

"We are realists... we dream the impossible" - Che



# Fire This Time!

## ELECTIONS AFTERMATH: REVOLUTION & COUNTERREVOLUTION IN VENEZUELA



**SPECIAL SECTION ON  
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By Alison Bodine

*This article is based on a talk was given by Alison Bodine with the same title at the Fire This Time forum on December 17, 2015, in Vancouver, Canada, ten days after National Assembly elections in Venezuela.*

Obviously a lot has been said tonight that I think is very important for our discussion, I want to add just a few things which I think are really important for us as far as where exactly I think Francisco ended, which is our necessity to build a broad and united movement in solidarity with the people in Venezuela fighting for the Bolivarian Revolution. And to really keep our “eyes on the prize” as they say, are eyes straight forward at the goal, which is to win the self-determination of the people of Venezuela and an end to imperialist intervention in Venezuela.

### U.S. Hostile History Toward Venezuelan



political parties and “civil society” in Venezuela, This is, of course, is the code-word for opposition groups against the government of the Bolivarian revolution. The main arm of the funding has come through the U.S. National Endowment for Democracy (NED) or the USAid. This includes things that many of us that have been involved in the Cuba solidarity movement will remember. Things like a five-day-a-week television program in Spanish, broadcast in Venezuela, or other PSYOPS, as they say, psychological operations meant to convince the people of Venezuela to rise up against their democratically elected government. These are, of course, things run out of the US military Southern Command. This includes a division of the USAid called the OTI, which was asked, in fact, directly by the State Department of the United States, if it could, in fact “offer programs and assistance in order to strengthen the democratic elements that are increasing

# ELECTIONS AFTERMATH: Revolution & Counter Revolution in Venezuela

Just to highlight a little bit about U.S. intervention, because I do think that it is the most important and critical point for us to organize on following this electoral defeat in the Venezuelan National Assembly elections, not very many days ago, about 10 days ago. We have to remember, of course, and maybe for some of us it is not remembering, I think that it is important to realize that there may be some people that have not been following Venezuelan politics, don't know about the Bolivarian Revolution and just now are finding out about it. So, we always have to talk and speak some about the history and about the tremendous gains made for poor, working and oppressed people in Venezuela under the Bolivarian Revolution, under the leadership of the late Hugo Chavez and now under the leadership of President Nicolas Maduro.

We have to remember that ever since the election of Chavez in 1998, the United States government has had Venezuela continuously in its targets, and this

includes, who was President when Chavez was elected? Bill Clinton, all the way up through eight years of George W. Bush and now Barack Obama, where really this war against Venezuela, through all of its different means that we have discussed tonight, has not ceased and continued, in fact, to expand, and get trickier and do what imperialism does around the world. Including the fact that Barack Obama is the one that put Venezuela in the “terrorist axis of evil.”

We have to remember dates like the April 2002 attempted coup, when the U.S. backed forces in Venezuela temporarily ousted Hugo Chavez from government, but the people of Venezuela took to the streets and brought Hugo Chavez back. We have to remember the oil strike in 2002-2003 that was an attempt to cripple the economy in Venezuela. Many of the perpetrators of the Venezuelan oil strike are in fact those that are living here in Alberta, Canada.

### U.S. Intervention In Venezuelan

We have especially a continuous funding of

under fire from the Chavez government.” This, happening right after Venezuela passed what I would consider one of the world's most democratic constitutions. Other objectives of the USAID and NED have included strengthening of political parties and unions, really working in all sectors of Venezuelan society to try and destabilize it from the inside.

The funding of these groups is linked directly to an organization that many of us are also familiar with, and may have thought of on today's date, which is DAI. This is the same group that Alan Gross worked for, Alan Gross is, of course, the person that was arrested in Cuba on charges of espionage and bringing equipment illegally into Cuba, telecommunications equipment illegally into Cuba and was released from Cuba when all of the Cuban 5 were released from U.S. prisons, one year ago. So this organization, DAI an operative of the U.S. government directly works in Venezuela, in Cuba and in Afghanistan.

Evidence of U.S. intervention in Venezuela

also includes Wikileaks, some cables released by Wikileaks, which have shown communiqués between the charge d'affaires or the U.S. Ambassador in Venezuela before he was kicked out, the charge d'affaires, which is now the representative of the U.S. government in Venezuela, or the Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Western Hemispheric Affairs, who laid out clearly in their cables back to the FBI and the State Department, or to the CIA, the areas of action that the US government needed to take to “limit Chavez’ influence in the region,” including the idea that the U.S. needed to strengthen ties with military leaders Latin America who are also concerned about Chavez, and therefore by extension now, to Maduro as this war has not ended. For instance, in 2012, 20 million dollars went directly to Venezuelan opposition parties, including \$5 million that came at the request of President Barack Obama as part of the U.S. Federal Budget.

**Venezuela, A Threat to U.S. National Security! Really?**

More recently, if we talk about just in the last year we have what we saw in the video earlier, but I also want to remind people about, the Presidential Decree of U.S. President Barack Obama who said that Venezuela was a “threat to U.S. National Security,” increased sanctions against people in Venezuela and, in fact declared “a national emergency with respect to the unusual and extraordinary threat to the national security and foreign policy of the United States posed by the situation in Venezuela.”

We have the presidential election, which saw the victory of President Nicolas Maduro led to an increasing re-enforcement of the U.S. destabilization campaign, a sabotage of basic infrastructure, including a strategy to destabilize the electrical grid in Venezuela, which I think is so interesting about the workers for the electricity company being those strongest out supporting their government and standing up for their rights at this time. There are many documents proving communication between people in Venezuela and the United States working strategy to “to blame the government for a weak infrastructure and projecting a crisis in Venezuela when it comes to the electricity, before the last election. The U.S. government has also continued its direct funding of MUD, which in the coalition, the right-wing opposition coalition that won

in the recent National Assembly elections. They find them through the International Republican Institute, which also works on “facilitate experiences between the Democratic Unity Roundtable [which is the English translation of the MUD] and the counterparts in Bolivia, Nicaragua and



Argentina.”  
**Right-wing Media Campaign And Economic War Against People**

As well as what was mentioned before by

Francisco as far as the media campaign, which I think is really important. We have to remember that Venezuela exists in a world capitalist economy that is facing crisis. Also, Venezuela still has a capitalist economy, and because of this, I think this is most clearly where we see the effects of the economic war. As I say this, I will comment and quote from Nicolas Maduro, who on the night of the election said “the victory of the counter revolution... [came with] the state of need created by the politics of savage capitalism.” I have just one image to help illustrate that from TeleSUR English, which is of course a tremendous resource for us in our solidarity work. This image clearly shows one arm of this economic war, which has to do with the cross-border smuggling of goods, which Venezuela took steps against with the closing of the border with Colombia, but just, I won’t read the whole thing, just the big yellow box. “In 2014 28,000 tons of food was seized and 12 million litres of oil and lubricants were seized when attempting to cross the border into Colombia, where they could be sold at profits thousands of times greater than they could be bought in Venezuela, because they were bought with subsidized prices in Venezuela. So, people say “where are the basic goods going?” This is one of the ways that basic goods are smuggled out, facilitated by the right-wing in Venezuela and sold at exurbanite prices.

**What next?**

I think that is what many of us have answered in different ways tonight and I think that it is also a lot where our discussion is going to lead. But I will say one thing that has specifically to do with U.S. intervention. The coalition of the right-wing opposition in Venezuela is actually made up of 20 different political parties that have slightly different politics and different tactics, differences which we will see in discussion in the coming months as they take their seats in the National Assembly, but the party that one the most seats from the right-wing coalition, in fact 30 of the seats is Primera Justicia, which is the party of Henrique Capriles, who is the one that ran against Nicolas Maduro in the last Presidential elections and lost. This

party was directly founded by working with the National Endowment for Democracy in the United States. It was directly funded by them and those connections are well established since the year 2001. So,

Henrique Capriles and his party is very much at the beck and call of the United States and imperialism in Venezuela.

Just to summarize what the response has been in Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro and the United Socialist Party of Venezuela, the PSUV, another quote from Maduro, “unity should be the aim, nobody should be confused by this adverse situation.” And how that has expressed itself, just in the last few days in rapid action has included meetings of the Grand Patriotic Pole, the GPP, which is the coalition of the Bolivarian Revolution in the National Assembly election. Over this past weekend there were meetings of the

### Debate Among Revolutionaries Is Positive!

An important quote, I think, to remember when we talk about where Venezuela is going and what President Nicolas Maduro and the PSUV are doing now is when Nicolas Maduro said, “I want a debate over revolutionary strategy in order to turn this crisis into a revolutionary crisis that allows us to experience another 4th of February, another 13th of April, a rebirth of this popular force in the Venezuelan revolution”

Maduro has called upon people in Venezuela to reflect and think about the

that have changed history and we need to know that those are ours. It is our people on the streets of Venezuela as we are here today in this room. We need people from all sectors of society, from the middle class, the working class, all oppressed people across Canada and really the world to join in the solidarity movement with Venezuela. We need to, of course, not only hear the words of Nicolas Maduro, but hear the words of Chavez when he himself said that the Venezuelan Revolution was not just for Venezuelans, it is for everyone.

### Building A Strong Solidarity Movement in Canada



Presidential Councils of Popular Power, which are the groups that represent women's organizations, LGBTQ groups, youth, Indigenous people, Wednesday there were meetings of the PSUV delegates themselves, and then all of the street meetings and mobilizations that we saw in the photos. These are an incredibly significant show of force and unity to defend the Bolivarian Revolution. Those are going on continue. We also have the creation of the National Communal Parliament, or the Parliament of Communes, which is actually an institution codified in Venezuelan law to help create a balance of power to the National Assembly, which we can talk about more in discussion.

Bolivarian Revolution and the next steps in this new situation, which will be one of increasing right-wing attack and attacks from U.S. and other imperialist forces. We also have to take that same reflection here, we have to hear those words as if they were own instruction of how to build and continue our solidarity work for Venezuela. *We need a broad solidarity movement with Venezuela, now is not the time to be sectarian, it is not the time to limit ourselves in any way in building our solidarity with the Bolivarian Revolution.* Venezuela, in action, in word, in deed, belongs to all oppressed people all over the world, the same as the Cuban Revolution, as the Russian Revolution, as the Chinese Revolution. These are acts

As we are here, as has been said a few times tonight, on the anniversary of the death of Simon Bolivar, the Liberator, I will also bring a quote from Simon Bolivar, who was speaking about the unity of Latin America. In his last public announcement addressed to people of the territories, on December 10, 1830, he summoned union. He said, “My last wish is for the motherlands happiness. If my death contributes to stop the parties and consolidate the union, I will calmly go down into my grave.” Because he wasn't worried about political parties, but about divisions within his motherland. That same year, he said something else that I think it powerful too. He said, “Country fellowmen, women, listen to my last voice as I finish

my political career. On behalf of Colombia [the Grand Colombia] I implore you to remain united so that you do not become the killer of the motherland and your own executioner.”

We hear those words too, from here in Vancouver, Canada, as they do in Venezuela, in their united fight to defend the Bolivarian Revolution. For us in Canada that means that we do whatever we can to build a broad solidarity movement. We bring university students, workers, church groups, many of which are represented in this room but could be taken much further to get them to understand, and get them to know more about the Bolivarian Revolution, for the great gains that it has made for people on important issues, especially during this time of economic crisis, housing, food, basic human rights. We have a common goal, to defend the Bolivarian Revolution, we have a common enemy as well, imperialism, whether from the giant U.S. government apparatus that works to destabilize and destroy the revolution every day to here in Canada where we have to hold the government accountable for its relationship with Venezuela and its attempts to also contribute to the destabilization there, including the funding of right-wing groups through Canadian organizations and apparatus.

Whatever the opposition ends up doing when it sits in Parliament on January 5, we



know what we have to do. We have to fight where we are. Whether it is in Canada, the U.K. or wherever else we may call home. We have to appeal to everyone and fight with everything that we have and that is what I ask people here to do today. Join us in this important fight to defend the Bolivarian Revolution of Venezuela.

Follow Alison Bodine on Twitter:  
@Alisoncolette



## Fire This Time Organizes Successful Actions in Solidarity with the Bolivarian Revolution of Venezuela!

By Alison Bodine

From December 4-6, 2015 the streets of Vancouver, Canada were introduced to the colourful tri-colours of the Venezuelan flag as supporters of the Bolivarian revolution took to the streets to educate and mobilize people about the revolution in Venezuela and the upcoming December 6, 2015 elections. These Vancouver actions were part of the International Days of Action called by the newly formed Cuba and Venezuela Solidarity Committee, based in the United States. Also during these days coordinated actions in solidarity with Venezuela were held in Toronto, Canada and San Francisco, New York City, Washington DC, Los Angeles and New Haven, United States.

Actions in Vancouver began with a free public community forum held on Friday December 4th. The Forum was called “Revolutionary Venezuela Advances Social Equality: What is at Stake in the Upcoming Elections.” Featured speakers included Dr. Francisco Dominguez, head of the Centre for Brazilian and Latin American Studies in the Middlesex University (London, U.K) and founding member and secretary of the Venezuela Solidarity Campaign in the U.K, speaking via videoconference;

Alejandro Calzadilla, Venezuelan organizer with the Hugo Chavez People’s Defence Front, anthropologist and researcher; Gloria La Riva, organizer, organizer with the Cuba & Venezuela Solidarity Committee, speaking via videoconference from the United States and Alison

Bodine, Editorial Board member of Fire This Time Newspaper, coordinator of Fire This Time’s Venezuela solidarity work and Chair of Vancouver’s antiwar coalition Mobilization Against War and Occupation (MAWO). The dynamic forum brought out long-time supporters of the Bolivarian Revolution as well as people new to Venezuela, which resulted in a lively and educational discussion.

Sunday December 6th was an entire day of activities in solidarity with Venezuela, beginning with a picket action at the U.S. Consulate in downtown Vancouver where supporters of the Bolivarian Revolution raised their voices high chanting “Hands Off Venezuela!” and demanding an end to U.S. and imperialist intervention in Venezuela. From the U.S. Consulate, the demonstration marched up the street to the Vancouver Art Gallery and set-up a table with information about imperialist intervention in Venezuela and the great gains made by poor and oppressed people there.

After the picket and info tabling, everyone headed together to a local cafe to watch the election results come in from TeleSUR on the big screen. The day concluded with an energetic discussion that began the minute that Maduro’s speech on the election results concluded.

Fire This Time’s solidarity organizing for Venezuela continued throughout the month. On December 17, Fire This Time organized a public forum called “Elections Aftermath: Revolution and Counter Revolution in Venezuela,” which also featured Francisco Dominguez, Alejandro Calzadilla, Gloria la Riva and Alison Bodine.

Today Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro and the Bolivarian Revolution need our support more than ever. Fire This Time invites you to get involved and active in solidarity with Venezuela and join us in building a broader and more united solidarity movement. The next Fire This Time action is a picket at the U.S. Consulate (1075 West Pender, Downtown Vancouver) from 4-5 pm on January 5, 2016, the day that the super-majority right-wing National Assembly meets for the first time. This will be followed by info tabling and petitioning at the Vancouver Art Gallery from 5-6pm.



## ***Fidel's message to President Nicolás Maduro***

The millions of children and youth who today attend the largest and most modern system of public schools in the world are Venezuelan. More can be said about the country's network of medical care centers and the attention paid to the health of its people, brave but poor as a result of centuries of plunder by

Spanish colonialism, and later by huge transnationals, which for more than 100 years extracted from its entrails the best of the immense oil reserves nature bestowed on this country.

History also bears witness that workers exist, and make possible the enjoyment of nutritious food, medicine, education, security, housing and the world's solidarity. You could ask the oligarchy, if you like: Do you know all of this?

Cuban revolutionaries – just a few miles from the United States, which always dreamed of taking possession of Cuba to make it a hybrid casino-brothel, as a way of life for the children of José Martí – will never renounce their full independence or respect for their dignity.

I am sure that human life on Earth can only be preserved with peace among all peoples of the Earth, and acknowledgement of the right to make the planet's natural resources common property, as well as

the sciences and technologies created by human beings to benefit all of its inhabitants. If humanity continues along the path of exploitation and the plunder of its resources by transnationals and imperialist banks, the representatives of states meeting in Paris, will draw the relevant conclusions.

Security does not exist today for anyone. There are nine states which possess nuclear weapons. One of them, the United States, dropped two bombs which killed hundreds of thousands of people in just three days, and caused physical and psychological harm to millions of defenseless people.

The People's Republic of China and Russia know the world's problems much better than the United States, because they were obliged to endure the terrible wars imposed on them by fascism's blind egoism. I do not doubt that, given their historical traditions and their own revolutionary experience, they will make the greatest effort to avoid a war and contribute to the peaceful development of Venezuela, Latin America, Asia and Africa.

