence of genocide being conducted in Gaza, highlighting the words of the Israeli officials. One official, the Israeli defence minister Yoav Gallant said, "I have released all restraints" (quoted both by the South African complaint and in the ICJ's order).

Netanyahu saying that there would be no "catastrophe" after over 28,000 Palestinians have been killed and after two million of the 2.3 million Palestinians in Gaza have been displaced is puzzling. Since the ICJ's order, the Israeli army has killed nearly 2,000 Palestinians. The Israeli army has already begun

to assault Rafah, a city with a population density now at 22,000 people per square kilometre. In response to the Israeli announcement that it would enter Rafah city, the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) – one of the few groups operating in the southern part of Gaza – said that such an invasion "could collapse the humanitarian response." The NRC assessed nine of the shelters in Rafah, which are housing 27,400 civilians and found that the residents have no drinking water. Because the shelters are operating at 150 per cent capacity, hundreds of the Palestinians are living on the street. In each of the areas that the NRC studied, they found the Palestinian refugees in the grip of hepatitis A, gastroenteritis, diarrhoea, smallpox, lice, and influenza. Because of the collapse of this humanitarian response from the NRC, and from the United Nations – whose agency UNRWA has lost its funding and is under attack by the Israelis – the situation will deteriorate further.

## Safe passage

Netanyahu says that his government will provide "safe passage" to the Palestinians. These words have been heard by the Palestinians since mid-October when they were told to keep going south to prevent being killed by the Israeli bombing. Nobody believes anything that Netanyahu says. A Palestinian health worker, Saleem, told me that he cannot imagine any place of safety within Gaza. He came to Rafah's al-Zohour neighbourhood from Khan Younis, walking with his family, desperate to get out of the range of the Israeli guns. "Where do we go now?" he asks me. "We cannot enter Egypt. The border is closed. So, we cannot go south. We cannot go into Israel, because that is impossible. Are we to go north, back to Khan Younis and Gaza City?"

Saleem remembers that when he arrived in al-Zohour, the Israelis targeted the home of Dr Omar Mohammed Harb,

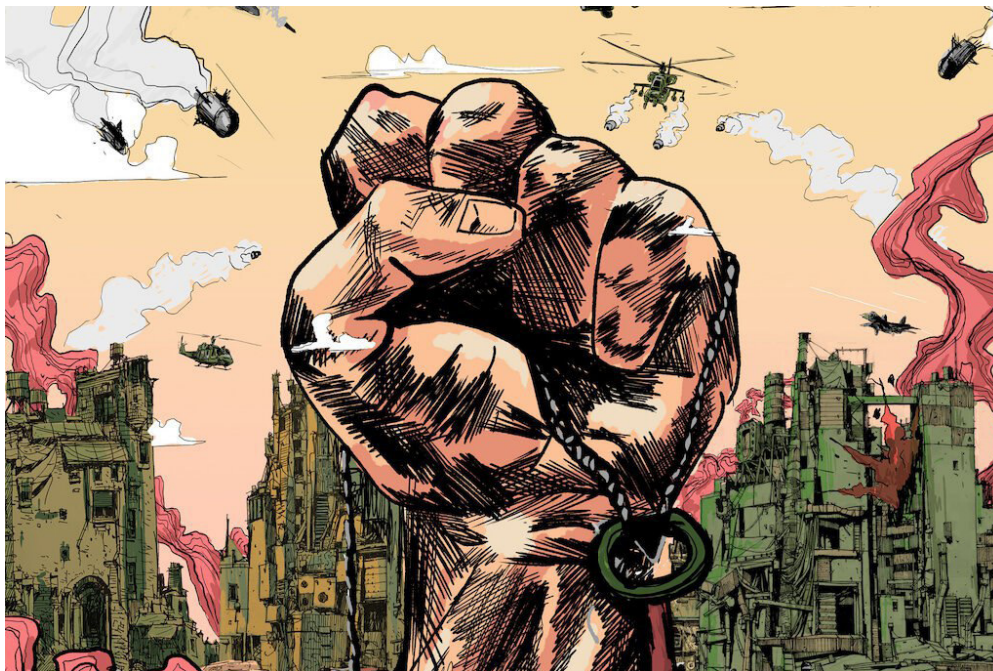
killing 22 Palestinians (among them five children). The house was flattened. The name of Dr Omar Mohammed Harb stayed with me because I recalled that two years ago his daughter Abeer was to be married to Ismail Abdel-Hameed Dweik. An Israeli air strike on the Shouhada refugee camp killed Ismail. Abeer was killed in the strike on her father's house, which had been a refuge for those fleeing from the north. Saleem moved into that area of Rafah. Now he is unsettled. "Where to go?" he asks.

On 29<sup>th</sup> January 2024, the UN special rapporteur on the right to adequate housing, Dr Balakrishnan Rajagopal wrote a strong essay in the *New York Times* called *Domicide: the Mass Destruction of Homes Should be a Crime Against Humanity*. Accompanying his article was a photo essay by Yaqeen Baker, whose house was destroyed in Jabalia (northern Gaza) by Israeli bombardment. "The destruction of homes in Gaza," Bak-

er wrote, "has become commonplace, and so has the sentiment, 'The important thing is that you're safe – everything else can be replaced.'" That is an assessment shared across Gaza amongst those who are still alive. But, as Dr Rajagopal says, the scale of the destruction of housing in Gaza should not be taken for granted. It is a form of "domicide," a crime against humanity.

