

Our Response to the Massacres in Gaza: Build the Independent Movement Against Imperialism and the Rule of Capital

Leaflet by Art Francisco and Ben Seattle, with help from others – August 9, 2014

Read our blogs at: <http://StruggleForUnifiedTheory.wordpress.com> and <http://WarForQuadrantTwo.wordpress.com>

For weeks now we have been seeing and hearing the news in our newspapers, radio and TV. Another school, hospital or UN refugee center is bombed and dozens more civilians killed for the crime of living in the world's largest open air prison—Gaza (with a population of 1.8 million crammed into a space the size of Seattle). Now there are more than 1800 dead and ten thousand injured, nearly all civilians, and the numbers are steadily rising.

And while the citizens of Gaza are bombarded with bombs, shrapnel and white phosphorus, here at home we are subject to a bombardment of cynical lies by our own imperialist media: “It is the fault of Hamas because they use civilians as human shields,” and “The Israeli government is only defending itself.” Reporters who have told the truth about the carnage have been taken off the story—such as the reporter who photographed four young boys killed on the beach while playing soccer. And anyone who challenges these lies and doublespeak is called anti-semitic.

What is the cause of the bloodbath in Gaza and what can we do about it?

There is a long and tortured history behind the current massacres. It is the story of the Palestinian people—driven from their homes by death and terror in 1948, herded into squalid concentration camps and threatened and betrayed from every direction. It is the story of cynical European and U.S. diplomats who created a *settler state* – the modern country of Israel—as a military outpost of western imperialism in the heart of the oil-rich Middle East—by displacing and driving out the original inhabitants—the native Palestinians. The Palestinians, to this day, are threatened and starved—and denied the right to either (a) form their own nation—which could then engage in manufacturing, trade and commerce or (b) live as equal citizens within the so-called democratic state of Israel.

This leaflet represents an attempt by a few activists to provide some background and perspective to other activists—as part of the work to build a movement, here in the U.S., with the aim of overthrowing the



rule of capital from which imperialism grows and from which imperialism can never be separated.

There is a lot of confusion within our own movement over fundamental questions. We intend, in this leaflet, to provide clarity, to the best of our ability, on some of the most important questions which are either related to the massacres in Gaza or which come up each time U.S. imperialism invades another country, launches another military adventure, or supports some particularly bloodthirsty action by a client state.

Help Break the Siege of Gaza! Join Us As We Blockade the Israeli Ship!



The *Zim Chicago*, which is largely owned by the Israeli state, will be docking at the Ports of Tacoma and Seattle on or about August 20 and 21. Activists from Olympia to Everett will be there to stop the ship from unloading. There will be a green zone for safety—like at the Dec 2011 Port blockade.

More info: <http://BlockTheBoatNW.wordpress.com/>

The Siege of Gaza

The current bloodshed has everything to do with Israel maintaining and tightening the siege of Gaza, in order to force the population of Gaza into abject submission. The Israeli and Egyptian governments, with the full support of the U.S., prohibit the movement of any goods or people into or out of Gaza beyond the barest minimum necessary to prevent mass starvation. This is a deliberate policy, engineered as part of a policy of *collective punishment* of the entire population for voting Hamas into power in Gaza seven years ago. (Hamas is a reactionary political organization, but it won the election because, unlike the more corrupt Palestinian National Authority, it refused to become an obedient servant of the Israeli government.)