Fraternally,

Fidel Castro Ruz

December 10, 2015

Dear Nicolás:

I share the unanimous opinion of those who have congratulated you for your brilliant, valiant speech on the night of December 6, as soon as the election's outcome was announced.

In world history, the highest level of political glory which a revolutionary can reach, is that of the illustrious Venezuelan combatant, Liberator of America, Simón Bolívar, whose name now belongs not only to this sister country, but to all peoples of Latin America.

Another Venezuelan official of honorable legacy, Hugo Chávez, understood and admired him and struggled for his ideas until the last moment of his life. As a boy, attending elementary school in the country where the poor children of Bolívar were obliged to work to help support their families, he developed the spirit in which the Liberator of America was forged.

## ***Raúl's message to President Nicolás Maduro***

December 7, 2015

Dear Maduro:

I followed, minute by minute, the extraordinary battle that you have fought and listened to your words with admiration.

I am sure there are new victories to come for the Bolivarian and Chavista Revolution under your leadership. We will always be with you.

An embrace

Raúl Castro Ruz



**\* EN ESPAÑOL \***

## **Mensaje de Fidel a Nicolás Maduro**



Diciembre 10 de 2015

Querido Nicolás:

Me uno a la opinión unánime de los que te han felicitado por tu brillante y valiente discurso la noche del 6 de diciembre, apenas se conoció el veredicto de las urnas.

En la historia del mundo, el más alto nivel de gloria política que podía alcanzar un revolucionario correspondió al ilustre combatiente venezolano y Libertador de América, Simón Bolívar, cuyo nombre no pertenece ya solo a ese hermano país, sino a todos los pueblos de América Latina.

Otro oficial venezolano de pura estirpe, Hugo Chávez, lo comprendió, admiró y luchó por sus ideas hasta el último minuto de su vida. Desde niño, cuando asistía a la escuela primaria, en la patria donde los herederos pobres de Bolívar tenían también que trabajar para ayudar al sustento familiar, desarrolló el espíritu en que se forjó el Libertador de América.

Los millones de niños y jóvenes que hoy asisten a la mayor y más moderna cadena de escuelas públicas en el mundo son los de Venezuela. Otro tanto puede decirse de su red de centros de asistencia médica y atención a la salud de un pueblo valiente, pero empobrecido a causa de siglos de saqueo por parte de la metrópoli española, y más tarde por las grandes transnacionales que extrajeron de sus entrañas, durante más de cien años, lo mejor del inmenso caudal de petróleo con que la naturaleza dotó a ese país.

La historia debe dejar también constancia de que los trabajadores existen y son los que hacen posible el disfrute de los alimentos más nutritivos, las medicinas, la educación, la seguridad, la vivienda y la solidaridad del mundo. Pueden también, si lo desean, preguntarle a la oligarquía: ¿saben todo eso?

Los revolucionarios cubanos —a pocas millas de Estados Unidos, que siempre soñó con apoderarse de Cuba para convertirla en un híbrido de casino con prostíbulo, como modo de vida para los hijos de José Martí— no renunciarán jamás a su plena independencia y al respeto total de su dignidad. Estoy seguro de que solo con la paz para todos los pueblos de la Tierra y el derecho a convertir en propiedad común los recursos naturales del planeta, así como las ciencias y tecnologías creadas por el ser humano para beneficio de todos sus

habitantes, se podrá preservar la vida humana en la Tierra. Si la humanidad prosigue su camino por los senderos de la explotación y continúa el saqueo de sus recursos por las transnacionales y los bancos imperialistas, los representantes de los Estados que se reunieron en París, sacarán las conclusiones pertinentes.

La seguridad no existe hoy ya para nadie. Son nueve los Estados que cuentan con armas nucleares, uno de ellos, Estados Unidos, lanzó dos bombas que mataron a cientos de miles de personas en solo tres días, y causaron daños físicos y psíquicos a millones de personas indefensas.

La República Popular China y Rusia conocen mucho mejor que Estados Unidos los problemas del mundo, porque tuvieron que soportar las terribles guerras que les impuso el egoísmo ciego del fascismo. No albergo dudas que por su tradición histórica y su propia experiencia revolucionaria harán el máximo esfuerzo por evitar una guerra y contribuir al desarrollo pacífico de Venezuela, América Latina, Asia y África.

Fraternalmente,

Fidel Castro Ruz

## **Raúl a Maduro: “Estaremos siempre junto a ustedes”**



7 diciembre 2015

Estimado Maduro:

He seguido, minuto a minuto, la extraordinaria batalla que han dado y escuché con admiración tus palabras.

Estoy seguro de que vendrán nuevas victorias de la Revolución Bolivariana y Chavista bajo tu dirección. Estaremos siempre junto a ustedes.

Un abrazo

Raúl Castro Ruz

# Venezuelan Election Results: The Electoral System and Democracy

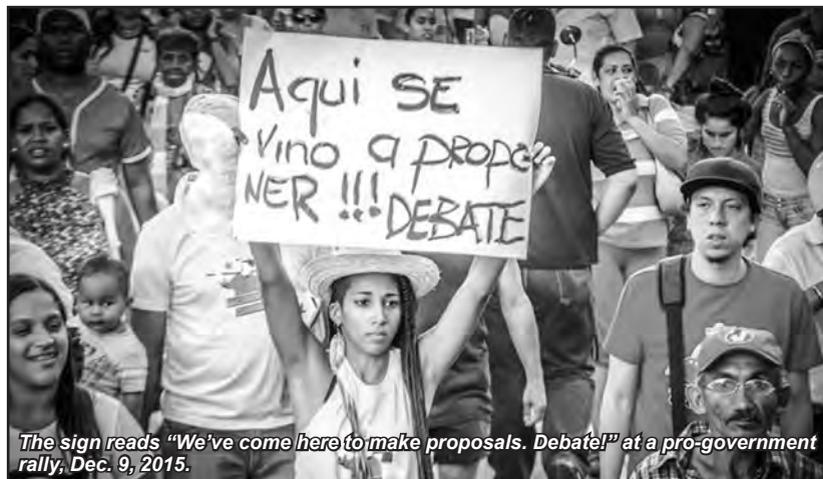
By Arnold August\*

The December 6, 2015 election resulted in a clear victory of the opposition over the Bolivarian alliance led by the Partido Socialista Unido de Venezuela (PSUV). The opposition won 112 seats, obtaining votes from 67.7% of the approximately 74% of the electorate who voted. The Bolivarian coalition won 55 seats and garnered 42% of the votes. This provides the opposition with one more seat than the minimum 111 needed to be declared a full majority. The 112-seat block holds 20 seats more than a simple majority. This status provides the opposition with the control of the unicameral National Assembly.

By obtaining two-thirds of the National Assembly (NA), the opposition may approve organic laws, propose reforms and make constitutional amendments, to replace members of the Supreme Tribunal of Justice, the National Electoral Board and other public authorities, but only with the approval of other legal bodies. The NA, to be installed in January 2016, must comply with its powers already enshrined in the Constitution. The system of Venezuela is not parliamentary, but mixed, as there are checks and balances between the five branches of government. The Assembly cannot remove other powers, even with the backing of a two-thirds majority, if there is not a previous ruling by the Supreme Tribunal of Justice, from the Citizens' Power or the authority established for each case. Nor can the NA legislate against the principle known as improving human rights, which states that the rights are improved or

left untouched, but never removed or limited.

This is the second time in the 20 elections held since the 1998 election of Hugo Chávez that the Chavista forces have lost. There was peaceful voting at the polls on December 6. This was followed by the results and the immediate acceptance of them by Nicolás Maduro. The respect for the results was never in doubt. What does this show? It indicates once again that the Venezuelan electoral system is not only fair but one of the best in the world. It provides proof for the world to view the electoral system as being solid and transparent. In this sense, it is a so-called "victory"; it is, however, a pyrrhic one.



This is because, it seems, one cannot declare that it was victory for democracy. The electoral system as mainly a legal process is one thing, while the concept of democracy is something else. Democracy cannot be assessed in the abstract. Democracy in the Venezuelan context means the political power of the people in a Venezuela that is sovereign and independent in the face of US imperialist attempts to gain control of the country of Bolívar once again. Who and what forces represent this people's political



power? It is the political alliance led by the PSUV. Most importantly, people's power springs from the concept that political power resides in the hands of the people as enshrined in the Constitution: "Sovereignty resides untransferably in the people [cannot be transferred], who exercise it directly in the manner provided for in this Constitution and in the law, and indirectly, by suffrage, through the organs exercising Public Power. The organs of the State emanate from and are subject to the sovereignty of the people" (article 5). Thus, the situation is very complex both for the opposition and the Bolivarian revolutionary forces.

Taking this into account, democracy today is based on the approximately 42% of the electorate. It voted, in general, to continue the Bolivarian Revolution. Moreover, voting day is for the Bolivarian force just one day in their daily ongoing struggle for their social, economic, cultural and political rights for the poor and others. Voting day is just a part of the participatory democracy that Venezuelan leaders from Chávez to Maduro have been striving to develop. In fact, it is successful to the extent that the new experiments in participatory democracy in Venezuela constitute a basis for its further development, even since December 6. This is so despite the shortcomings the new situation has to face. It still offers lessons to other countries as well.

However, this force in favour of people's power or democracy lost to those who seek to turn the clock back on recent Venezuelan history since December 1998. As such, it was a major defeat for democracy. The opposition is fiercely

against the Bolivarian Revolution and in favour of the Venezuelan oligarchy and further US penetration and control. This is in flagrant violation of democracy. Yet, the opposition easily won.

Nevertheless, the democratic force of millions of Venezuelan revolutionaries has become, and is today, a material force. Under certain conditions, consciousness can be converted into a material force. It does not consist merely of ideas. Even though its numbers have drastically fallen, it is still a solid force despite being the minority. Many of those inside and outside of Venezuela who support the Bolivarian Revolution do not think very highly of those among the most disadvantaged sections of the society who voted for the opposition. This sentiment is understandable and justified.

Although December 6 represents a serious downswing, it challenges the revolutionary forces to further innovate and improve the notion that sovereignty resides in the people and cannot be transferred. Its first task is to resist all attempts to roll back the gains of their revolution, as Maduro has pointed out. As for those who voted for the opposition, but should not have, they can also learn by the positive example of the democracy in motion in the streets, neighbourhoods, workplaces and educational institutes. This is bound to contrast with their experience alongside the opposition forces that now control the National Assembly.

Compared to this compact material force, based on a clear ideology tempered in battle since 1998, what does the opposition represent today? It is a mixed

relief, for example, from the seven-hour lineups to obtain necessities at increasingly higher prices.

This opportunist electoral alliance is no match in the long run for the forces of the Bolivarian Revolution. It has a huge responsibility at this time. There is, of course, the domestic situation. However, December 6 is also a direct challenge to maintaining, let alone further developing, the regional integration of Latin America and the Caribbean, one of the greatest legacies of Hugo Chávez. It is also a threat to international cooperation such as demonstrated by PetroCaribe, which is based on the use of the oil industry for the people of Venezuela and neighbouring countries. Given this, the results also defy the new developing multipolar world in resistance to the unipolar one led by the



*Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro speaks to supporters in Caracas, Dec. 9, 2015.*

However, there is the other side of the coin. While important sections at the base were duped by the media war against the Chavistas, those who were not stood up very strongly and resisted the media terrorism. This highlights that those millions of Venezuelans, while now a minority, should be considered more solid than ever. They have to be appreciated more now than before December 6. Their December 6 option represents a heroic resistance to the all those Venezuelan and international forces that targeted the Bolivarian Revolution in an attempt to bury it. The revolution is not dead. December 6 is not even a nail in the coffin of the revolution.

The Bolivarian Revolution as the bearer of democracy in Venezuela is a democracy in motion. It has its ups and downs.

bag of different outlooks and classes. This shaky coalition is based first and foremost on the determined efforts of the oligarchy and their ideology, which revolves around capitalism and dependence on the US. This is relatively solid and will not change significantly until they are eventually overthrown by the further development of the Bolivarian Revolution.

On the other hand, the forces from the base that adhered so massively for the first time to the oligarchy on December 6 did so for a variety of reasons. They mainly stem from the economic war and its accompanying media war led by the US and its allies in Venezuela. These forces probably did not all vote to “punish” the Maduro government. Rather, many were animated by a general dissatisfaction resulting from the economic war. This materialized in a vague hope of seeking

US.

Can the Bolivarian Revolution successfully face up to these momentous domestic and international challenges? In the long run, yes. Seventeen years is a relatively short period in a revolution that is continuously developing. One cannot underestimate the Venezuelan base. After all, this incipient democracy in motion was largely responsible for defeating the 2002 US-inspired coup d'état against Hugo Chávez. He was brought back to power and democracy was reinstated in the main by the masses in the street.

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# Venezuelan Election: One Step Backward, But We Will Fight Forward!



Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro casts his ballot for the Venezuelan elections, Dec. 6, 2015.

By Francisco Dominguez\*

In Venezuela's December 6 election, the right-wing opposition coalition MUD won two-thirds of the National Assembly. It got 112 MPs while pro-government candidates (PSUV) won 55 seats. For supporters of Chavismo (a left ideology associated with former president Hugo Chavez) this represents 33 per cent of National Assembly seats but 42 per cent of the popular vote. The opposition secured 56.2 per cent.

Despite the massive national and world campaign to malign the country's electoral system as prone to fraud, and the national electoral authority, the CNE, as the key mechanism of the fraud, the CNE — as it has done on 19 previous occasions — conducted itself impeccably.

With its typical efficiency it gave a full report on time, reporting the victory of the opposition.

Furthermore, President Nicolas Maduro recognised the results without raising any doubts of objections as to their genuineness. Most important of all, he correctly declared that democracy and peace were victorious.

This came after so many catastrophic predictions by the world media and so many US government officials, including presidential hopeful Hillary Clinton, sowed doubts about the cleanliness of Bolivarian Venezuela's election system but also, crucially, the democratic nature of

changes that could substantially affect the composition of the CNE, Supreme Court, existing constitutional principles and laws and a great deal more. It could organise a recall referendum to oust President Maduro in 2016.

Already Fedecamaras, Venezuela's CBI, has formally requested the MUD parliamentary majority leadership to repeal the highly progressive labour and fair pricing laws, both which benefit the poor. The latter protects the poorest against the ravages of the economic war the country has been subjected to for at least five years.

The size of the defeat is a reflection of



The Bolivarian Government approves 30 thousand special pensions and 5 percent of the homes of the Great Mission Housing Venezuela for people with disabilities, Dec. 15, 2015.

Chavismo. Many a media commentator, writer and media hack knowingly told lies to demonise the Maduro's government.

With its majority the right wing can now introduce gigantic constitutional

the enormous discontent of ordinary Venezuelans with the deliberately created shortages of basic necessities, especially foodstuffs, the long queues they have had to endure for at least five years now, resulting from well-organised hoarding



Venezuelan opposition set public buildings on fire located in the Altamira residential area, 2014,

and massive contraband, massive currency speculation and exorbitant levels of inflation that bit into their standard of living.

They were also fed up with inefficiencies in the delivery of social programmes and the day-to-day running of the administration at all levels. An additional blow was the US development of fracking that led to a drastic plummeting of oil prices, thus denying the Maduro government the wherewithal to address the consequences of the economic war — of which fracking was one more component. On December 6 Venezuelans punished the Maduro government for all of these ills. Paid TV



The President of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, Nicolas Maduro joins CANTV workers who have marched through Caracas in support of the Bolivarian Government, Dec. 15, 2015,



Venezuelans line up outside a supermarket to purchase goods such as toilet paper.

opposition propaganda stated: “The best electoral propaganda for the opposition are the existing queues.”

The opposition gained 343,000 votes last week. By contrast the government lost nearly two million votes. As Venezuelan pollster Oscar Schemel aptly put it: “It

was a vote for punishment, not a vote in favour of the opposition.”

Paradoxically, these two million Venezuelans have given the MUD, the option they mostly refused to vote for, a huge constitutional

power that the right will use to dismantle the social programmes they felt Maduro was unable to do something about.

For Maduro and his government, it was the most difficult of predicaments. Yet the government was able to maintain 43 per cent of the popular vote. The opposition’s

inability to offer an attractive alternative to fed-up Chavistas offers possibilities of recovery but it will also be necessary to mount broad defence campaigns against the unavoidable attacks to people’s rights that will come from the National Assembly majority.

Those who planned and carried out the economic war aimed at exactly that. As in Allende’s Chile, they sought to erode popular support for the government so as to oust it. The PSUV has entered an intense period of reflection, discussion

and repair with an upcoming emergency national conference to devise a strategy to face this dramatic challenge.

