

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



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Imperialist Occupation, Corruption and the Failed State in AFGHANISTAN

By Nita Palmer

Billions of US taxpayer dollars spent in Afghanistan were funnelled into the hands of corrupt elites and warlords, according to a damning report by the U.S. office of the Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR) released earlier this month.

“While corruption in Afghanistan predates 2001, it has become far more serious and widespread since then,” noted John Sopko, head of SIGAR. “The result [of US/NATO intervention] in Afghanistan was systemic corruption – pervasive and entrenched, affecting the courts, the army and police, banking and other critical sectors.”

Earlier this year, Transparency International ranked Afghanistan the third most corrupt country in the world, at 166 out of 168 countries.

U.S. Empowers Warlords And Enables Corruption

The SIGAR report confirms what Afghans have said for years: foreign intervention has resulted in the rise of warlords as the de facto rulers of the country.

“In many cases, US actions legitimized and empowered a class of strongmen who had conflicted allegiances between their own power networks and the nascent Afghan state. In this way, the US helped to lay a foundation for continued impunity, weak rule of law, and the growth of corruption,” the report states. An annual survey of Afghans by the ASIA foundation has also found a dramatic increase in reported corruption. When asked to rate how much of a problem corruption was in their daily lives, 42% of Afghans reported it as a ‘major problem’ in 2006. By 2016, that number had risen to 61%.

The SIGAR report concludes that the US government ‘failed to recognize’ the threat of corruption between 2001 and 2009, and that

the response to dealing with the problem of corruption after 2009 was ‘weak’. SIGAR points to the massive influx of aid – sometimes more than 100% of Afghanistan’s GDP – with little oversight as a major reason for corruption. In 2015, another SIGAR report found that \$45 billion US taxpayer dollars went ‘missing’ in Afghanistan – the Pentagon did not begin tracking where money was spent in Afghanistan until 2010.

While the findings of the SIGAR report are damning, the conclusion that the US government and military ‘failed to recognize’ the problem seems unlikely. A 2010 report to the US House of Representatives titled “Warlord, Inc.” found that “the Department of Defense designed a contract that put responsibility for the security of vital US supplies on contractors and their unaccountable security providers. This arrangement has fueled a vast protection racket run by a shadowy network of warlords, strongmen, commanders, corrupt Afghan officials, and perhaps others.” In short, the Pentagon was fully aware that they were engaged in corrupt dealings in Afghanistan.

Since 2009, when the findings on corruption first came into the public eye, there has been ‘limited’ government response to tackle the problem, SIGAR found. Mohammad Shafiq Hamdam, head of the Afghan Anti-Corruption Network, told Russian news agency Sputnik that “the level of level of corruption in Afghanistan is very high. There are many reasons, but the principal reason is a lack of political will to tackle corruption within the government and within the international community which is backing the Afghan government.”

Fuelling The Drug Trade
The free flow of US dollars into the hands of warlords has also fuelled the country’s

thriving drug trade. Today, Afghanistan produces an estimated 90% of the world’s opium. Under the Taliban, the trade had been nearly eliminated. This influx of opium – and especially heroin, an opium derivative – onto the world market has contributed to an increased epidemic of drug use worldwide – including on the streets of the U.S. itself. The drug trade has also funded terrorist organizations such as al-Qaeda – the very enemies the U.S. purports to be ‘fighting’.

Empire Building, Not Nation Building

The US claims to be ‘nation-building’ in Afghanistan, but what sort of nation are they building? Afghanistan today is more fractured and insecure than it was under the Taliban. It is not truly run by the Afghan government, which holds little real power outside of Kabul, but by warlords and various terrorist organizations. Many of Afghanistan’s professed ‘gains’ since 2001 have been nothing more than smoke and mirrors, and themselves fuelled by corruption. Take, for example, the report published last year by BuzzFeed which found that many of the schools that USAID claimed to have built had no teachers, no students, or in some cases, never existed in the first place. The same report also found that the money for building these schools often went to the hands of local warlords and other



U.S. airstrike in Afghanistan that killed 42 people at Doctors Without Borders Kunduz hospital. Oct. 3, 2015.



shady characters. The majority of Afghans have seen no fundamental improvements to their lives since 2001. The war has simply enriched a small class of wealthy elite and shifted power from the Taliban to murderous warlords.

The war has also enriched wealthy elite in the US and internationally. US defense contractors have made billions on the war. Defense giant Northrop Grumman earned \$325 million on failed counternarcotics operations alone. Academi (formerly known as the infamous Blackwater USA) has made \$309 million on counternarcotics.