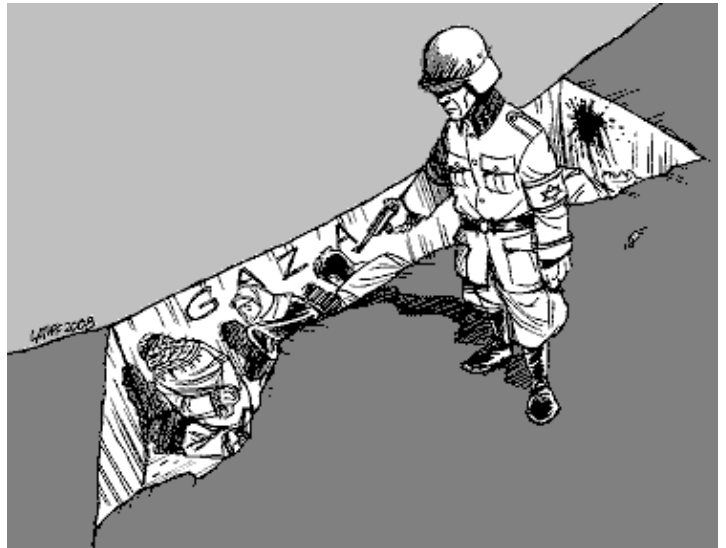
The Hamas Rockets

The siege and blockade of Gaza is itself a crime against humanity, and in our view it is not much of an exaggeration to compare it to the walls which the Nazis built around the Warsaw ghetto.

In order to put pressure on the Israeli government to end the siege, and in an attempt to call world attention to this crime, Hamas and other groups in Gaza have been firing rockets into Israel. From a military perspective, these rockets are more of a nuisance than a threat—but they have been effective in capturing media attention and drawing attention to the siege—because Hamas has announced that it will not stop firing the rockets until the siege is lifted. And many in Gaza, even those who oppose Hamas, support any action that may force an end to the siege. They say it is better to face a quick death by an Israeli bomb than the slow suffocation of the siege.

Murderous Reprisals

The Israeli government, of course, does not want to lift the siege, because it sees the siege as the most effective way to force the Palestinians in Gaza to put in power some trend which is willing to become an Israeli puppet. If Israel cannot force Hamas to stop firing rockets—it knows that it has the power to kill Palestinian civilians in reprisal—and to make hundreds of thousands of families cower in the dark in fear—and this is exactly what it is doing. Their cynical political calculation is that if they kill and injure enough civilians, destroy enough homes and infrastructure, and create enough misery—the Palestinian people will eventually learn their lesson and turn against, not only Hamas, but any trend which continues to defy Israel.



This is the reason that every few days a tank or airplane attacks a school, hospital or refugee center. The Israeli state knows that it has the full support of U.S. imperialism, which gave a green light to these murderous reprisals. Moreover, no matter how many women, children and old people it kills, it can in effect say, “Hamas made us do it.”

The Israeli tactic of murdering thousands of Palestinians every few years in order to keep them terrified is called “mowing the grass” and is supposedly aimed only at reducing the military capability of Hamas. But if this were really true, it would be difficult to explain why U.N. refugee centers keep getting bombed. Were the kids on the beach hiding a rocket in their soccer ball?

Solidarity

The problem with the Hamas tactic of firing rockets at non-military targets is not only that it provides a pretext for the current bloodshed but, more importantly, that it undermines solidarity between the Palestinian and Israeli working classes. It is this solidarity that will be the basis of progress in Palestine and Israel. We, the authors of this leaflet, do not feel we know enough about the situation and the tactical alternatives to either approve or condemn the tactic of firing rockets. What is clear is that these rockets, which have so far killed a total of three people, are insignificant in comparison to the brutal siege of Gaza, which must be broken. And it is also clear that activists in the U.S. *do not need* to take positions on tactical questions thousands of miles away. Our task is to **build a powerful movement here at home** against the number one terrorist in the world; as well as the ultimate architect of the bloodshed in Gaza and elsewhere: U.S. imperialism.

Syria, Iraq and the Brutal Legacy of *Divide and Rule* Colonialism

The events in Gaza are not unrelated to the civil wars taking place in nearby Syria and Iraq, and the US-backed coup in

Egypt aimed at reversing the gains of the mass uprisings there in 2011

Part of what we are seeing in the current civil wars is the legacy, not only of the first world war, which created a series of artificial countries in the Middle East, but also of many decades of European colonialism—which, using the time-tested tactic of *divide and rule*—made use of ethnic and religious differences to set different sections of the population against one another. For example, in a territory with a majority Sunni population, such as Syria, the French colonial administrators selected a minority tribe (the Alawites) to help them oppress and rule the Sunnis. Similarly, in a territory with a majority Shiite population, such as Iraq, the British administrators selected minority Sunni tribes to help them rule.