Chavismo has the government, the majority of governorships (20 out of 23), plus 76 per cent of the country’s mayoralties. This is not the end of Bolivarianism in Venezuela, even though it faces an externally funded and externally led offensive which represents a mortal threat.

We cannot allow the ghost of Chile 1973 and Nicaragua 1990 to fall on Bolivarian Venezuela. We must redouble our solidarity efforts.

*\*Francisco Dominguez is the secretary of Venezuela Solidarity Campaign (VCS) UK*

<http://www.venezuelasolidarity.co.uk/>

# Socialism & Revolution in Venezuela

## Party for Socialism and Liberation Statement on Venezuelan Election

[www.pslweb.org](http://www.pslweb.org)

The outcome of the December 6, 2015, National Assembly elections in Venezuela is a major victory for the right-wing forces of counter-revolution and U.S. imperialism, and a severe blow to the governing United Socialist Party of Venezuela (PSUV) and the Left in Latin America.

But it is *not* a historic defeat of the Left in the sense of the 1973 Pinochet/CIA coup in Chile or Hitler's 1933 rise to power in Germany. In those and other counter-revolutions, the communist and socialist parties, labor unions and all progressive forces were crushed.

Despite its electoral defeat – in the midst of a severe economic crisis — the PSUV retains a strong mass base, the presidency and other important government positions on both national and state levels, and considerable support in the armed forces.

*[Since this article was initially published, the opposition coalition, the “Democratic United Roundtable” (MUD), has won 109 of 167 seats in the National Assembly to 55 for the PSUV. Along with three Indigenous legislators who are aligned with the right wing, this secures the opposition a two-thirds majority, which gives them additional legislative powers.]*

More than 50 national and regional parties belong to the MUD – including several with “socialism” or “green” in their names — but it is dominated by the COPEI (Christian democrats) and Acción Democrática (social democrats), the two historically dominant parties of the Venezuelan capitalist and upper middle classes. The MUD leaders have made it clear that they intend to overturn many of the social gains of the Bolivarian Revolution.

If the MUD wins at least 111 seats, it would be in a position to re-write the progressive Constitution approved by more than 78 percent of voters in 1999, and push for a referendum in 2016 to remove President Nicolás Maduro of the PSUV from office.



Maduro succeeded Hugo Chávez as president in 2013, following the late leader's tragic death. Chávez first took office in 1999 and was the initiator of the Bolivarian Revolution that dramatically improved life for millions of poor people inside the country and elevated the anti-imperialist struggle in Latin America.

In his speech following the December 6 election, Maduro pledged to continue the struggle. “The opposition hasn't won, a counterrevolution has won . . . We have lost a battle today but the fight for a new socialism has barely begun,” said Maduro. “We see this as a slap to wake us up to act . . . We lost a battle, but the struggle for socialism and a new society begins now . . . It is time for a rebirth.”

Diosdado Cabello, president of the National Assembly, and First Vice-president of PSUV, said in statement:

“Pain and sorrow was losing our Eternal Commander [Chávez]. Losing the election was simply a stumble. We must learn from the errors and move forward . . . In difficult times we raise the flags of Bolívar and Chavez to learn from them. We are unconquerable Bolivarians and Chavistas.”

In a message to Maduro, Cuban President

Raúl Castro wrote, “I am sure there are new victories to come for the Bolivarian and Chavista Revolution under your leadership. We will always be with you.”

### The Bolivarian Revolution and its impact

The outcome of the struggle in Venezuela has great importance for all of Latin America, which is why the U.S., long the dominant power in the region, has been pulling out all stops in its campaign to bring down the PSUV government.

In 2004, Chavez and Cuban President Fidel Castro announced the launching of the Bolivarian Alliance for Latin America, which promoted coordination in economy, social development, culture, science and more between their two countries. In the years that followed, Bolivia, Ecuador, Nicaragua and several of the Caribbean island states joined. Governments oriented toward independent development in Latin America were elected in Brazil, Argentina and more.

These developments were viewed in Washington as a dire threat to U.S. hegemony over the region. The Obama administration has worked long and hard to undermine progressive and socialist governments and the Left in general

across the region. The U.S. has supported the recent election of the right-wing, pro-imperialist Macri in Argentina — after months of destabilizing campaigns which weakened President Cristina Fernández’s presidency — and the move to impeach Brazilian president Dilma Rousseff of the Workers Party in Brazil as part of this effort.

The State Department, the so-called National Endowment for Democracy and other U.S. agencies have sent tens of millions of dollars and other forms of assistance to build up and organize the opposition in Venezuela. The U.S. has also imposed economic sanctions that have exacerbated the economic crisis in the country.

Venezuela has the largest-known oil reserves of any country in the world, and oil accounts for 95 percent of the country’s exports. Before Chávez and the Bolivarian Revolution, U.S. and British oil companies reaped enormous profits with minimal royalties paid to Venezuela. Meanwhile, 80 percent of the people lived in poverty.

That all changed under the Bolivarian revolutionary government. Oil revenues were used to fund a vast array of social program, including nutrition, housing, healthcare, employment, education, literacy, childcare and more. Extreme poverty was reduced from 21 percent to 5 percent.

The drastic drop in world oil prices from over \$130 to under \$40 per barrel, something over which the government had no control, was a fundamental cause of Venezuela’s economic crisis and soaring inflation. Hardest hit were the poor and recently poor who had been the main beneficiaries and supporters of the Bolivarian revolutionary process, causing significant demoralization and demobilization among the Chavista base.

Another key factor in the inflationary crisis was the hoarding of consumer goods, massive currency theft and flight of capital engaged in by the biggest corporate enterprises in the country.

### **Socialism and revolution in Venezuela**

The capitalist media and politicians in the U.S. commonly and falsely refer to Maduro, as they did to Chavez before him, as a “dictator,” despite the fact that this was the 20<sup>th</sup> national election – counting presidential, legislative, constitutional and referendum elections — in the country in the past 17 years. Most of the media

remains in the hands of the right-wing, and played a key role in the MUD victory.

In fact, what is most needed in Venezuela is the rule of the working class; in Marxist terms, the dictatorship of the proletariat. In Venezuela, the progressive and pro-socialist forces of Chavismo hold the reins of government and have a strong influence in the military, but the power of the Venezuelan capitalist class has not been defeated. There is a kind of dual power in the country, two competing centers of power that represent opposing class interests.

Contrary to capitalist propaganda, the dictatorship of the proletariat — or to put it in another way, workers’ democracy — is the most democratic form of class rule because it represents the interests of the vast majority of society. Here in the supposedly “democratic” USA, we live under the dictatorship of the big capitalists — a tiny minority — who own all the productive wealth and decide what to do with it in their interests, not ours. Accompanying their economic power is an increasingly repressive state and mass incarceration.

The Bolivarian Revolution has been a great step forward for the people of Venezuela, Cuba and all of Latin America. The leaders have announced their intention to build a socialist society. We fully support them.

But the only way that the working class can actually take power is through a socialist revolution that “expropriates the expropriators” – that seizes the factories, banks, natural resources, means of distribution, and so on, most of which is in the hands of a tiny minority, the capitalist class. Such a revolution would break up the old state apparatus and fully consolidate power. A thoroughgoing socialist revolution is the only way that the productive wealth of society can be used to meet the needs of the people rather than enriching the few.

The leadership of the Bolivarian Revolution has had to function under the real conditions at hand. They have made great advances and contributions. It seems clear that neither Maduro, nor Chavez before him, believed that the requisite conditions had yet come into existence for carrying out such a revolution.

A socialist revolution cannot take place without society entering into a revolutionary situation or crisis, and revolutionary crises cannot be wished into being. They occur outside the control of either the ruling class or revolutionaries.

The Russian revolutionary leader Lenin described the conditions that bring about a revolutionary situation in a famous 1915 pamphlet, “The Collapse of the Second International.”

“(1) When it is impossible for the ruling classes to maintain their rule without any change; when there is a crisis, in one form or another, among the “upper classes,” a crisis in the policy of the ruling class, leading to a fissure through which the discontent and indignation of the oppressed classes burst forth. For a revolution to take place, it is usually insufficient for “the lower classes not to want” to live in the old way; it is also necessary that “the upper classes should be unable” to live in the old way; (2) When the suffering and want of the oppressed classes have grown more acute than usual; (3) when, as a consequence of the above causes, there is a considerable increase in the activity of the masses...”

There have been many revolutionary situations in history that did not result in a socialist revolution succeeding, but there are no instances of such a revolution taking place where societies have not entered into an acute crisis.

“It is not every revolutionary situation that gives rise to a revolution; revolution arises only out of a situation in which the above-mentioned objective changes are accompanied by a subjective change,” Lenin wrote, “namely, the ability of the revolutionary *class* to take revolutionary mass action *strong* enough to break (or dislocate) the old government, which never, not even in a period of crisis, “falls,” if it is not toppled over.”

It is entirely possible that in the coming period the newly ascendant right-wing — which includes fascist elements — could, in its rabid desire to dismantle the Bolivarian Revolution, over-reach and engender a mass militant response. It would not be the first time in history that the “lash of the counter-revolution” drove a revolution forward.

The struggle over the future of Venezuela is now entering a new and entirely unpredictable phase, the outcome of which will be of tremendous importance for Venezuela, Latin America and the world. All those who stand for revolutionary internationalism must stand in solidarity with the Venezuelan revolutionaries at this critical time.

"We are realists... we dream the impossible" - Che



# Fire This Time!

## A Fundraising Appeal! \$20,000 Goal - A Great Success! Help us get to \$25,000 by February 1!

October 15, 2015 to February 1st, 2016

Dear Fire This Time Reader,

We are very happy to announce that our fundraising goal of \$20,000 by January 15, 2016 has already been exceeded, with \$20,065 pledged as of December 27, 2015. We are truly humbled by the generous response of our readers, and would like to thank everyone who has pledged and contributed so far! The willingness of our supporters to contribute their hard-earned money to make printing this paper possible further strengthens our belief that the Fire This Time Newspaper is valuable and important to our readers. With increased support comes increased possibilities, and the potential to extend the distribution of the Fire This Time Newspaper, which is currently distributed monthly throughout British Columbia, to some further provinces as well as to be mailed internationally. After this encouraging support, we are extending the deadline in order to finance not only the tremendous costs involved in printing but also growing our distribution and international mailing. So we have expanded our fundraising campaign to \$25,000 by February 1st. With the increased funds, we will be able to amplify our distribution and ensure that the newspaper gets into the hands of new readers beyond BC, both nationally and internationally!

*For the last thirteen years, Fire This Time has refused to be silent. We continue to reflect the battle of ideas that is shaping the political, economic and social fabrics of our society. With the perspective that, "Every international fight is local and every local fight is international," we have also continually highlighted the fightback of working and oppressed people across the*

*globe. This has included a special focus on Latin-America, and the revolutionary governments of Cuba, Venezuela and Bolivia.*

IN A WORLD WHERE THE MAINSTREAM MEDIA IS DOMINATED BY A NARROW, CORPORATE AND ANTI-HUMAN AGENDA, FIRE THIS TIME PRESENTS AN ALTERNATIVE THAT IS INTELLECTUALLY HONEST AND PRESENTS FACTS AND ANALYSIS FOR THOSE WHO ARE INTERESTED TO KNOW THE TRUTH AND WANT TO BRING ABOUT A BETTER WORLD.

★ ★ In 2012, FTT Editorial Board member Thomas Davies and 2 contributors were assaulted, handcuffed and dragged into police cars for refusing to stop distributing FTTs at the Metrotown Skytrain Station. Once again we were able to mount a popular public campaign which forced the authorities to write a written statement acknowledging our right to distribute at the stations. We have since returned time and time again

**"The truth must not only be the truth, it must be told." - Fidel**

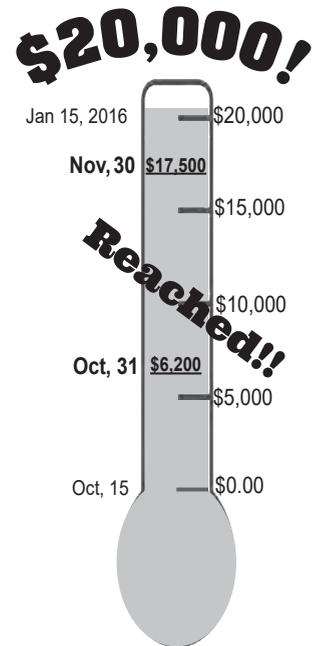
and we refuse to be intimidated.

*But now we really need your help!*

If you agree that the newspaper is unique and important, we ask you to make a financial contribution, no matter how small (or how large!) to enable us to continue printing in the coming year. We have calculated that we will need a minimum of \$25,000 to continue publishing Fire This Time as a free, monthly, social justice newspaper for 12 months in 2016. We have launched a campaign to raise these funds by February 1st, 2016 and we are really counting on your support!

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Thank you for all the support! We look forward to continuing work together to build a better world!

In Solidarity,

Editorial Board of the Fire This Time Newspaper

# “Why can’t you just get over it?”

## The Legacy of Residential Schools in Canada & Truth and Reconciliation Commission

By Tamara Hansen

On December 15, 2015 the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) released its final report into the legacy of Indian Residential Schools in Canada. The TRC began its work in 2008, over 6 years ago. Through many controversies and difficulties, this 6 volume report, which is thousands of pages long, has finally been released. Included within the report are thousands of stories of the deplorable conditions of the residential schools, the abuse, hunger, sickness, fear and powerlessness felt by the six generations of Aboriginal students forced into these schools that were run jointly by churches and the government of Canada from 1883-1996.

Most importantly the TRC has attempted to create a report, which will be accessible to all and not gather dust on some bureaucrat’s desk. According to Mclean’s Magazine, “A centre at the University of Manitoba will become the permanent home for all statements, documents and materials gathered by the commission. It is scheduled to open this summer.” All 6 volumes of the TRC report are going to be audio recorded, for those who have difficulties with reading. Some media also claims that the TRC report may be translated into various Indigenous languages; languages that the residential schools were meant to wipe out.

Making sure this TRC report does not get filed in the dustbin of history will be a real challenge in Canada, which has a long history of commissioning reports that no one ever reads, or if they do read them, the government and other institutions never act on these reports’ most important and fundamental findings.

The TRC report is based on testimony

given by over 6,750 residential school survivors, and even some who worked in the residential schools. However the report goes beyond just documenting history. Also within this report are connections made to today.

Many people across Canada say things like, ‘this was a long time ago, why can’t native people just get over it?’ Well, it wasn’t very long ago. If you think about it, those schools impacted six generations of Aboriginal people, babies being born today in 2016 are still in the first generation since the closing of the last residential school in 1996. If people across Canada were honest with themselves and really learned about the legacy of residential schools, they wouldn’t dare to keep asking this type of question. What if it was your grandma, your aunty and your father? Wouldn’t it be impacting your family? Wouldn’t it be impacting your community? Could you just ‘get over it’? The TRC report attempts to answer this type of question for the disbelieving Canadian public, along with many others. In examining the deep connections between the residential school system and the challenges facing Indigenous people across Canada today, the TRC report answers, in short, that the impact of residential schools is felt in all aspects and areas of First Nations, Inuit and Metis communities across Canada today.



The report is not only about uncovering truths about the legacy of Canada’s Indian Residential Schools. It is also about reconciliation, mostly between the government of Canada and Indigenous people, but also about reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people in Canada. To that effect, the report includes a 94 point action plan. The document “Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada: Calls to Action” is a fascinating document to read and think about what it would mean for the daily lives of Indigenous people in Canada if all 94 points were implemented in a real and sustainable way. Take these 4 examples.

Number 7: “We call upon the federal government to develop with Aboriginal groups a joint strategy to eliminate

*continued on page 37*

# Environmental Degradation: Why is Water so Important?

By Macarena Cataldo

*“Water must be an essential human right because it bears directly on the development of life of all beings on the planet and is a fundamental component in the mobilization of all productive processes.”*  
- Bolivian President Evo Morales.

Water is the essence of life. Without water our planet dies. There would be no plants, animals or human beings. Water is the lifeblood of the planet and it is crucial for all socioeconomic development. About 97.5% of the water on our planet is salty. Only a 2.5% is fresh water and most of that is stored in the polar ice caps, leaving less than 1% available for human consumption.

In 1950, the world's population was approximately 2.5 billion. By 2010 the population rose to 7 billion, and is predicted to rise to 9 billion by 2050. The increase in the population has intensified the use of water sources in different sectors. Agriculture currently accounts for 70% of water consumption worldwide, and is projected to double by 2050. Industry currently accounts for 22 % of the consumption and domestic activities just 8%. Increased agricultural production will increase water consumption. This will generate several tensions, conflicts among users and huge pressure on the environment.