Canadian contractor SNC Lavalin came under fire for their questionable use of taxpayer dollars on the construction of the Dahla Dam – a \$50 million project which has been plagued by engineering problems. Controversy erupted when it was revealed that SNC Lavalin hired the Watan Group as security for the project – a company which had been blacklisted for its ties to warlords.

Much of the US and international involvement in Afghanistan has been hidden by the use of “private contractors”, which provide not only logistical support to the US and NATO, but often are used as hired guns as well (though they are referred to as ‘security contractors’). As of April 2015, there were nearly 40,000 contractors working in Afghanistan.

What the US and NATO have built in Afghanistan is not an independent, democratic nation, but their own empire. Democracy and social progress cannot be brought to a nation at gunpoint. All that has been built in Afghanistan is a system of corruption which lines the pockets not only of local warlords and elites, but major US and multinational corporations. The interests of these corporations are not to benefit Afghans, but to make massive profits off security, defense, resource extraction, and cheap labour. Furthermore, the US has created a giant military and diplomatic infrastructure in Afghanistan in order to use the whole country as a military base and gain a strategic and economic advantage over rising global

economic competitors such as China and Russia.

End The War Now

Over 400,000 Afghans have been killed directly or indirectly as a result of this war (Watson Institute, Brown University) as well as thousands of foreign soldiers. Billions of taxpayer dollars from the US and other NATO countries have been funnelled into the war as well – the US alone has spent over a trillion dollars on the war in Afghanistan.

But to what end have these dollars and lives been spent? Afghans certainly haven’t benefitted, with security, corruption, and quality of life getting worse. Ordinary Canadians, Americans, and citizens of other countries involved in the war haven’t benefitted either – rather than defeating terrorism in the country, we have only seen it spread around the world.

The only group to have benefitted from this war are the warlords, terrorists, and a small number of wealthy elite in Afghanistan and internationally. We cannot support a war which has cost so many lives, not to mention taxpayer dollars which could have gone to education, health care, and other programs within our countries.

The war in Afghanistan is far from over. Nearly 10,000 US troops remain in Afghanistan, along with tens of thousands of contractors. International governments – including the Canadian government – continue to fund dubious projects in the country, often funnelling money into the hands of warlords.

The US and NATO have proven beyond a doubt that they have no interest in creating a better life for Afghan people. That task must be left to Afghans themselves, no matter how difficult it may be. We must not forget this war, or the Afghan people. It is our responsibility to continue to demand an end to this war and the immediate withdrawal of all foreign troops and contractors from Afghanistan.

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PUBLIC EDUCATION IN BRITISH COLUMBIA & CANADA

CRISIS AFTER CRISIS & GETTING WORSE

By Tamara Hansen

On August 30, 2016 British Columbia's education minister Mike Bernier had an interview with the CBC's Rick Cluff on The Early Edition, a morning radio program. Minister Bernier was invited to defend his government's education policies after the Canadian Center for Policy Alternatives (CCPA) released a scathing report titled, "What's the real story behind BC's education funding crisis?"

Minister Bernier explained to the CBC, "When you look at the funding that we do have here in British Columbia, \$5.1 billion, we have increased funding every single year in the province here in British Columbia." He continued, "We've increased our budget 32% since we've come into power and at the same time, aside from last year and this year, we've seen a decrease in about 70,000 students. It's completely false to say we haven't increased our funding."

In a recorded statement for the interview, Alex Hemingway, the author of the CCPA report, explained that while technically Bernier's claim of increased dollars in British Columbia's (BC) education spending is true, at the same time it is a serious oversimplification. "If you look simply at raw dollars it is a higher number than before. [...] But, you have to include inflation in there. And what often gets missed, you have to include a whole range of additional cost pressures. Often cost pressures controlled by the government that have been downloaded on to school districts: that includes the doubling of MSP premiums since 2001, 60% increase in BC Hydro since 2008, they add up. We've seen in freedom of information documents that these add up to about \$200 million from the 2012-2015 school year. These serious costs pressures aren't being incorporated in those numbers."

Added to this is the fact that the BC provincial funding per student is some of the lowest in the country. While Minister

Bernier has tried to say we are 6th lowest (out of 10 provinces) in the country, Hemingway's statistics demonstrate that we are 2nd lowest in the country, with only Prince Edward Island spending less per student than BC. Whether Hemingway or Bernier are correct, BC students are being short changed by the provincial government.

But does money matter? Can't you have a good education that costs less? Technically yes, however with the way public school systems are set up throughout North America, the answer is no... not really. A June 2016 report from the National Education Policy Center at the University of Colorado Boulder titled, "Does Money Matter?" Conclusion? YES! One of the concluding points explains, "gains from investing in education are found in test scores, later earnings, and graduation rates."