The advantage of this tactic was that the tribes and ethnic groups which helped the European colonialists rule, being minorities who had helped suppress the majority, would now be hated and vulnerable to violent retribution from the majority if the colonial rulers were overthrown and no longer able to protect them. This meant that these groups now had a material interest, as a matter of their own survival, in supporting continued colonial rule.

Of course this also meant that, as these territories, arbitrarily shaped by the European colonialists, became semi-independent countries in the 20th century, members of these minority tribes and ethnic groupings became the ruling families in an unstable situation full of ethnic and religious hatreds. These countries have never experienced a period during which democratic rights existed and workers of different nationalities and religions had opportunities to overcome the hatreds created or amplified under colonialism.

It is not only in the Middle East that this legacy has been created—but also in Africa and elsewhere. The genocide in Rwanda, for example, was based on hatreds between Hutu and Tutsi that were largely created by German and Belgian colonialists.

Seen in this light, we can better understand the strategic situation of Israel. U.S. imperialism needs a reliable ally to help it control the region. And what could be more reliable than an ally which is totally hated in the region and is completely dependent on U.S. imperialism for its survival?

The “Two-State Solution” Has Always Been a Fraud

False friends of the Palestinians have long preached what has become known as the *two state solution*, in which two countries, Israel and Palestine, would exist side by side. The problem with this solution is that it has always been a fraud. The Israeli state winds up with nearly all the land, all the water, all of the economy and capital and all the military equipment and know-how—while the Palestinian side gets ghettos separated by checkpoints—and a denial of all rights



at the hands of a supposedly independent Palestinian government that is nothing more than an Israeli puppet. In fact a two-state solution was the premise of the original partition of Palestine in 1948 that resulted in the ethnic cleansing of most of the Palestinian population.

The only *democratic solution* to the needs of the Palestinian and Israeli working class and masses is the end of *Apartheid*: a single democratic state in the region, in which everyone, whether Arab or Jew, has equal rights. This would mean equal rights to land, water, jobs and education. This would mean full and democratic political rights for *everyone*.

From the River, to the Sea Palestine Will Be Free

Of course, in such a situation, the modern state of Israel, as we know it today, which is based on a thousand exclusive privileges for the Jewish population—side-by-side with poverty and violent repression for the Palestinians—would not exist. In its place would be a more ordinary country—in which rights would not be based on religion or nationality. Such a *one-state solution* is the only way to meet the democratic rights and material needs of both the Arab and Jewish masses.

Palestinians would constitute a slight majority in a single, democratic state. The racist capitalist media in both Israel and the U.S. say that a single state would never be acceptable and would be anti-semitic because it refuses to recognize what they call “Israel’s right to exist” and would lead to what they call the “destruction of Israel”. They make it sound like the Jewish population would be thrown into the sea.

But a single, democratic state would really mean that, instead of a state based on a religion, everyone would get land, water, jobs, democratic rights—and an opportunity to have a life. And the opponents of a single democratic state can only offer the alternative of keeping millions of Palestinians voiceless and in chains—and to keep “mowing the grass” until the end of time.

The US-Israeli Partnership: Who is the Dog and Who is the Tail?

There is a myth in circulation that the Israeli lobby has taken control over the foreign policy of the U.S. and that this is the reason that the U.S. government supports Israel so much. We want to make it clear: this is bullshit.

It is true that there is a powerful Israel lobby in the U.S. But this lobby is allowed to function as an informal cog in the state machine only because this cog perfectly fits the strategic interests of U.S. imperialism.

The U.S. helped create and shape Israel as a military outpost in an oil rich region of the world that it is determined to control as part of its strategic rivalry with other major powers past (the former Soviet Union) and future (China).