Advanced industrial countries use around 60% of water for industry, versus only 10% in poor countries. The difference in domestic water use is much smaller, at 11% for rich countries and 8% for poor countries. The common domestic uses of water include drinking, food preparation and hygiene.

## Water is a Human Right

On the July 28, 2010 after many years of struggle led by the President of Bolivia Evo Morales, the United Nations General Assembly voted on Bolivia's resolution to declare water and sanitation “a basic human right”, and acknowledged that these are a prerequisite for the realization of other human rights. However, the motion was not universally supported. The US, Canada, Britain, Australia, Israel and 36 other countries abstained.

For the majority of people living in the Advanced industrial countries cities, clean drinking water is only as far away as the



Water activists protest against the increase in water shutoffs in Detroit, USA, 2014.

nearest tap. However, many people living in third world countries and in small, rural and indigenous communities around the world are struggling everyday to have access to clean drinking water. Even though water has been declared a human right, not enough effort had been made to guarantee this right. Almost 900 million people in the world still do not have access to clean drinking water, and more than double that do not have adequate sanitation. 2 million people, mostly children, die every year due to causes that are directly or indirectly related to not having access to clean water. Canada is not the exception. 6 million people are currently at risk for water borne disease in this country, many of them are indigenous people.

## Water and Inequality

Water scarcity is highly related to inequality. Poor and indigenous people are the most affected by water scarcity. According to the Comprehensive Assessment of Water Management in Agriculture, 1.6 billion people face “economic water shortage”. This means they cannot afford sufficient access to water even if there is an adequate source available.

While the average person in Europe and North American consumes between 200 and 600 liters of water a day, 1 in 5 people in developing countries do not have access to sufficient clean water (20 liters a day). In addition, people in the slums of developing countries typically pay 5 to 10 times more per unit of water than people living in rich countries.

Water and sanitation issues also have

gender implications. Women in developing countries are in charge of the water. In most rural areas, women and girls walk long distances to access water from remote locations. On average they must spend 6 hours walking 6 kilometers each day, carrying up to 20 kilograms.

## Who is Responsible for the Water Scarcity Crisis?

Commonly the water scarcity crisis is blamed on poor management, corruption, lack of appropriate institutions, bureaucratic inefficiency and a shortage of investment. However, the most important predator of water and natural resources is the colonial capitalist imperialist system. This system encourages the privatization of natural resources in poor and developing countries. It also facilitates and promotes the overexploitation of these natural resources (such as lakes and rivers) by corporations, converting Mother Earth into an object of their domination. At the same time, corporations prioritize their own economic interests above the wellbeing of the planet, without considering ecological limits set by the water cycle or rising human poverty.

The international imperialist free trade agreements and organizations such as the World Trade Organization (WTO), North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), and Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA) play an important role supporting and defending the economic interests of corporations. There are countless examples in which corporations and capitalism are destroying natural water

*continued on page 37*

## **“By Any Means Necessary...”**



### **MALCOLM X SPEAKS**

*Revolutionary Black Liberation Leader in the U.S.  
1925-1965*

“Lumumba [is] the greatest Black man who ever walked the African continent. He didn't fear anybody. He had those people so scared they had to kill him. They couldn't buy him, they couldn't frighten him, they couldn't reach him. Why, he told the king of Belgium, ‘Man, you may have let us free, you may have given us our independence, but we can never forget these scars.’ The greatest speech — you should take that speech and tack it up over your door. This is what Lumumba said: ‘You aren't giving us anything. Why, can you take back these scars that you put on our bodies? Can you give us back the limbs that you cut off while you were here?’”

*Excerpt from Malcolm X speech at a rally in the Audubon Ballroom June 28, 1964*

“The basic cause of most of the trouble in the Congo right now is the intervention of outsiders — the fighting that is going on over the mineral wealth of the Congo and over the strategic position that the Congo represents on the African continent. And in order to justify it, they are doing it at the expense of the Congolese, by trying to make it appear that the people are savages. And I think, as one of the gentlemen mentioned earlier, if there are savages in the Congo, then there are worse savages in Mississippi, Alabama and New York City, and probably some in Washington, D.C., too.”

*Excerpt from Malcolm X interview on radio station WMCA Nov. 28, 1964*

## **OUR HERITAGE**



**Vilma Espín**  
1930-2007

*Cuban Revolutionary leader, helped found the Cuban Federation of Women (FMC) and was its president up to her death in 2007.*

"Feminists have given the impulse to the process of raising social consciousness of women's oppression.

In particular, I believe in those feminist groups who tie the solution to the oppression of women, to the liberation of women, to the liberation of all the exploited, the oppressed, the discriminated against, which also means taking into consideration social, political and ideological, as well as economic problems, from the perspective of a class, sex and race analysis.

I am convinced that the problems women face cannot be seen in isolation from other social problems, and that they cannot be analyzed outside of their economic context. Nor should they be considered as side issues within a particular social, historical situation. Thus there are no solutions to women's problems unrelated to their context.

It is ridiculous, for example, to think that in an imperialist country a businesswoman and a woman worker can be equal.

Therefore, I can say that I believe in the feminist groups that propose radical social changes in socio-economic structures, as the undeniable basis of the struggle for equality between the sexes. But naturally in today's world the fight for sexual equality in many places is simultaneous with the struggle for revolutionary change.

*Excerpt from an interview with Vilma Espín by Greek journalist Elisabeth Popagay in 1989.*

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The opinions expressed in the newspaper are those of the authors, and do not necessarily represent those of Fire This Time.

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If you would like to help with a donation, please make cheques payable to “Nita Palmer”.

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-ISSN-1712-1817-

# Remembering Patrice Lumumba: A Great African Anti-colonial Revolutionary Leader



Introduction by Alison Bodine

*On January 17, 1961 a great African anti-colonial revolutionary leader was assassinated. This leader was Patrice Lumumba, the first democratically elected Prime Minister of the newly independent Democratic Republic of the Congo. He was only 35 years old when he was brutally beaten, tortured and then shot by a firing squad of U.S. and imperialist backed forces in the Congo.*

*Under the leadership of Patrice Lumumba and Congolese National Movement political party, the Democratic Republic of the Congo won its independence from Belgium on June 30, 1960. This formal declaration did not, however, mean that the people of the Congo had won the struggle against colonization, exploitation and slavery. Patrice Lumumba knew this and was committed to completely overthrowing the yoke of colonization and building a sovereign nation and an economy independent of the old colonial institutions. Because of this, the newly formed government of Patrice Lumumba lasted less than three months before a Western backed coup d'état by Colonel Joseph Mobutu and secessionist leaders from the mineral-rich Congolese province of Katanga. United Nations "peace-keeping" forces stood silently by as Patrice Lumumba was captured and delivered into the hands of those that would eventually murder him. Although the final trigger that put an end to the great life of Patrice Lumumba was pulled by his fellow Congolese, the true killers were U.S., U.K. and Belgian colonial and imperialist forces that saw his murder as a way to put an end to this movement in the Congo for unity, and sovereignty and self-determination.*

*By 1961 the Congo and all of its human and natural resources had long been a prized possession of its colonizers, first as the private and personal property of King Leopold II of Belgium, then as a Belgian colony. Tremendous wealth, in the form of natural resources such as ivory, rubber, diamonds, gold, copper, timber, and palm oil, was stolen from the people of the Congo. With the assassination of Patrice*

*Lumumba and continued Western foreign intervention the Democratic Republic of the Congo was thrown into decades of continued exploitation, foreign intervention, and war that continue until today. In 2014, the Democratic Republic of the Congo ranked second to last on the United Nation's Human Development Index despite the fact that it remains the world's largest producer of cobalt ore, and a major producer of copper and diamonds as well as coltan, a key ingredient in electrical components used in nearly all electronic devices used today.*

*The brutal and criminal assassination of Patrice Lumumba was an attempt to stop growing movements demanding independence and self-determination in Africa and around the world. Their bullets might have silenced Patrice Lumumba the man, but his ideas have lived on and continue to inspire us as we struggle today for social justice and a better world. As we mark the 55<sup>th</sup> anniversary of his murder, we have re-printed below his most famous speech, an anti-colonial declaration of independence and vision that people in Africa and oppressed people around the world continue to strive for today.*

## SPEECH AT THE CEREMONY OF THE PROCLAMATION OF THE CONGO'S INDEPENDENCE

**Patrice Lumumba**  
June 30, 1960

Men and women of the Congo,

Victorious independence fighters,

I salute you in the name of the Congolese Government.

I ask all of you, my friends, who tirelessly fought in our ranks, to mark this June 30, 1960, as an illustrious date that will

be ever engraved in your hearts, a date whose meaning you will proudly explain to your children, so that they in turn might relate to their grandchildren and great-grandchildren the glorious history of our struggle for freedom.

Although this independence of the Congo is being proclaimed today by agreement with Belgium, an amicable country, with which we are on equal terms, no Congolese will ever forget that independence was won in struggle, a persevering and inspired struggle carried on from day to day, a struggle, in which we were undaunted by privation or suffering and stunted neither strength nor blood.

It was filled with tears, fire and blood. We are deeply proud of our struggle, because it was just and noble and indispensable in putting an end to the humiliating bondage forced upon us.

That was our lot for the eighty years of colonial rule and our wounds are too fresh and much too painful to be forgotten.

We have experienced forced labour in exchange for pay that did not allow us to satisfy our hunger, to clothe ourselves, to have decent lodgings or to bring up our children as dearly loved ones.

Morning, noon and night we were subjected to jeers, insults and blows because we were "Negroes". Who will ever forget that the black was addressed as "tu", not because he was a friend, but because the polite "vous" was reserved for the white man?

We have seen our lands seized in the name of ostensibly just laws, which gave recognition only to the right of might.

We have not forgotten that the law was never the same for the white and the black, that it was lenient to the ones, and cruel and inhuman to the others.

We have experienced the atrocious sufferings, being persecuted for political convictions and religious beliefs, and exiled from our native land: our lot was worse than death itself.

We have not forgotten that in the cities the mansions were for the whites and the tumbledown huts for the blacks; that a black was not admitted to the cinemas, restaurants and shops set aside for "Europeans"; that a black travelled in the holds, under the feet of the whites in their luxury cabins.

Who will ever forget the shootings which killed so many of our brothers, or the cells into which were mercilessly thrown those who no longer wished to submit to the regime of injustice, oppression and exploitation used by the colonialists as a tool of their domination?

All that, my brothers, brought us untold suffering.

But we, who were elected by the votes of your representatives, representatives of the people, to guide our native land, we, who have suffered in body and soul from the colonial oppression, we tell you that henceforth all that is finished with.

The Republic of the Congo has been proclaimed and our beloved country's future is now in the hands of its own people.

Brothers, let us commence together a new struggle, a sublime struggle that will lead our country to peace, prosperity and greatness.

Together we shall establish social justice and ensure for every man a fair remuneration for his labour.

We shall show the world what the black man can do when working in liberty, and we shall make the Congo the pride of Africa.

We shall see to it that the lands of our native country truly benefit its children.

We shall revise all the old laws and make

them into new ones that will be just and noble.

We shall stop the persecution of free thought. We shall see to it that all citizens enjoy to the fullest extent the basic freedoms provided for by the Declaration of Human Rights.

We shall eradicate all discrimination, whatever its origin, and we shall ensure for everyone a station in life befitting his human dignity and worthy of his labour and his loyalty to the country.

We shall institute in the country a peace resting not on guns and bayonets but on concord and goodwill.

And in all this, my dear compatriots, we can rely not only on our own enormous forces and immense wealth, but also on the assistance of the numerous foreign states, whose co-operation we shall accept when it is not aimed at imposing upon us an alien policy, but is given in a spirit of friendship.

Even Belgium, which has finally learned the lesson of history and need no longer try to oppose our independence, is prepared to give us its aid and friendship; for that end an agreement has just been signed between our two equal and independent countries. I am sure that this co-operation will benefit both countries. For our part, we shall, while remaining vigilant, try to observe the engagements we have freely made.

Thus, both in the internal and the external spheres, the new Congo being created by my government will be rich, free and prosperous. But to attain our goal without delay, I ask all of you, legislators and citizens of the Congo, to give us all the help you can.

I ask you all to sink your

tribal quarrels: they weaken us and may cause us to be despised abroad.

I ask you all not to shrink from any sacrifice for the sake of ensuring the success of our grand undertaking.

Finally, I ask you unconditionally to respect the life and property of fellow-citizens and foreigners who have settled in our country; if the conduct of these foreigners leaves much to be desired, our Justice will promptly expel them from the territory of the republic; if, on the contrary, their conduct is good, they must be left in peace, for they, too, are working for our country's prosperity.

The Congo's independence is a decisive step towards the liberation of the whole African continent.

Our government, a government of national and popular unity, will serve its country.

I call on all Congolese citizens, men, women and children, to set themselves resolutely to the task of creating a national economy and ensuring our economic independence.

Eternal glory to the fighters for national liberation!

Long live independence and African unity!

Long live the independent and sovereign Congo!



*Patrice Lumumba at the ceremony of the proclamation of the Congo's independence. June 30, 1960*

**“Africa will write its own history...  
a history of glory and dignity”**

**PATRICE  
LUMUMBA**



**WWW.FIRETHISTIME.NET**

By Alison Bodine

"We had to walk for hours under heavy rain without knowing how far we still have to go. Winter is coming but all I can think of right now is to walk to my freedom. I need to escape from war. Me, personally, I don't care about the weather. I just feel sorry for the poor women and their babies that they have to go all through these just for the sake of a better life."- Ahmed, 20, refugee from Afghanistan (The Guardian)

When news agencies look back on 2015, the refugee crisis in Europe will undoubtedly make the list of the top

refugee quoted above, worsening weather and cold temperatures have not deterred hundreds of thousands of refugees from crossing the increasingly dangerous waters of the Mediterranean and continuing their journeys into Northern Europe, where they hope to find safety and a new home. 140,000 refugees made this perilous passage in November alone, only to find that once their feet reach the shores of Greece and Italy, their struggle for basic human rights and dignity in this new land was just beginning.

**The European Response to the Crisis is Not Enough!**

people fleeing poverty in Eastern Europe. According to the Asylum Information Database, even as far back as 2012, there were already an issue with overcrowding in shelters for refugees in Germany, which has continued to intensify in 2015 and meant that refugees are being housed in emergency shelters conditions for an unacceptable amount of time. In the words of Karl Kopp from the German organization Pro Asyl, "The situation is becoming dramatic...If we put people up in undignified conditions then this will have long-term consequences for their health and their ability to integrate in the country."(Associated Press)

## THE NEW ERA OF WAR AND OCCUPATION: REFUGEE CRISIS CAUSED AND CREATED BY IMPERIALIST CRIMINAL WAR AND OCCUPATION



*Refugees attempt to cross border into Hungary*



*Refugees sleep at Gevgelija railway station near Macedonia border*

news stories of the year. On December 22 the International Organization on Migration (IOM) reported that over 1 million people have entered Europe this year, through the various deadly crossings of the Mediterranean Sea. Over 4,000 refugees have needlessly drowned. The vast majority of these refugees looking for somewhere safe to be have come from the bombed out and war torn countries of Syria, Afghanistan and Iraq.

Despite the continuing movement of tens of thousands of refugees every day, stories of the complete human tragedy of the refugee crisis have begun to fade from major media in the last few months. This is regardless of the fact that, with the onset of winter, government action and human sympathy and solidarity for refugees is now more needed than ever.

Like Ahmed, the determined Afghan

The response of European governments to the refugee crisis has continued to fall far behind what is required. For example, at the end of October E.U. and Balkan governments held yet another summit which resulted in a 17-point action plan to address the crisis. Within this plan it was agreed to "increase reception capacity [essentially shelter for refugees] to 30,000 places by the end of the year in Greece. The UN refugee agency will provide rent subsidies and host family programmes for at least 20,000 more people." This number doesn't even represent 40% of all of the refugees that landed in Greece in November.

Conditions for life remain unbelievably difficult even for those refugees who are able to make it to Germany. In all of 2015 Germany has registered over 1 million asylum applicants, which includes people from the Middle East and Africa, as well as

To add even more to the physical and psychological stress that refugees have had to endure, the future for refugees that make it to Germany is far from secure. On December 2, 2015 Angela Merkel, the Chancellor of Germany held a press conference in Berlin with Afghan President Ashraf Ghani where she declared "We will have to deport people to Afghanistan," putting into question the legal status of 128,000 Afghan refugees that have entered Germany in the past year.

Living conditions have also worsened for those refugees that are struggling to make it to the U.K, and are stuck living in deplorable conditions in overcrowded tent camps in the cold rain of Northern France. Doctors of the World, a health organization attempting to provide services to the estimated 6,000 refugees in the Calais camp, has declared the camp

to be a “violation of their human rights, dignity.” This organization has even filed an official complaint against French authorities for their neglect. A writer for the Guardian newspaper described another refugee camp located in Grande-Synthe, France as a “swamp,” where 1500 people are living with zero access to basic water and sanitation facilities.