BC government's love for private schools

It is no secret that BC Premier Christy Clark and the BC Liberals love private education: They have increased funding to private schools with dollars from the public purse; in September 2014 (when public school teachers were on strike) Christy Clark prioritized visiting private schools instead of meeting with teachers and students from public schools; and as a bonus, Clark's own



Student protest in front of Vancouver School Board against school closures. Sept 12, 2016

son is enrolled in private school.

In May 2016, the National Observer published an article titled, "Christy Clark gives record funding to private schools, pressures some Vancouver public schools to close". In this article, journalists Jenny Uechl and Elizabeth McSheffrey explain how "private and independent schools received \$341 million in public funding this year, up from \$311 million in public funding from 2014 to 2015. Clark sends her own son to the prestigious St. George's School, a private establishment in Vancouver, which charges upwards of \$20,000 a year in tuition for residents and \$30,860 for international students." Clark's preference for privatization has been established throughout her career from healthcare to transportation; the rise of privatization has sharply increased under the BC Liberal party.

However, it is not only about privatizing, the underfunding of public education has led to many problems. One of which is coming to a head right now between the provincial government, Vancouver School Board and the people of Vancouver. Due to chronic underfunding, lower student enrolment and the government criteria sheet for seismic upgrades, the Vancouver School Board is possibly going to be closing 11 public community schools in Vancouver (all happen to be on the less affluent eastside of the city). These school closures are not only being threatened in Vancouver though, school boards across the province are having to consider this as an option based on the catch-22 given to them by the provincial government.

What we really have is a case of bad government priorities...

Hemingway's report for the CCPA begins with an abstract which concludes, "School closures, disjointed funding announcements and school board budget crises are not necessary or inevitable. In BC, the numbers show we can afford to invest strongly and stably in education. Underfunding is a political choice." The notion that the BC government is creating the funding crisis in the public education system is not new. Since coming to power in 2001, the BC Liberal government has torn up teacher contracts; eliminated class size and composition language in order to stuff schools to the brim; taken the cap off university and college tuition; increased funding for private secondary schools; threats to hold back seismic upgrading funds if schools were not filled to 95% of their capacity; and the list goes on. Of course, many of the government's own statements and decisions have so infuriated people living in British Columbia that the government has had to change their policies



Families protest against school closures. August 4, 2016.

or plans – due to protests or upcoming elections. Recently right-wing journalist for the Vancouver Sun, Vaughn Palmer, nicknamed Minister Bernier “Backdown Bernier” due to all of the government flip-flopping on education.

However throughout the ups and downs one thing has been clear. The BC government is guiding the public education system in this province down a path that can only lead to a sharpened crisis. As mentioned in Hemingway’s report, this is not a simple mistake or a ‘tightening of the belt’ in a time of economic desperation. This is a question of priorities and political preference.

In the CCPA report Alex Hemingway looks at the numbers: “Arguably the best way to understand what we can afford to invest in public education is to look at BC’s overall economic pie to see how much of it we invest in the education system. When we do that, we see a significant drop in the share of our total economic resources dedicated to public education. K–12 funding has fallen steadily from 3.3% of our province’s Gross Domestic Product in 2001 to a projected 2.5% in Budget 2016 — which is a 25% decline.”

Hemingway further explains, “These numbers are not small potatoes. A 0.9% decline in the share of GDP dedicated to education funding represents about \$2 billion per year. (Yes, that’s ‘billion’ with a ‘b’.)” So where is the rest of the money going? This is a good question that we will have to delve into in future articles.

Education in Cuba

So what are our options in BC? How do we avoid this deepening crisis? An interesting example for education is that of socialist Cuba. Since the Cuban revolution in 1959, the Cuban government has made education a firm priority for all people regardless of gender, race, age, class or community.

Before the revolution in 1953, 90% of people in Cuba were illiterate or semi-literate, without even a 6th grade education level. Today, Cuba has officially eradicated illiteracy. However, illiteracy was rooted

out, not this year, but only two years after the triumph of the revolution in 1961 through the Cuban literacy campaign. This campaign involved thousands of young volunteers going out into mostly rural Cuba to teach farmers and peasants to read. It also meant getting children into schools and learning, rather than working on family farms. This has been called “the world’s most ambitious literacy campaign” and it has been a great and lasting success!