The so-called *tail wags the dog* theory supports, and is supported by, a range of anti-semitic ideas. More than this, it goes against an understanding of how modern imperialism works as an **economic and political system** in which the entire state apparatus and commercial infrastructure of society is integrated with and subordinated to the needs of capital markets. And understanding how modern imperialism works is key to understanding the modern world, and key to understanding that imperialist wars, and the kinds of bloodshed we see today in Gaza, are *inevitable* as long as our world is ruled by capital.

Building an Independent Movement Against Imperialism and the Rule of Capital Here at Home

The working class and oppressed in Palestine and present-day Israel clearly have their work cut out for them. In order to move forward they will need to form bonds with one another and unite in struggle against the rule of capital and the associated ruling classes in the region.

And, here at home, we have our work cut out for us also. Our movement is flooded with illusions that, by enlightening the conscience of our ruling class, or by electing the right saviors, we can (somehow) end the “policy” of imperialism.

But imperialism is not a policy. Imperialism is the name of the economic and political system that is the *inevitable* result of the rule of capital. The only way to bring an end to the system of imperialism is to bring an end to the **rule of capital**. And bringing an end to the rule of capital will require that we bring an end to the rule of society by the social class, **the bourgeoisie**, that was created by and is attached to the circulation of capital.

After the class rule of the bourgeoisie is overthrown, society will begin a lengthy transition period during which an economy which is not based on *commodity production* will grow, side-by-side with the commodity economy. It is only when this new economy (which will be based on voluntary labor and the free distribution of goods and services, rather

than the sale or exchange of one good or service for another, or for any form of money) becomes large enough and efficient enough to compete with the commodity economy and render the commodity economy obsolete—that the distorting and corrupting power of commodity production and capital will be eliminated.

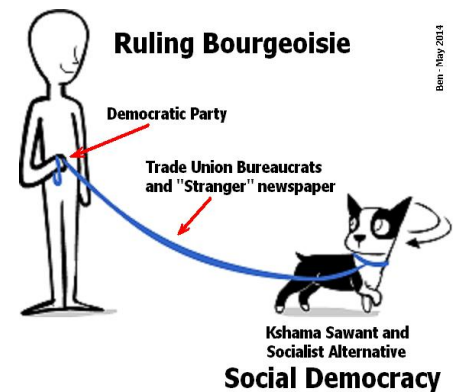
The creation of goods and services on the basis of voluntary labor and free distribution exists today in small scale in various ways, including certain forms of software and entertainment videos on YouTube. But this mode of production will be able to expand to create freeways, airplanes, homes and hospitals only *after* the present-day system of the class rule of the bourgeoisie is overthrown.

It is the **working class** here in the U.S., supported by all oppressed sections of society, and by the working classes and oppressed from the entire world—that will overthrow the class rule of the bourgeoisie. This is the historic mission and destiny of the working class.

Our task, as activists, is not only to organize struggles for worthwhile partial demands, such as higher wages, livable rents, fewer brutal police attacks and legality for all immigrants—but is also to help the working class organize a **conscious political movement** for the liberation of humanity from the rule of capital.

Such a movement will need, above all, to be **independent** of those political trends which are *on a leash* in capitalist society—whereby they are (1) *dependent* on institutions and power brokers controlled by the capitalists—but also (2) maintain the *appearance* of being independent. The name for such political trends which are on a leash but have the appearance of being independent is “social democracy.”

Here in Seattle, we have many good examples of social democracy—but the best and most well known example is that of “our own” Kshama Sawant. It is great that workers will soon have a higher minimum wage. But we also need a movement that cannot be ordered around by the trade union bureaucrats or the *Stranger* newspaper.



Join Us at the **Black Coffee**

The authors of this leaflet often meet on the weekends at the *Black Coffee* to talk about how to confront and resolve the problems of the movement. Readers are welcome to join us. You can contact us through our blogs.