### Isn't Canada Better?

Although images of the tragedies facing refugees in Europe are fading from the international media spotlight, media in Canada has given special attention to the arrival of the first Syrian refugees in Canada since the new Liberal government took power. It is undoubtedly moving to witness the arrival of Syrian families to Canada as they are welcomed at airports by their families and loved ones or by complete strangers who came to demonstrate the sympathy that people in Canada have for refugees. But these images are not enough to cloud the fact that the response of the government of Canada to this crisis facing humanity has been far too small and a long ways from human.

First of all, let's look at the numbers of Syrian refugees that the government of Canada has agreed to accept. During the 2015 election, the Liberal party put forward the most progressive plan for accepting Syrian refugees of any of the three major political parties in Canada, a promise to bring 25,000 government sponsored refugees to Canada by the end of the year. Since the Liberal government and Prime Minister Trudeau took office that number has decreased, to 10,000 Syrian refugees (notice the absence of the word government sponsored) by the end of 2015 and 25,000 Syrian refugees (still not government sponsored) by the end of February. As is noted these commitments are no longer for government-sponsored refugees, but rather a mix of private and government sponsored refugees.

As of December 26, 2015, 2,413 Syrian refugees have arrived in Canada, meaning that so-far the government of Canada has been able to settle less than 1/4 of its already reduced commitment, which it is unlikely to meet in the last few days left in December. Looking through

the new #WelcomeRefugees website of the government of Canada, there is no information provided that distinguishes the numbers of government sponsored refugees from that of privately sponsored refugees, making any real understanding of how the Liberals are living up to their campaign promise of settling 25,000 government sponsored Syrian refugees very difficult. For a rich and spacious country like Canada, even 25,000 Syrian refugees was a disgracefully small number.

On top of the limiting the number of Syrian refugees settled in Canada, the



Refugees attempt to cross border into Hungary



Child at Al Zaatari refugee camp, Jordan

Liberal government also limited the types of refugees that would be accepted in Canada. Firstly, they had to be refugees already registered with the United Nations or with the government of Turkey, a difficult or even impossible process for refugees that have fled their homes with little to no documentation. Secondly it was announced in November that Canada would only be accepting women, children and complete families as refugees, leaving out single unaccompanied men. This kind of pre-screening is based on the racist and Islamophobic assumption that single-men are more likely to be a

“terrorist threat” to Canada, a notion that has no basis in reality. By applying this restriction, the government of Canada is really attempting to deceive the people of Canada, especially those that have been fooled into thinking that Syrian refugees, or Muslim refugees from any other country are a security threat. The government of Canada considering only what every other capitalist country considers when accepting refugees and other kinds of immigrants, they want to bring the people that are most able to be exploited in Canadian economy.

Also notice that so far I have only discussed refugees from Syria. With all of the media coverage and government policy announcements about Syrian refugees, what about refugees from other countries in the Middle East and Africa similarly destroyed by Western meddling, military intervention and sanctions? Because there have been no official plans announced by the government of Canada regarding non-Syrian refugees, we can only look at what has not been said to understand whether or not the policies of the government towards non-Syrian refugees has changed with the new Liberal government.

As of 2014 Canada ranked 41st in the world in per-capita acceptance of refugees, with 4.2 per hundred thousand people. In 2014, Canada's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) ranked them the 15th largest in the world (International Monetary Fund). By contrast, Lebanon, with a GDP ranking of 84 has the highest per-capita acceptance of refugees in the world, at nearly 1/4 of their total population. Nothing in

the government of Canada's policies has been introduced that will fundamentally change these statistics.

Additionally, there are a number of exclusions and changes to policy that the government of Canada has said will apply to refugees from Syria, but not to other groups of refugees. This includes an immigration loan program that means that 90% of refugees arriving with next to nothing in Canada owe the government up to \$10,000 to cover the costs of their travel to Canada, medical exams, and initial settlement expenses (according

to an Immigration, Refugee and Citizenship Canada report). Incredibly, the government even begins charging interest on these loans if not re-paid in 12 months. The new Liberal government also has a long way to go to reverse the in-human and anti-immigrant policies of the Harper government, including disastrous legislation passed in 2012 that, among other measures, lengthened the detention times for some refugees and severely cut refugee health services like dental work, prosthetics and medication. Not to mention new legislation like the so-called anti-terrorism Bill C-51, now law in Canada, this gives the Canadian state sweeping powers that will especially target immigrants and refugees.

### Who Is Responsible for the Refugee Crisis?

“Just stop the war, we don’t want to go to Europe,” - Masalmeh, young refugee from Syria, speaking with police in Hungary



The words of Masalmeh are short and direct. They also summarize exactly the reason that over one million people have risked their lives and fled for Europe this year. The new era of war and occupation, which began with the U.S.-led invasion of Afghanistan in 2001, has unleashed a war machine that has leveled entire civilizations and made life simply unlivable for 10’s of millions of people in the Middle East and Africa. For over the last decade the reality for people living in Iraq, Afghanistan and Syria has been one of constant violence and destruction at the hands of the U.S. government and their allies, including the government of Canada. People are fleeing their homes at such an unimaginable pace because there is no end in sight to the human disaster of imperialist war and occupation.

This has become increasingly true for

the people of Syria, who have faced an intensified onslaught from imperialist countries, especially the government of France. France, with the support of the U.S., U.K and Germany has increased its bombing campaign in Syria in the name of fighting against the Daesh (also known as ISIS or ISIL) terrorist organization that claimed responsibility for the horrible November 13 terrorist attacks in Paris. All this destruction while Daesh is in fact the direct result of the imperialist war in Iraq, the Western-fueled civil war in Syria and imperialist support for the so-called “moderate” Syrian rebels. What the people of the Middle East and Africa need is self-determination and an end to imperialist meddling, wars and occupations.

### Canada’s Hands Are Not Clean

“I decided life in Afghanistan was too dangerous...I have to protect my children. I have to make sure they survive - that’s my job as a father...We miss our relatives



and our home a lot, we never wanted to leave.” – Javid, 27 years old, refugee from Afghanistan (Al Jazeera)

The government of Canada has also had a role in creating the refugee crisis through their involvement in every imperialist war and occupation since 2001. This includes Canada’s participation in the brutal NATO occupation of Afghanistan, where the government of Canada deployed 40,000 Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) personnel from 2001-2014. Refugees from Afghanistan now represent the third largest group of refugees leaving their entire lives behind to look for safety and security in Europe through the Mediterranean passage.

Also significantly, Canada contributed war planes and bombs to a U.S./France led aerial bombing campaign that completely destroyed Libya in 2011. Today, the chaos

and complete instability in Libya created by imperialist intervention has made it the ideal running ground for human traffickers preying on desperate refugees from across the Middle East and Africa headed for the shores of Italy.

When seen in this light, it is clear that the government of Canada’s promise to settle 25,000 Syrian refugees is a far from justifiable response to the refugee crisis. Given the human and financial resources available to the government of Canada, it was entirely possible to re-settle 50,000 refugees by the end of 2015, and there is no excuse not to settle at least 200,000 refugees in the next year, with full human and legal rights.

### Stop War and Occupation: Not Refugees!

When the clock ticks 12 midnight on December 31, 2015, the refugee crisis that escalated so overwhelmingly in 2015

will not be over. There will still be over 60 million refugees world-wide. Given increasing intervention and meddling by the U.S. government and their allies in the Middle East and Africa, 2016 is sure to be another year in which millions of more people are forced to flee their homes in desperation.

Peace-loving people from all around the world must unite to put an end to this disastrous human crisis. We must educate, organize and take action on the streets, not only to demand that imperialist governments around the world do more to welcome refugee with full human and legal rights, but to put an end to the imperialist wars and occupations that have led to this crisis.

*Follow Alison Bodine on Twitter:  
@Alisoncolette*

# “In prison, the holiday season is grim – but I won’t lose hope.”

By *Chelsea E. Manning\**

Having a birthday around the holidays was never easy and, with every successive year, it felt more and more as if celebrating my birthday got thrown into the December holiday mix as an afterthought.

But now, Decembers are becoming the hardest month of the year to endure.

The most obvious reasons are physical: the temperature drops; here in Kansas, it rains and snows a lot more; the colors outside my window turn from the greens, yellows and blues of summer to the browns, grays and tans of winter, with the occasional white on the rare days that it snows. I spend more time indoors, trying to stay warm and dry. The hills and trees I can see seem still, silent and lifeless.

I feel myself becoming more distant and disconnected as the color leaches from the world outside these walls. The chasm between me and the outside world feels like it’s getting wider and wider, and all I can do is let it happen.

I realize that my friends and family are moving on with their lives even as I’m in an artificially imposed stasis. I don’t go to my friends’ graduation ceremonies, to their engagement parties, to their weddings, to their baby showers or their children’s birthday parties. I miss everything – and what I’m missing gets more routine and middle-aged with each passing year.

The changes that occur as I sit here can raise doubts about my very existence. I have no recent snapshots of myself and no current selfies, just old Facebook photos, grainy trial photos and mugshots to show for the last six years of my life. When everyone is obsessed with Twitter, Instagram, SnapChat and WhatsApp, it begins to feel like I don’t exist in some very real, important way. Living in a society that says “Pics or it didn’t happen”, I wonder if I happened.

I sometimes feel less than empty; I feel non-existent.

Still, I endure. I refuse to give up. I open the mail I receive – which spikes in December, as people send me birthday and then Christmas cards, but I get letters

and well-wishing cards all year – and am happily reminded that I am real and that I do exist for people outside this prison.

And I celebrate, too, this time of year, in my own little way: I make phone calls to family, I write letters, I treat myself with the processed foods and desserts I all but gave up during my gender transition.

This holiday season is the first since I won the right to begin hormone therapy for that gender transition, which I began in February. The anti-androgen and estrogen I take is reflected in my external appearance, finally: I have softer skin, less angular facial features and a fuller figure.

Even though I’m still not allowed to grow my hair to the female standard in prison – a battle I’ll continue to fight with the ACLU in 2016 – I know that my struggles pale in comparison to those faced by many vulnerable queer and transgender people. Despite more mainstream visibility, identification and even celebration of queer and trans people, the reality for many is that they face at least as many, if not more, obstacles as I do in transitioning and living their lives with dignity.

And, however improbably, I have hope this holiday season. With my appeals attorneys, Nancy Hollander and Vince Ward, I expect to submit my first brief to the US army court of criminal appeals next year, in support of my appeal to the 2013 court-martial convictions and sentence.

Whatever happens, it will certainly be a long path. There may well be other Decembers like this one, where I feel at times so far away from everyone and everything. But when faced with bleakness, I won’t give up. And I’ll try to remember all the people who haven’t given up on me.

*\*Private Chelsea Manning is a US soldier sentenced to 35 years in prison for leaking classified US diplomatic cables, videos and documents. Published on the whistleblower site Wikileaks, they exposed US war crimes around the world including mass killings, torture, corruption, and the government’s attempted cover-up of their atrocities. For more info visit: [www.chelseamanning.org](http://www.chelseamanning.org)*

Follow Chelsea Manning on Twitter:  
@xychelsea



# Declaration by Cuban President Raúl Castro

**On the occasion of the first anniversary of the announcements made on December 17, 2014, regarding the decision to reestablish diplomatic relations between Cuba and the United States**



One year has gone by since the simultaneous announcements made on December 17, 2014, by the presidents of Cuba and the United States to reestablish diplomatic relations between both countries and work to improve our relations.

One year ago, on a day like yesterday, as part of the agreements reached to find a solution to issues of interest for both countries, we were able to announce, to the great joy of all of our people, the return to our homeland of Gerardo, Ramón and Antonio, with which we made true the promise made by Fidel who had asserted that our Five Heroes would return.

On that same date, in accordance with our reiterated disposition to hold a respectful dialogue with the Government of the United States, on the basis of sovereign equality, to discuss a wide variety of issues in a reciprocal way, without any detriment to our people's national independence and self-determination, we agreed to take

mutual steps to improve the bilateral atmosphere and move on towards the normalization of relations between the two countries.

It could be said that, since then, we have achieved some results, particularly in the political, diplomatic and cooperation spheres:

- Diplomatic relations were re-established and the embassies in both countries were re-opened. These actions were preceded by the rectification of the unjust designation of Cuba as a State sponsor of terrorism.
- High level meetings and visits have taken place.
- The already existing cooperation in areas of mutual interest, such as aviation safety and security as well as the combat against drug-trafficking, illegal migration, alien smuggling and migration fraud has been expanded. The regular and respectful meetings between

the military commands of Cuba and the United States in the perimeter of the US Naval Base in Guantánamo have continued

- New possibilities for bilateral cooperation have opened up in areas of mutual benefit, such as environmental protection, law enforcement, maritime and port security and health.
- New dialogues have been initiated on bilateral and multilateral topics of interest, such as climate change, mutual compensations, traffic in persons and human rights, this latter being the one on which we have profound differences and about which we are having an exchange on the basis of respect and reciprocity.
- We have signed agreements on environmental protection and the re-establishment of direct postal services.

All of this has been achieved through a professional and respectful dialogue based on equality and reciprocity.

Quite on the contrary, this year we have not made any progress in the solution of those issues which are essential for Cuba to be able to have normal relations with the United States.

Although President Obama has repeatedly stated his opposition to the economic, commercial and financial blockade and has urged Congress to lift it, this policy remains in force. The persecution of Cuba's legitimate financial transactions as well as the extraterritorial impact of the blockade, which causes damages and hardships to our people and is the main obstacle to the development of the Cuban economy, have been tightened.

The steps taken so far by President Obama, although positive, have proved to be limited in scope, which has prevented their implementation. By using his executive prerogatives, the President could expand the scope of the steps that have already been taken and take new steps that would substantially modify the implementation of the blockade.

Despite Cuba's repeated claim for the return of the territory illegally occupied by the Guantánamo Naval Base, the Government of the United States has stated that it has no intention to change the status of that enclave.

The US Government is still implementing programs that are harmful to Cuba's sovereignty, such as the projects aimed at bringing about changes in our political, economic and social order and the illegal radio and television broadcasts, for which they continue to allocate millions of dollars in funds.

A preferential migration policy continues to be applied to Cuban citizens, which is evidenced by the enforcement of the



**Raul meets with all of the newly freed Cuban 5 political prisoners. December 17, 2014.**



**Raising of the flag at the new Cuban Embassy in Washington, DC. July 20, 2015**



**High enthusiasm at May Day rally in Havana despite the rain. May 1, 2015**

wet foot/dry foot policy, the Medical Professional Parole Program and the Cuban Adjustment Act, which encourage an illegal, unsafe, disorderly and irregular migration, foment human smuggling and other related crimes and create problems to other countries.

The Government of Cuba will continue to reiterate that, in order to normalize relations, it is imperative for the US Government to derogate all these policies that date from the past, which affect the Cuban people and nation and are not in tune with the present bilateral context and the will expressed by both countries to re-establish diplomatic relations and develop respectful and cooperative relations between both peoples and governments.

No one should expect that, in order to normalize relations with the United States, Cuba will renounce the principles and ideals for which several generations of Cubans have struggled throughout more than half a century. The right of every State to choose the economic, political and social system it wishes, without any interference whatsoever, should be respected.

The Government of Cuba is fully willing to continue advancing in the construction of a kind of relation with the United States that is different from the one that has existed throughout its prior history, that is based on mutual respect for sovereignty and independence, that is beneficial to both countries and peoples and that is nurtured by the historical, cultural and family links that have existed between Cubans and Americans.

Cuba, in fully exercising its sovereignty and with the majority support of its people, will continue to be engaged in the process of transformations to update its economic and social model, in the interest of moving forward in the development of the country, improving the wellbeing of the people and consolidating the achievements attained by the Socialist Revolution.

Thank you.

# Declaración del Presidente Cubano Raúl Castro

**En relación con el primer aniversario de los anuncios del 17 de diciembre de 2014 sobre la decisión de restablecer las relaciones diplomáticas entre Cuba y EE.UU.**

## \* EN ESPAÑOL \*

Ha transcurrido un año desde los anuncios simultáneos realizados el 17 de diciembre de 2014 por los Presidentes de Cuba y los Estados Unidos, de restablecer las relaciones diplomáticas y trabajar por el mejoramiento de nuestros vínculos.

Un día como ayer, dentro de los acuerdos alcanzados para solucionar temas de interés para ambos países, pudimos anunciar con gran júbilo para todo nuestro pueblo el regreso a la Patria de Gerardo, Ramón y Antonio, con lo que cumplimos la promesa de Fidel de que nuestros Cinco Héroes volverían.