The Israeli attack on Gaza, Dr Rajagopal writes, is "far worse than what we saw in Dresden and Rotterdam during the Second World War, where about 25,000 homes were destroyed in each city." In Gaza, he says, more than 70,000 housing units have been totally destroyed, and 290,000 partially damaged. In these three months of Israeli fire, he notes, "a shocking 60 to 70 per cent of structures in Gaza, and up to 84 per cent of structures in northern Gaza, have been damaged or destroyed." Due to this domicile, there is no place for the Palestinians in Rafah to go if they go north. Their homes have been destroyed. "This crushing of Gaza as a place," reflects Dr Rajagopal, "erases the past, present, and future of many Palestinians." This statement by Dr Rajagopal is a recognition of the unfolding genocide in Gaza.

As I speak with Saleem the sound of the Israeli advance can be heard in the distance. "I don't know when we can speak next," he says. "I don't know where I will be".





# Russia advances on all fronts

**The third year of the full-scale war in Ukraine has begun with a Russian offensive in all directions along the Ukrainian front.**

On the night of 26<sup>th</sup> February a massive Russian combined attack struck Ukrainian military facilities throughout the country. Russian strikes targeted Ukrainian barracks and military-industrial facilities in the Sumy and Poltava regions. Local authorities confirmed numerous strikes in the city of Kharkov. In Dnipro the targets included the machine-building plant and the local airfield. The Kanatovo airfield in the Kirovograd region also came under another attack. Closer to the frontlines, a new wave of explosions

thundered in Chuguev and Pokrovks and Kupiansk.

Russian precision strikes continue on a daily basis, which makes it possible to destroy Ukrainian reserves and deter the manoeuvres of the Ukrainian military on the battlefields.

As a result, the Russians have been able to push back the Ukrainian lines.

To the west of Artyomovsk, Russian troops launched an assault on Ivanovskoe. Clashes are already reportedly ongoing in the central part of the village. The Ukrainians were forced to retreat to the western outskirts of the settlement. At the same time, Russian forces expanded their zone of control in the forest area on the outskirts of



Chasov Yar, threatening the Ukrainian garrison with an upcoming assault on their large stronghold there.

After their victory in Avdeevka, Russian forces are finishing the mop up operation in the town without stopping their advance in the region, pushing the Ukrainian army

to the west. Russian troops are securing their positions in the recently liberated villages of Stepovoe, Lastochkino and Severnoe, where the remaining Ukrainian forces continue attempts to counter-attack on the outskirts. According to preliminary reports by both Russian and Ukrainian

military sources, Russian assault groups have reached the village of Tonenkoe, where clashes are already ongoing on the eastern streets.

This village is located on the main line of the Ukrainian defence which is in the chain of settlements west of

Avdeevka. In the case of a Russian breakthrough there, the Russian troops will face almost no obstacles to advance about 10 kilometres to the west and take control of large territories of the Donetsk People's Republic.

At the same time, the Russian military is taking back positions it lost during the failed Ukrainian counter-offensive. Russian forces gained a foothold on the southern outskirts of Rabotino and continue attacks in the centre of the village, where there are at least some large buildings to hide in during the operations in the ruins. The Ukrainians have withdrawn to the cemetery north of the village, from where they attempt counterattacks.

*South Front*

## A date with vultures

by Guillermo Alvarado

**A few days ago, the Conservative Action Political Conference was held in the United States, one of the largest assemblies in the world of the forces of the international extreme right characterised by hatred of migrants and absolute contempt for progressive ideas.**

The meeting brought together the top representatives of the

regressive thinking of this third millennium of the modern history, including the Spanish Pedro Abascal, leader of VOX, the American Steven Bannon and President Javier Milei of Argentina, among other specimens.

However, what was scheduled as a meeting of the ideas of the most reactionary world, ended up becoming another campaign event for former President Donald Trump in his crazy race to return to

the White House.

Indeed, the figure of the eccentric tycoon remained at the centre of the speeches, as if it were an assembly of the Republican Party and not a meeting of international extremists.

Even areas destined for the souvenir trade were taken over entirely by the figure of Trump on caps and T-shirts.

The latter, of course, took advantage of his speech, which not by chance coincided with the

closing of the Conference, and repeated his government programme against migrants, whom he crushed without any mercy.

He repeated, for example, that his first act of government will be to implement the largest mass deportation in the history of the United States, a threat that should not be taken lightly.

As he did during his previous campaign, he launched a barrage of lies and insults against those

who go to seek work and a future for themselves and their families in what was once known as the "land of opportunity".

He said, for starters, that migrants are taken from mental health hospitals and prisons and thrown towards the northern border and repeated that they are going to "poison" the blood of the United States, which has already earned him comparisons to Adolf Hitler.

Of course, before reaching the ballot box and eventually regaining the keys to the Oval Office, he has to first face numerous accusations before the courts, where he will be tried, among other things, for various fiscal and economic crimes.

He should remember, I think, that the gangster Al Capone was not locked up for his multiple crimes, but for tax evasion, something that in the United States is considered more serious than being a thief or a murderer.

## American soldier sets himself on fire by Israeli embassy

**A member of the US Air Force set himself on fire outside the Israeli Embassy in Washington this week, saying he could no longer be complicit in genocide.**

Twenty-five-year-old Aaron Bushnell live-streamed his own self-immolation. In the video, he could be heard screaming "Free Palestine" as the

fire spread. Wearing his uniform, Bushnell spoke on the live stream prior to setting himself on fire.

"I am an active-duty member of the United

States Air Force, and I will no longer be complicit in genocide. I am about to engage in an extreme act of protest, but compared to what people have

been experiencing in Palestine at the hands of their colonisers, it's not extreme at all. This is what our ruling class has decided will be normal".

In December, a protester with a Palestinian flag self-immolated outside the Israeli Consulate in Atlanta, Georgia.

*Radio Havana Cuba*