En esa misma fecha, en correspondencia con nuestra reiterada disposición a sostener con el Gobierno de los Estados Unidos un diálogo respetuoso, basado en la igualdad soberana, para tratar los más diversos temas de forma recíproca, sin menoscabo a la independencia nacional y la autodeterminación de nuestro pueblo, acordamos adoptar medidas mutuas para mejorar el clima bilateral y avanzar hacia la normalización de los vínculos entre los dos países.

Desde entonces, se puede afirmar que hemos obtenido algunos resultados, sobre todo en el plano político-diplomático y de la cooperación:

• Se restablecieron las relaciones diplomáticas y se reabrieron las embajadas en ambos países,

lo cual estuvo precedido de la rectificación de la injusta designación de Cuba como Estado patrocinador del terrorismo.

• Se han celebrado dos reuniones entre los Presidentes de ambos países, así como otros encuentros y visitas de alto nivel.

• Se ha expandido la cooperación ya existente en temas de interés mutuo, como la seguridad aérea y de la aviación; y el enfrentamiento al narcotráfico, la emigración ilegal, el tráfico de emigrantes y el fraude migratorio.

• Se han abierto nuevas áreas de cooperación bilateral sobre temas de beneficio común, entre ellas la protección del medio ambiente, la aplicación y el cumplimiento de la ley, la seguridad marítimo-portuaria y la salud.

• Se han iniciado diálogos sobre asuntos de interés bilateral y multilateral, como el cambio climático, las compensaciones mutuas, la trata de personas y los derechos humanos, tema este último en el que tenemos profundas diferencias y estamos sosteniendo intercambios sobre la base del respeto y la reciprocidad.

• Hemos suscrito acuerdos sobre protección del medio ambiente y el restablecimiento del servicio de correo postal directo.

Todo esto se ha logrado mediante un diálogo profesional y respetuoso, basado en la igualdad y la reciprocidad.

Por el contrario, durante este año, no se ha avanzado en la solución de los temas que

para Cuba son esenciales para que haya relaciones normales con los Estados Unidos.

Aunque el Presidente Barack Obama ha reiterado su oposición al bloqueo económico, comercial y financiero y ha llamado al Congreso para que lo levante, esta política sigue en vigor. Se mantienen la persecución financiera a las transacciones legítimas de Cuba y los efectos extraterritoriales del bloqueo, lo que provoca daños y privaciones a nuestro pueblo y es el obstáculo principal para el desarrollo de la economía cubana.

Las medidas adoptadas hasta el momento por el presidente Obama, aunque positivas, han demostrado tener un alcance limitado, lo cual ha impedido su implementación. El Presidente, en uso de sus prerrogativas ejecutivas, puede ampliar el alcance de las medidas ya tomadas y adoptar otras nuevas, que modifiquen sustancialmente la aplicación del bloqueo.

A pesar del reiterado reclamo de Cuba de que se le devuelva el territorio ilegalmente ocupado por la Base Naval en Guantánamo, el Gobierno de los Estados Unidos ha manifestado que no tiene la intención de cambiar el estatus de este enclave.

El Gobierno de los Estados Unidos mantiene programas que son lesivos a la soberanía cubana, como los proyectos dirigidos a promover cambios en nuestro orden político, económico y social, y las transmisiones

*continúa en la página 36*

# One year after Cuba-U.S relations: Lift the Blockade on Cuba!

By *Azza Rojbi*

Before the Cuban revolution, Cuba was governed by a series of dictators imposed by the U.S. government. The Cuban people lived in poverty and famine while the resources of their country were being stolen and plundered by foreign companies. U.S. Companies owned over 50% of Cuba's railways, over 70% of its land and 90% of Cuba's telephone and electricity services.

On January 1, 1959, the Cuban people led by Fidel Castro succeeded in overthrowing the U.S. backed dictator Fulgencio Batista. A new Cuban government was formed to represent the interest of the Cuban people and their right to self-determination. The new revolutionary government kicked out U.S. corporations, nationalized all industries and invested in healthcare, education, development and jobs.

This triumph of the Cuban revolution was a big defeat to the domination of U.S. imperialism in Latin America. That is why ever since then the U.S. government have carried policies of sabotage and aggression against Cuba and imposed a full economic blockade against the island. This cruel blockade has so far cost

the Cuban economy \$1.2 trillion and continue to cause shortages of medicine, food and other necessary supplies to the Cuban people.

## A new era of Cuba-U.S. relation?

On the morning of December 17, 2014 the governments of Cuba and the United States announced the re-establishing of diplomatic relations between the two countries. Around the world people woke up to the historic news of the return of the Cuban 5 Heroes to Cuba, after over 16 years of unjust imprisonment in the United States.

From that time, a number of steps have been taken towards "normalizing" relations. The U.S. was forced to take Cuba off its "State sponsor of terror" list, the Cuban flag flies proudly at the newly re-opened Cuban embassy in Washington DC and we witnessed the loosening of some trade and travel restrictions. While those are positive steps, the U.S. government still maintains

in full force the most outrageous aspects of U.S. aggression towards Cuba, the almost 6 decades Blockade on the island and the U.S. occupation of Guantánamo Bay, Cuba.

This hypocrisy of the U.S. foreign policy toward Cuba was demonstrated again this year. On October 27, 2015, at the United Nations General Assembly, the world voted overwhelmingly, 191 countries to 2, in favor of Cuba's resolution demanding an end to the criminal and illegal blockade of Cuba by the United States. Only the U.S. and Israel voted against the resolution.

Cuba stands firm in the principles it's been defending since the triumph of the revolution and strongly assert that a true normalization between the countries has to be based on the respect of Cuba's sovereignty and self determination.

Vancouver), upon celebrating the historic victory of the freedom of all 5 Cuban Heroes began to reorganize themselves in a new organization to respond to new challenges in defense of Cuba's sovereignty and against the U.S. blockade. With 10 years of experience through protests and actions in defense of the 5 Cuban Heroes, the group decided to join many people and groups around the world in focusing their work on ending the cruel U.S. blockade and demanding the return of Guantánamo Bay to Cuba.

On December 17, 2015, the world marked one year after the establishment of the new Cuba-U.S. diplomatic relations and the historic victory of the freedom of the Cuban 5 Heroes. On the streets of downtown Vancouver chants of "Cuba Si! Bloqueo No!" were heard as FCAB-Vancouver held its 4th monthly picket action in front of the U.S. consulate.

Participants braved the rainy Vancouver weather with their picket signs demanding "End the U.S. blockade on Cuba NOW!" "Return Guantánamo to Cuba NOW!". Local and national Cuba solidarity activist were invited to share some words with participants in between rounds of energetic picketing. This included Sam Heaton from the group Ottawa-Cuba Connections, who shared greetings from Cuba solidarity activists in Ottawa, who also were out in the streets protesting the U.S. blockade on Cuba in front of the U.S. embassy in Ottawa. On that same day, activist with the Table de concertation de solidarité Québec-Cuba took to the streets of Montreal to join their voices

to Vancouver and Ottawa in demanding an end to the inhuman blockade on Cuba by the United States.

Indeed 2015 was a year full of exciting advancements and positive changes but our work is far from over. As we welcome the New Year, we need to continue building the campaign against the U.S. blockade on Cuba locally, nationally and internationally. If you are in Vancouver, Canada please join us for the next monthly picket action of the Friends of Cuba Against the U.S. Blockade (FCAB-Vancouver) on Sunday January 17, 2016 at 4pm in front of the United States Consulate (1075 W. Pender St. in Downtown Vancouver).

**NOW MORE THAN EVER, LIFT THE CRIMINAL BLOCKADE!**

**AHORA MAS QUE NUNCA ¡ABAJO EL BLOQUEO CRIMINAL!**

*Follow Azza Rojbi on Twitter:  
@Azza\_R14*



4th Monthly Picket to End U.S. Blockade on Cuba at the U.S. Consulate in Vancouver. December 17, 2015

As the Cuban President Raúl Castro explained in his speech at United Nations General Assembly on September 28, 2015 "After 56 years in which the Cuban people put up a heroic and selfless resistance, diplomatic relations have been re-established between Cuba and the United States of America. Now, a long and complex process begins toward the normalization that will only be achieved with the end of the economic, commercial and financial blockade; the return to our country of the territory illegally occupied by Guantánamo Naval Base; the cessation of radio and TV broadcasts, and of subversion and destabilization programs against the Island; and, when our people are compensated for the human and economic damages they still endure."

## Vancouver steps up the fight against the U.S. blockade on Cuba

Friends of Cuba Against the U.S. Blockade-Vancouver, formerly known as the Free the Cuban 5 Committee-Vancouver (FCAB-



## Pakistan Returns 'Unparalleled' Cuban Favor

December 24, 2015 (teleSUR English)

In an expression of thanks, Pakistan will donate 15,000 tons of rice to Cuba as the Caribbean nation continues to suffer from one of its worst droughts in 115 years.

With more than 70 percent of the Caribbean island's territory affected by either "severe" or "extreme" drought dependent on location, Cuban rice production is expected to reach just 60 percent of the amount required to satisfy national consumption.

The decision by Islamabad to assist Cuba is a response to the latter's humanitarianism during the deadly 2005 earthquake that devastated Kashmir, killing over 86,000 people and displacing an estimated 2.8 million.

Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif announced the support Wednesday during a ceremony attended by Cuban ambassador to Pakistan, Gabriel Tiel Capote.

"Pakistan and Cuba have enjoyed longstanding cooperation based on respect and understanding," Prensa Latina report Sharif to have said in an official document.

"We recognize Cuba as a proven friend that has stayed by our side in tough times," Sharif also said in a separate message published on the country's Ministry of Foreign Affairs website.

During the 2005 earthquake, Cuba dispatched 2,400 medical staff to Pakistan, setting up 30 hospitals in the field and sending tons of medical equipment to the country. Over 600,000 consultations and 5,900 surgeries were performed by Cuban humanitarian teams in 44 different locations, resulting in at least 1,300 lives being saved.

"That example of sincerity, care and friendship towards Pakistan has few parallels in modern history," said Sharif.

Pakistan's humanitarian efforts follow a strengthening of ties between the two countries since the 2005 earthquake, with bilateral ties being developed in agriculture, higher education, industry and science.

Since 2005, Cuba has also granted over 1,000 medical scholarships to the South Asian country, resulting in many qualified doctors returning to Pakistan to ply their trade.

## Syria and Cuba sign health cooperation

December 26, 2015 (Al-Masdar News)

Syria and Cuba signed on Thursday a framework agreement on cooperation between the Syrian Health Ministry on the one hand and the Cuban External Trade and Foreign Investment Ministry and the Biotechnology and Pharmaceutical Industry Group (BioCubaFarma) on the other hand.

The Cuban Minister Rodrigo Malmierca Diaz said the agreement is a "modest contribution on the way to look for other potentials to build a strategic partnership" in the various areas of the health sector between the two countries and not just in the medicinal field.

"It's our duty to provide all forms of help to the Syrian people in light of the current ordeal they are going through," he added.

Malmierca Diaz's remarks were echoed by Health Minister Nizar Yazigi, who described the agreement as a starting point for

## Venezuela's Maduro Launches Sexual Diversity Council

December 16, 2015 (teleSUR English)

Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro inaugurated Tuesday a presidential council to promote sexual diversity.

On Wednesday, the president also announced that he would approve a special law, through his enabling powers, to give judicial validity and protection to the Presidential Government Councils. The councils were elected by various social sectors and movements, such as women, indigenous peoples, youth, and so on, to be a direct voice with the president.

The Presidential Council of Sexual Diversity will seek to tackle discrimination based on sexual orientation, along with supporting women's rights.

"We must demand respect in our mass media, and elsewhere," said council head Ingrid Baron.

Speaking on the president's television program, "En Contacto Con Maduro" (In Contact with Maduro), Baron called for tougher legislation against sexual discrimination.

She argued sexual diversity rights should be a key priority of Venezuela's socialists.

Maduro agreed, stating, "Your fight for respect has moved me, and ... you can count on me."

Maduro's predecessor, Hugo Chavez, was fiercely critical of Venezuela's traditionally conservative, machismo culture. He was also the country's first head of state to openly support feminism, once stating he was a "convinced socialist-feminist."

"All socialists have to be feminist ... capitalism is macho," he said in 2008.

"From childhood there is unfair treatment of boys compared to girls," Chavez argued.

The new sexual diversity council is part of Maduro's broader efforts to renew Venezuela's socialist revolution, which was started under Chavez.

Since his socialist party, the PSUV, lost its majority in the National Assembly early this month, Maduro has called to reorganize and reconnect with grassroots social movements.

In a key address days after the election, Maduro emphasized the importance of addressing the country's current economic woes by proposing to hold a popular economic congress, which is intended to provide a platform for supporters and grassroots movements to formulate strategies to rectify the current economic challenges facing Venezuela.

The Venezuelan leader has taken on a tone of self-reflection, calling on his party and supporters to examine the reasons behind the electoral defeat in the National Assembly.

The election saw the opposition Movement for Democratic Unity (MUD) win a supermajority in the National Assembly.

wider cooperation in the health domain, including in transferring biotechnology in both directions and exchanging of medicines, expertise and research.

Earlier on the day, Minister Yazigi met with Vice President of the Council of Ministers of Cuba Ricardo Cabrisas Ruiz who affirmed that Cuba's support to Syria under the terrorism war waged against it is firm and that Havana is serious about offering all forms of support and aid to Damascus.

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# COP21 PARIS CLIMATE AGREEMENT CAPITALIST ENVIRONMENTAL CRISIS CONTINUES



*By Thomas Davies*

*“By comparison to what it could have been, it’s a miracle. By comparison to what it should have been, it’s a disaster...So yes, let the delegates congratulate themselves on a better agreement than might have been expected. And let them temper it with an apology to all those it will betray.”*

- George Monbiot. The Guardian, December 12, 2015

While headlines were still celebrating the “historic” Paris Climate Agreement, another one crept into the news: “Lake Poopo, Bolivia’s 2nd-largest lake, dries up. Climate change has boosted temperatures, tripling evaporation” (CBC) While diplomats relaxed and enjoyed the sites of Paris after a couple weeks of negotiations, leery images emerged of the over 2000 square kilometres of new desert, spotted with millions of dried up fish carcasses and abandoned boats. While it took 21 years for these United Nations meetings to move beyond a debate about the reality of climate change, poor and working people around the world have been living with, and dying from, the consequences every day. So a Bolivian fisherman and his family would be justified in asking, “How does this new agreement make sure that its promises are kept?” They would then also be justified in spitting onto the dust where their lake used to be when told the agreement really doesn’t have any way to do that.

So the bad news overall? Despite the hype and the urgency, the new Paris Climate Agreement will not save the planet. The good news though? The international movement for climate justice is growing and outpacing these flashy high profile meetings, and is making its own proposals for how to save the planet and build a better world for everyone at the same time.

**The Climate Crisis is Real**

Here’s some more recent headlines from 2015:

“Earth has lost a third of arable land in past 40 years, scientists say” (The Guardian)

“2015 Hottest Year on Record” (The Independent)

“Will Humans Survive the 6th Mass Extinction?” (National Geographic)

“The Marshall Islands are Disappearing. Rising Seas are Claiming a Vulnerable Nation” (New York Times)

“Climate Change and El Niño May Leave 10 Million Hungry” (Time Magazine)

If anyone has any doubts about climate change and its devastating consequences, visit the NASA Global Climate Change website for a huge source of resources detailing the basic evidence, causes, effects, consequences and scientific consensus regarding the phenomenon which is threatening our very existence on the planet.

The NASA Evidence section points to 9 major indicators of climate change:

“Sea Level Rise: Global sea level rose about 17 centimeters (6.7 inches) in the last century. The rate in the last decade, however, is nearly double that of the last century

Global Temperature Rise: All three major global surface temperature reconstructions show that Earth has warmed since 1880.5 Most of this warming has occurred since the 1970s, with the 20 warmest years having occurred since 1981 and with all 10 of the warmest years occurring in the past 12 years.6

Warming Oceans: The oceans have absorbed much of this increased heat, with the top 700 meters (about 2,300 feet) of ocean showing warming of 0.302 degrees Fahrenheit since 1969.

Shrinking Ice Sheets: The Greenland and

Antarctic ice sheets have decreased in mass. Data from NASA’s Gravity Recovery and Climate Experiment show Greenland lost 150 to 250 cubic kilometers of ice per year between 2002 and 2006, while Antarctica lost about 152 cubic kilometers of ice between 2002 and 2005.

Declining Arctic Sea Ice: Both the extent and thickness of Arctic sea ice has declined rapidly over the last several decades

Glacial Retreat: Glaciers are retreating almost everywhere around the world — including in the Alps, Himalayas, Andes, Rockies, Alaska and Africa

Extreme Events: The number of record high temperature events in the United States has been increasing, while the number of record low temperature events has been decreasing, since 1950. The U.S. has also witnessed increasing numbers of intense rainfall events

Ocean Acidification: Since the beginning of the Industrial Revolution, the acidity of surface ocean waters has increased by about 30 percent.

Decreased Snow Cover: Satellite observations reveal that the amount of spring snow cover in the Northern Hemisphere has decreased over the past five decades and that the snow is melting earlier.”

## **The History of Failures**

These are not new facts. Climate change has been discussed seriously by scientists since the 1950’s, and the world’s largest oil company ExxonMobil had been advised directly by its scientists as early as 1978 that climate change was real, caused by humans, and would raise global temperatures by 2 to 3 degrees Celsius this century. COP21 is called that because this was the 21st year of the annual meeting.

Before the COP (“Conference of the Parties”)



*Indigenous organizers defy Paris protest ban. December 12, 2016*

meetings, there was a UN meeting in Rio de Janeiro which created the still existing United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. Much like the Paris Agreement, it called on governments to take action to avoid dangerous climate change, but did not specify what kind action or how it would be enforced.

Since 1995 the COP meetings have taken place annually to discuss a global approach to climate change. The 1997 COP meeting in Japan established the now infamous “Kyoto Protocol” which was meant to create legally binding agreement reducing greenhouse gas emissions. The United States, the world’s largest polluter, stalled and never really participated along with many other major polluters. Canada officially withdrew in 2011

There was a huge amount of hope and enthusiasm from environmental organizations before the COP conference in Copenhagen in 2009. Unfortunately, “Hopenhagen” provided a huge letdown as backroom meetings controlled by the US resulted in a weak agreement that we never legally binding and was not fully adopted at the conference because of the chaos surrounding it.

COP meetings since have often been likened to the band on the Titanic which continued to play as the ship continued to sink into the icy waters of the Atlantic.

### **COP21 – Under Pressure**

COP21 was held under a lot of pressure, as world leaders realized they were becoming more than irrelevant, they were becoming universally despised for their inaction on climate change. This has been propelled by the reemergence and the maturing of the global climate justice movement. After the Paris terrorist attacks, French officials banned what was supposed to be the largest climate march in history which was to coincide with COP21. Despite this, a coordinated Global Climate March broke records as the largest coordinated climate mobilization in history with over 785,000 people marching at 2,300 events in 175 countries on November 28

and 29 of 2015. This came soon after the largest single climate march in history which happened in New York on September 21 of last year, with over 400,000 people joining the “Peoples Climate March” and over 270,000 more participating in 2000 coordinated actions in 166 countries across the globe.

As we have reported consistently in *Fire This Time*, Latin American countries led by Cuba, Bolivia, Venezuela and Ecuador have been leading a coordinated global effort to create a real alternative to the COP meetings. Disgusted with the failure of the COP meetings, Bolivian President Evo Morales initiated the The World Peoples’ Conference on Climate Change and the Defense of Life. Over 35,000 people attended, and adopted the Universal Declaration of the Rights of Mother Earth.

In January 2014, the first International Tribunal on the Rights of Nature and Mother Earth was held in Quito, Ecuador, and tried such cases as the oil pollution of Chevron-Texaco in Ecuador. A second tribunal was held at the end of 2014 during COP 20 in Lima, Peru. A second World Peoples’ Conference on Climate Change and the Defense of Life was also held in Bolivia this year, again with tens of thousands attending and drafting concrete proposals based on moving beyond the current economic system which demands exploitation of both humans and nature.

### **So What did COP21 Accomplish?**

Those who support the COP21 agreement say that creating a consensus among 195 countries with different realities and agenda’s is a huge step forward. The deal requires any country that ratifies it to act to stem its greenhouse gas emissions in the coming century, with the goal of peaking greenhouse gas emissions “as soon as possible” and continuing the reductions as the century progresses. Countries will aim to keep global temperatures from rising more than 2°C (3.6°F) by 2100 with an ideal target

of keeping temperature rise below 1.5°C (2.7°F).

Approximately 180 countries put forward voluntary “Intended Nationally Determined Contributions”, which detail their plans over the next 20 years to reduce emissions. There is also a requirement to submit a progress report every 5 years and a commitment for developed countries to make available 100 billion dollars of “new and additional” money a year for developing countries to help them adapt to climate change.

Unfortunately the agreement relies almost entirely on the goodwill of those who have facilitated the destruction of the planet to meet their voluntary commitments and stop destroying the planet. The agreement relies entirely on the vague language of, “as soon as possible”, “encouraged” and “should”.

Scientists point out that even if the 180 Intended Nationally Determined Contributions from different countries are met, the result would still be a rise above 2°C. There is also no concrete commitment from developed country to make a contribution to the Green Climate Fund’s promised \$100 billion annually by 2020.

While Evo Morales proposed the creation of a Global Climate Justice Tribunal to be able to hold those who destroy the environment accountable, the Paris Agreement has no real structure of accountability despite the requirement for countries to report every 5 years.

Justin Gillis of the New York Times wrote, “The deal, in short, begins to move the countries of the world in a shared direction that is potentially compatible with maintaining a livable planet over the long term.” Are we really supposed to be excited about an agreement that is only “potentially compatible” with a livable planet? Is that really our criteria? “Potentially compatible”? 2°C is when scientists think we go past

*continued on page 36*



*Evo Morales speaks to rally of 1 million in Bolivia. August 2, 2013*



# 3<sup>RD</sup> INTIFADA: A Palestinian Response to 67 years of Zionist Occupation

By Noah Fine

*As a Jewish activist, I would like to invite other young Jews, Palestinians and any people of interest in the struggle for peace to get involved in this debate, this burning issue facing our younger generations: What to do about the Palestine/Israel conflict. In this article I hope to give a glimpse into some basic concepts surrounding the issue. In further articles I would like to open up some of these themes in more detail such as the difference between "Anti-Semitism" and "Anti-Israel" alongside many other topics of importance within the struggle for Palestinian self-determination. This article is simply a base in which to start to dive in to the conflict. I hope you will look at the past 2 issues of Fire This Time (Vol.9 Iss. 11 & Iss. 12) for more around this issue and continue reading in the future so we can together understand the crisis of Israeli occupation of Palestine and work together to confront and end it.*

## Israel Zionist Regime is Brutal

While families were preparing for holiday and Christmas celebrations around the world, many in Bethlehem, Palestine,

the birthplace of Jesus Christ were observing the holidays differently. A parade of Palestinians representing all faiths marched through the streets near the Israeli apartheid wall dressed as Santa Clause. They were protesting many issues although all related at its base to the same thing: deplorable living conditions thanks to Zionist occupation.

Although the December 19th Santa Clause protest's aim was to be peaceful, protesters were even attempting to give candy to Israeli Defense Force soldiers (IDF), as usual Israeli military cracked down brutally. In the end 14 Palestinians were injured.

This protest is part of months of ongoing resistance by Palestinians to almost 70 years of Zionist occupation. This upswing of resistance which began in early October, 2015, led by Palestinian youth has become widely known as the 3rd Intifada.

Many factors are believed to have contributed to the growth of the 3rd Intifada since October. The IDF as well as illegal Israeli settlers have burned and uprooted dozens of Palestinian olive trees, which they use as a livelihood. The state of Israel has been limiting access by Palestinians to their holy site the Al-Aqsa mosque in Jerusalem and massive

crackdowns on peaceful Palestinian protest have all been factors.

Back to Bethlehem, On October 4th, 2015 an Israeli sniper assassinated a 13-year-old boy during a protest. "My son went to school and never came home," said Abdel Rahman Obeidallah, the mother of the murdered child.

Anger over the murder of this boy as well as the murders, injuries and crackdown on human

Palestinian women participating in 3rd Intifada. Ramallah, Oct. 12, 2015.



*Illegally occupied West Bank Israeli Settlement of Kochav Yaakov.*



*Homes, schools, mosques, hospitals, orphanages bombed by Israel in stage on Gaza. Jan. 2009*



rights of Palestinian people are have what led to this 3rd Intifada. And as long as the brutal occupation of Palestine continues the heroic resistance of Palestinian people led by their youth will persevere.

3 months into the 3rd Intifada there continue to be daily shows of protest by Palestinian people against occupation. Since October about 130 Palestinians have been killed while 20 Israelis have been killed in the same period.

#### **What Future For Palestinian Youth**

“Arab terrorism attacks us relentlessly and we are fighting it without restrictions,”

-Benjamin Netanyahu, Prime Minister of Israel to his cabinet meeting. Dec. 27, 2015.

With statements such as this from Israeli officials, it's no wonder why Palestinians are so frustrated. The blame for acts perpetrated by Palestinians, especially youth in the recent months that come in the form of stabbings and hit and runs by car cannot however be blamed on the Palestinian people. Although the Israeli government has used it as a justification to collectively punish the entire

population, the acts are the concrete result of almost 70 years of brutal war and occupation.

The reality facing Palestinian people, especially youth, is the reality that they have no future. The apartheid wall and checkpoints make it near impossible for Palestinians to get to their jobs if they're so lucky to be able to find jobs in the first place. Lack of water, electricity, food, medicines and every other essential human necessity make the conditions even worse. After that the nightly home invasions, bombings and other aspects of the war aim to strip Palestinian people of any hope for a dignified life. But as a result, generations of war and occupation have always led to generations of Palestinian youth who struggle against it. The 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Intifadas (Palestinian uprisings) were both led by youth. Those generations have become adults now. The 3<sup>rd</sup> Intifada we are witnessing today is propelled by the children of the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup>.

#### **The Prospect For Peace**

The prospects for peace are not what mainstream media and the governments who

back Israel would like us to believe. We are made to think these issues are complicated religious, cultural or political affairs we could never really understand. And for that reason every round of “peace talks” usually overseen by the U.S. have collapsed. The reality is they were never meant to succeed. Simply to act as a cover of progress while Israel continues to expand its territory displacing countless more Palestinian people.

Prospects of the “Two-State Solution” have all but plummeted. The possibility of two states living side by side was long ago made impossible by Israel through its aggressive illegal expansion and division of the West Bank by way of the apartheid wall.

However as time passes, another solution becomes clearer and more achievable: One State. We have been made to believe once again that there is some holy separation between Jews and Palestinians that could never be reconciled. Let's dare to disagree! At one time Jews and Palestinians lived together peacefully on the same land. They may have had disputes at times but those disputes were in passing and not dissimilar from disputes among Jewish people or Muslim people within themselves.

Both people share many common interests. In fact the most important interests: those of a peaceful life, food, a home, healthcare, education, work... all things denied to Palestinian people by the Zionist occupation. But the reality is that more and more those same things are being denied to Jewish people living in occupied Palestine. Ever-growing unemployment, human trafficking, poverty, racism and dissatisfaction have become central to life for Israelis. The “GINI Index” which measures the level of inequality in countries has rated Israel second only to the U.S. in its level of inequality. So we can see that Palestinian people and Israeli people have a lot more in common than they have in opposition. And this phenomenon is only growing.

#### **Zionist Regime the Problem**

The problem is Israel, the problem is war and occupation. The problem is that Zionism and the state of Israel work as a block to the natural interests of all people living on that land. Therefore with Zionism's ever burning hatred for Jewish peoples natural and necessary friend, the Palestinian people, one would argue that one state called Palestine with democratic rights for all and the right of return for Palestinian people expelled from their land is the only viable solution to the crisis of Peace.

Let's unite across all religions, all races, all diversities to unite with the Palestinian people, join their 3<sup>rd</sup> Intifada and demand an end to the Zionist occupation of Palestine.

*Follow Noah Fine on Twitter:  
@noahfine*

radiales y televisivas ilegales, para cuya implementación continúan otorgándose fondos millonarios.

Se sigue aplicando una política migratoria preferencial a los ciudadanos cubanos, expresada en la vigencia de la política de pies secos-pies mojados, el programa de parole para profesionales médicos y la Ley de Ajuste Cubano, lo cual estimula una emigración ilegal, insegura, desordenada e irregular, promueve el tráfico de personas y otros delitos conexos, y genera problemas a otros países.

El Gobierno de Cuba seguirá insistiendo en que para alcanzar la normalización de las relaciones, es imperativo que el Gobierno de los Estados Unidos elimine todas estas políticas del pasado, que afectan al pueblo y a la nación cubana, y no se corresponden con el contexto bilateral actual ni con la voluntad expresada por los dos países, al restablecer las relaciones diplomáticas, de desarrollar vínculos respetuosos y de cooperación entre ambos pueblos y gobiernos.

Nadie debe pretender que Cuba, para normalizar las relaciones con los Estados Unidos, abandone la causa de la independencia por la que nuestro pueblo, desde 1868, hizo grandes sacrificios; ni olvide que, después de muchas frustraciones y 60 años de total dependencia, esta fue por fin alcanzada el primero de enero de 1959 con la victoria del Ejército Rebelde, bajo el mando del Comandante en Jefe Fidel Castro Ruz.

El pueblo cubano no renunciará a los principios e ideales por los que varias generaciones de cubanos han luchado a lo largo de este último medio siglo. El derecho de todo Estado a elegir el sistema económico, político y social que desee, sin injerencia de ninguna forma, debe ser respetado.

El Gobierno de Cuba tiene total disposición a continuar avanzando en la construcción de una relación con los Estados Unidos que sea distinta a la de toda su historia precedente, sobre bases de respeto mutuo a la soberanía y la independencia, que sea beneficiosa para ambos países y pueblos, y que se nutra de las conexiones históricas, culturales y familiares que han existido entre cubanos y estadounidenses.

Cuba, en pleno ejercicio de su soberanía y con el apoyo mayoritario de su pueblo, seguirá inmersa en el proceso de transformaciones para actualizar su modelo económico y social, en aras de avanzar en el desarrollo del país, incrementar el bienestar de la población y fortalecer los logros de la Revolución Socialista.

Muchas gracias.

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the “point of no return” for causing an unstoppable climate crisis which will probably make earth uninhabitable for humans. Why would we risk even getting close to that?

### What Was Canada's Role?

While the bar was set pretty low by the Conservative government in regards to environmental policies, the new Liberal government still managed to anger environmentalists and “win” two to the Climate Actions Network’s “Fossil of the Day awards” during the COP21 meeting. The Canadian government made a big deal of supporting a 1.5°C limit for climate change, but itself never submitted a greenhouse gas emissions target. This being the most fundamental issue being discussed. The Canadian delegation also worked with the US to block even the discussion on compensating poor countries vulnerable to natural events caused by climate change.

### Where to Go From Here?

The reality is that we’ve already been forced much too far down the road to climate catastrophe. The air and water are already too polluted. Too many trees have already been cut down. Too many species of animals have already been forced into extinction. Too many people have already died or been made refugees because their lands are no longer inhabitable and their waters are no longer drinkable. The status quo of over half the world’s population living, and dying, on less than \$2.50 a day should not be acceptable. We must do better.

With one hand “developed” countries like the US, UK, France and Canada sign the COP agreements, and with the others they sign



**“COP21 = World on Fire” Thousands defy Paris protest ban. December 12, 2016**

new free trade deals such as the Trans Pacific Partnership which give corporations more power to cause even more environmental destruction. They also continue their wars and occupations across the globe causing irreparable damage to life and the environment in places like Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya and Syria.

The solution is not just technological innovation. Humans are already technologically advanced enough to take advantage of the earth’s resources to provide enough for a healthy and happy life for all 7 billion people which inhabit the earth. We are also not interested in solar powered tanks or “energy efficient” missiles.

The question is priorities. Do we prioritize profits and the rights of corporations to make as much as possible, regardless of the consequences for human beings and nature? Do we prioritize a rising stock market above a rising average income? Are we still waiting for the corporate profits to “trickle down” to us, even when it’s clear all that is flowing is toxic sludge?

The question is ultimately pretty straightforward, and the millions of people around the world who are demanding, “System Change Not Climate Change!” understand that capitalism and its profit driven motor is not compatible with a healthy planet or with humanity. Think of

what would be possible if all the resources currently dedicated to wars and corporate bailouts were put towards creating a healthy and sustainable society! A better and sustainable world is possible and necessary. It just won’t be created at a COP meeting, but by the millions of poor and working people marching outside they are failing to silence.



**“System Change NOT Climate Change!” Paris. December 12, 2016**

*Follow Thomas Davies on Twitter: @thomasdavies59*

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educational and employment gaps between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Canadians.”

Number 24: “We call upon medical and nursing schools in Canada to require all students to take a course dealing with Aboriginal health issues, including the history and legacy of residential schools, the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, Treaties and Aboriginal rights, and Indigenous teachings and practices. This will require skills-based training in intercultural competency, conflict resolution, human rights, and anti-racism.”

Number 30 “We call upon federal, provincial, and territorial governments to commit to eliminating the overrepresentation of Aboriginal people in custody over the next decade, and to issue detailed annual reports that monitor and evaluate progress in doing so.”

Number 47: “We call upon federal,

provincial, territorial, and municipal governments to repudiate concepts used to justify European sovereignty over Indigenous peoples and lands, such as the Doctrine of Discovery and terra nullius, and to reform those laws, government policies, and litigation strategies that continue to rely on such concepts.”

At the same time, this article is not meant to glorify the TRC report or its 94 point action plan. There are deep flaws in the report, which will be explored in future articles. While the action plan is a relatively solid list of immediate demands, they are in no way revolutionary ones that would lead to the true self-determination for Indigenous nations across Canada. In other words, the 94 calls to action are positive based on the expectations one could have from a commission which was struck with the funding and partial cooperation of the government of Canada. While the Harper conservative government was unwilling assist in much of the work of the TRC and refused to sign the United Nations Declaration on the

Rights of Indigenous Peoples in 2007 (they later “endorsed” the declaration in 2010), we have a new government in Canada which is promising to change course. In fact, the Liberal government of Prime Minister Justin Trudeau has promised to make all 94 points of the TRC report a reality. However, looking at the headlines nationwide and report after report on the dire situation facing Indigenous people in Canada today, we have to ask, when will these 94 recommendations become a reality? And will they really be enough?

In the coming issues of Fire This Time Newspaper will we look deeper into the legacy of residential schools in Canada, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, the challenges and struggles of Indigenous people in Canada today and the prospects for real justice and self-determination.

*Follow Tamara Hansen on Twitter:  
@THans01*

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sources and the quality of life of people around the world. In this article we will focus only on three.

### **Nestle Bottled Water in British Columbia, Canada**

While several indigenous communities in BC lack access to clean water, Nestle Corporation is paying only \$2.25 per 1 million of liters of water it extracts. At the same time that this corporation is taking limitless amounts of natural water sources to sell for an enormous profit, the provincial government is asking people to reduce their water consumption by taking shorter showers! Some groups are asking the provincial government to increase the ridiculously low rates Nestle pays for water. However, overall water sources should not be commoditized for a company's private profit, because they belong to all of the community and are part of complex ecosystems.

Drinking Water Crisis in Flint, Michigan  
In December of 2015 local officials declared a state of emergency in Flint. In order to prevent bankruptcy, they decided to try and save money on water. They had been purchasing increasingly expensive water from Detroit, and changed to a cheaper source from Huron Lake. Unfortunately this was done without any real water analysis. The switch would initially save millions of dollars per year, but the water

from Huron Lake corroded the pipes, increasing levels of lead poisoning for the people of Flint, especially children. Lead poisoning affects brain development and causes learning disabilities, lower IQ's and impulsivity.

### **The Struggle for Water in Cochabamba, Bolivia.**

In 1997, the World Bank refused to give \$600 million of debt relief to Bolivia unless the country agreed to privatize water. The city of Cochabamba had also sold its water company to the transnational consortium Aguas del Tunari, controlled by US company Bechtel. Bechtel increased water prices from \$20 to \$30 monthly. This price was unaffordable for Cochabambans, who were earning about \$100 per month.

However, this situation gave origin to a historic movement against water privatization which included farmers, factory workers, rural and urban water committees, neighborhood organizations, students, and middle class professionals. The main leaders of this social movement were Oscar Olivera and Evo Morales.

Despite the constant oppression from the police, the movement forced Bechtel to decrease its water prices, and the company was eventually forced to end its contract. After this battle, people in Bolivia continued their struggle and elected Evo Morales as President in 2006. Bolivia's

constitution now bans water privatization on the grounds that water access is a human right.

This last example gives us huge inspiration as a demonstration of a people's victory against corporations and foreign domination. Today, Latin-American countries led by Bolivia and strongly supported by Cuba and Venezuela, are taking an ethical obligation towards the planet and advocating the need for human beings to recover a sense of unity and relevance with Mother Earth.

### **Our Planet is in a Dangerous Situation and our Water Cannot be in Private Hands!**

Now is the time to take action, to mobilize, and to change the world and our own minds. Now is the time to bury the idea of happiness and success based on the possession of material goods, and to spread connection, respect and empathy with our Mother Earth. As Evo Morales said, “It is the beginning of the end of unfettered capitalism as well as the transition from the time of violence between human beings and violence to nature to a new time in which human beings will constitute a unity with Mother Earth and all will live in harmony and equilibrium with the cosmos as a whole.”

*Follow Macarena Cataldo on Twitter:  
@makufy*

# Hey Justin Trudeau, Our demand is still the same: "Repeal Bill C-51!"

By Thomas Davies

On October 19, 2015 the Harper Conservative government was defeated by the Trudeau Liberal party in Canada's Federal Election.

While the new Prime Minister of Canada, Justin Trudeau promised "Real Change" as his campaign slogan, activists and organizers of the Working Group to Stop Bill C-51 in Vancouver, Canada are not convinced that Justin is promising the change we want. We cannot forget that Justin Trudeau and the Liberal Party voted in favour of Bill C-51 when it was

These pickets are also an important chance to connect with students and working people in Metro Vancouver, many of whom are opposed to this so-called "Anti-Terrorism" Bill. November 2015 saw 5 weekly picket actions: November 2 at New Westminster Station, November 9 at Broadway-City Hall Station, November 16 at Waterfront Station, November 23 at Main Street Station and November 30 at Lougheed Town Centre Station.

The pickets have continued in

for why an "Anti-terrorism" Bill was necessary in the first place.

> There was never any proof given as to how Bill C-51 would make things "safer" for people in Canada.

> Bill C-51 gives the government and policing agencies new powers to spy on people in Canada and violate our privacy.

> Bill C-51 gives police more power to preventatively arrest people without a warrant.

> Bill C-51 uses a vague definition of terrorism, so that protesters and those exercising freedom of speech and assembly could be criminalized.

> Bill C-51 is obviously part of the government's ongoing efforts to create fear and criminalize dissent.

Now is the most important time to demonstrate loudly and clearly that we will not accept even an amended attack on our democratic and human rights. The Working Group to Stop Bill C-51 has organized 42 weekly pickets against Bill C-51, and we invite you to join us!

>> 43rd Weekly Protest is Monday January 4th at 4pm at Waterfront Station

**WE NEED TO CONTINUE TO EDUCATE, ORGANIZE AND MOBILIZE TO DEMAND THE IMMEDIATE REPEAL OF BILL C-51!**

To get involved in the Working Group to Stop Bill C-51 in Vancouver - Follow us on Twitter: @StopBillC51 or send an email: stoppolicestatebillc51@gmail.com or www.firethistime.net

Follow Thomas Davies on Twitter: @thomasdavies59



41st Weekly Picket Action & Petition Drive to Repeal Bill C-51 in downtown Vancouver. December 21, 2015

originally passed in June 2015.

While the Liberals have committed to make some amendments to the widely unpopular Bill C-51, they are minimal changes which do not respond to our fundamental concerns regarding how this law allows the government to violate the human and democratic rights of people in Canada.

Because of this, the Working Group to Stop Bill C-51 has been continuing its weekly picket actions at skytrain stations and transit hubs across the lower mainland to let Justin Trudeau and the Liberal government know that our demand remains the same, "Repeal Bill C-51!"

December: December 7 at Nanaimo Station, December 14 at Commercial and Broadway Stations, December 21 at Vancouver City Centre Station and December 28 at Broadway-City Hall Station.

Every week commuters and shoppers have stopped to sign petitions, to sign up for more information, or even to pick up a sign and chant with us to express their resentment of this unjust law. In fact, December 14th marked the 40th weekly picket action to stop Bill C-51 and the campaign is continuing!

6 Reasons why Bill C-51 is so unpopular?

> There was never any basis established

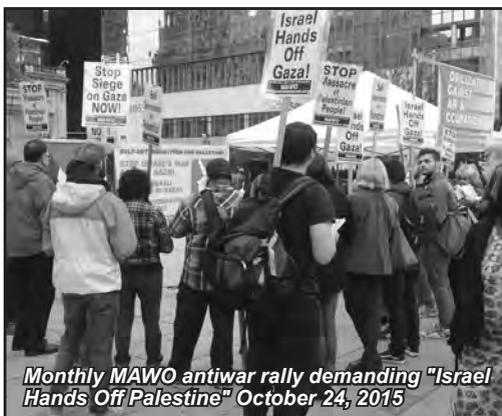
# FROM 2015 TO 2016. MOBILIZATION AGAINST WAR AND OCCUPATION CONTINUES TO EDUCATE, ORGANIZE + MOBILIZE AGAINST THE NEW ERA OF WAR AND OCCUPATION

By *Janine Solanki*

As we close 2015 and enter 2016, we look back on the past year of new and increasing wars, occupations and imperialist interventions, humanitarian crises and rising attacks on civil and democratic rights at home, as well as the fight back and huge resistance of poor and working people worldwide. 2015 saw the new war on Iraq and Syria, with the excuse of fighting Daesh (also known as ISIS), become the central campaign of the war machine led by the US with the help of their allies, including Canada. We also saw a new war

launched against Yemen in March of 2015, led by US-backed Saudi Arabia. The war has created immense destruction and a humanitarian catastrophe that has left four out of five Yemenis in need of aid. Despite that this war has been labeled the “forgotten war” it is by no means over and the Yemeni people continue to suffer brutal attacks by the Saudi-led coalition. Throughout 2015 we saw the continued Israeli attacks on Palestinian people, but also saw a huge grassroots resistance of Palestinian people fighting for Palestinian self-determination, in what has been called a third Intifada. (For more on the Palestinian struggle see the article on page 34).

2015 has been the year in which the consequences of over 14 years of the new era of war and occupation hit home for people in Europe and North America, as well as around the world as huge numbers of refugees escaping their war-torn homelands reached European shores. (To read more about the refugee crisis see page 22). In response to the refugee crisis we have seen the huge effort of regular people, who have pressured their governments to both stop the wars causing the crisis and to accept refugees into their countries. Regardless of the positions of various governments, people throughout Europe and North America have taken it upon themselves to ease the crisis that arriving refugees face in any way they can. However in the face of such humanity, right-wing and Islamophobic attacks have been on the rise. Imperialist politicians have been feeding the Islamophobic fear campaign and have used events like the Paris terrorist



Monthly MAWO antiwar rally demanding “Israel Hands Off Palestine” October 24, 2015

attacks in November 2015 to ramp up the backlash against refugees and Muslims. Here in Canada Islamophobia and a crackdown on civil liberties and democratic rights has come in the form of Bill C-51, the so-called Anti-Terrorism law that was enacted in June 2015 despite widespread opposition from individuals and institutions across Canada. (To read more about Bill C-51 see page ?) While many people in Canada have celebrated the end of nine years under Stephan Harper’s conservative government, the new Liberal Prime Minister Justin Trudeau has no plans to repeal Bill C-51 and has only suggested some superficial amendments.

The last month of 2015 gave a snapshot of MAWO’s consistent and ongoing antiwar events and actions. On Tuesday December 8th MAWO organized a public forum titled “The Election of the Liberal Government and the Prospect of Building the Antiwar Movement in Canada: Will PM Justin Trudeau End Canada’s Military Missions Abroad?” The forum looked back at the track record of the Liberal Party of Canada up to the current political positions of the new Prime Minister Justin Trudeau. Following video clips, MAWO Chair Alison Bodine gave an overview of Canada’s recent war-making history, before opening up for discussion. Throughout the course of the forum, the central message was that whether it be war and occupation, Bill C-51, environmental issues or social issues at home, peace-loving people can’t hold out hope for the new Prime Minister. Our campaigns and demands must be louder than ever and we can’t release an ounce of pressure in the fight against war and occupation.

On Saturday December 19th MAWO took to the streets for a monthly antiwar rally and petition campaign, asking passerby’s to sign MAWO’s petition against Canada’s war in Iraq and Syria. Also at this rally, MAWO had a table dedicated to the Wikileaks whistleblower Chelsea Manning, who is serving out a 35 year prison sentence in the US. Chelsea Manning’s “crime” was to tell the truth about US war crimes, a heroic act that makes her a soldier of humanity. On December 17th she spent her 28th birthday behind bars, and on that day

supporters in Vancouver held banners, picket signs and a “Happy Birthday” sign for Chelsea Manning in front of the US Consulate in Downtown Vancouver for a photo which was tweeted around the world (including by Chelsea herself). At the December 19th rally activists and passerby’s added their name and messages of solidarity to a birthday card to be mailed to Chelsea Manning, which was part of international actions in support of Chelsea Manning on her birthday.

Throughout 2015 Mobilization Against War and Occupation (MAWO) has continued organizing antiwar campaigns and responded to the maneuverings of imperialist forces. In 2015 we formed close relationships with the Iraqi, Yemeni and Muslim communities and joined together to organize events and actions against the imperialist attacks on their home countries. We have raised our banners against Bill C-51, in solidarity with Palestine, to open the doors to refugees and against environmental degradation. We have picketed, marched, petitioned, discussed and debated. As we enter 2016, it is with a resolve to continue educating, organizing and mobilizing and to raise our voices louder in demanding an end to the new era of war and occupation!

Follow Janine Solanki on Twitter:  
@janinesolanki

MONTHLY ANTIWAR RALLY & PETITION CAMPAIGN

US/UK/CANADA/FRANCE/NATO:

# NO TO WAR!

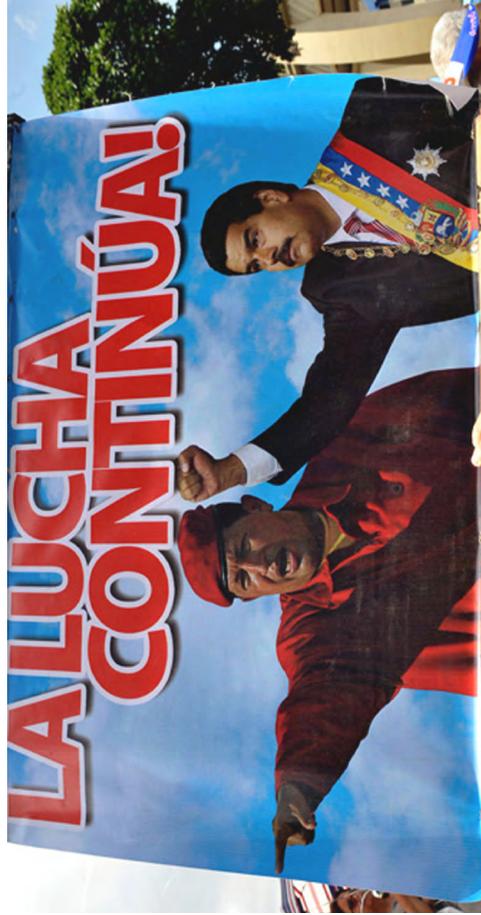
# NO SYRIA

IRAQ/YEMEN/AFGHANISTAN

Open the Borders to Refugees!

**Saturday January 23**  
2pm- Vancouver Art Gallery  
Robson Street at Howe Street  
Downtown Vancouver, BC

MOBILIZATION AGAINST WAR & OCCUPATION  
MAWOvan | info@mawovancouver.org  
**WWW.MAWOVANCOUVER.ORG**



**In Venezuela the Struggle Continues!  
¡En Venezuela la lucha continúa!**

"Let the dogs of the empire bark, that's their job, ours is to battle to achieve the true liberation of our people" -Hugo Chavez



**2 EVENTS**  
**TUESDAY JANUARY 5**  
On the opening day of Venezuela's new national assembly

**1 >> PROTEST ACTION:**  
**U.S. HANDS OFF VENEZUELA!**  
**4-5pm**

**U.S. Consulate**  
1075 West Pender at Thurlow Street

**2 >>> INFO TABLING & PETITION**  
**MADURO IS OUR PRESIDENT!**  
**5-6pm**

**Vancouver Art Gallery**  
Robson at Howe Street  
Downtown Vancouver, Canada

Fire This Time Movement for Social Justice (FTT)  
**WWW.FIRETHISTIME.NET**



**U.S. GOVERNMENT:  
RETURN LIFT THE  
GUANTANAMO BLOCKADE!  
TO CUBA! ON CUBA!**



**5th MONTHLY PROTEST**  
**SUNDAY**  
**JANUARY 17**  
**4PM**

**U.S. CONSULATE**  
**(1075 W. PENDER ST)**  
**VANCOUVER, CANADA**

FRIENDS OF CUBA AGAINST THE U.S. BLOCKADE - VANCOUVER  
NOBLOQUEOVANCOUVER@GMAIL.COM | @NOBLOQUEOVAN

**WWW.VANCUBAVSBLOCKADE.ORG**