According to UNICEF statistics the Cuban government dedicates about 13% of its Gross Domestic Product (GDP) to education. Nationally Canada uses about 5% according to UNICEF statistics. We know from Hemingway’s report that that number is lower in British Columbia about 2.5% of the GDP for the 2016 Budget.

A World Bank report placed Cuba in the top position in terms of investment in education for 2009-2013. According to the report Cuba’s investment of 13% of its GDP in education means it spends a larger percent of its GDP on education than any other country in the world!

Cuba has firmly established education as a human right. They have made elementary, secondary and post-secondary studies free and accessible to all. Their education system is also renowned in Latin America. Salim Lamrani, professor at the University of Reunion and author of the book: *Cuba, the Media, and the Challenge of Impartiality*, wrote an article about Cuba’s education system in May 2015. Lamrani explains, “Areas such as health, education, culture and sport have always been a priority in Cuba and the results are outstanding. With a literacy rate of 99.8%, the island exhibits the lowest rate of illiteracy of Latin America, according to UNESCO, which also emphasizes that Cuba has the highest enrollment rate in Latin America with 99.7 of the students with free education. Another UNESCO report on education in 13 countries in Latin America ranks Cuba in first place in all subjects and stresses that a Cuban student has twice the knowledge and skills of the average Latin American student.”

In another World Bank report: “Great Teachers: How to Raise Student Learning in Latin America and the Caribbean” had to begrudgingly recognize the outstanding teacher training Cuba provides. They wrote, “No Latin American school system today, except possibly Cuba’s, is very close to high standards, high academic talent, high or at least adequate compensation, and high professional autonomy that characterize the world’s most effective education systems.” Once again Cuba shows itself to be a major force in education

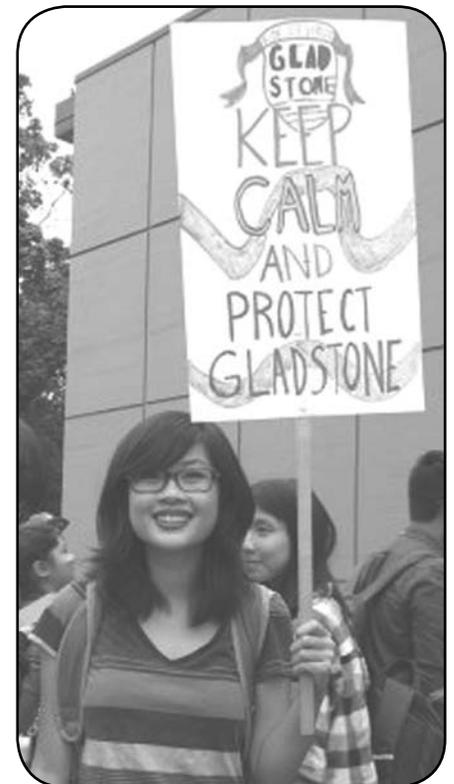
for the western hemisphere. Also showing that it is not only about money, it is also about government priorities.

What can BC learn from Cuba?

It is true that Cuba is a developing or third-world country. Cuba’s Gross Domestic Product annually is \$77.15 billion as compared to Canada’s \$1.552 trillion or even the province of British Columbia’s GDP which will reach \$250 billion in 2016. Cuba reminds us of what is possible on a small budget, when quality education is your goal and priority. Despite over 50 years of economic blockade by the United States and even the crushing economic crash of the special period in 1990s- Cuba did not close its schools or hospitals, because Cuba’s priority is people, not profits.

Here in BC and across Canada, we are hearing constant excuses for cuts to our social programs. Families and communities are consistently fighting the provincial and federal governments to put the money where it belongs, in the programs and institutions that provide health, education, shelter, water and jobs to the people of BC and Canada. We need to put a stop to the school closures and demand that the BC government adequately fund our education system. However, we also need to reflect on what Cuba has been able to accomplish and work towards systemic change to a more equitable education system for all.

Follow Tamara on Twitter: @THans01



Protest in front of Vancouver School Board. September 27, 2016

THE PEOPLE OF YEMEN HAVE SHOWN AN ASTONISHING RESISTANCE AGAINST U.S. & SAUDI-ARABIAN AGGRESSION



By Azza Rojbi

"This is a daily reality for us; the bombs fall from the sky day and night and we don't know where it is safe."

-Abd-al-Fattah Hassan Abdullah, whose father was killed by a Saudi airstrike in Sa'da city, Yemen, July 2015.

The story of Abd-al-Fattah is the story of thousands of Yemenis suffering daily under the U.S.-backed Saudi-led brutal war on Yemen. Eighteen months after the beginning of the Saudi bombing campaign, the United Nations (UN) estimates that over 10,000 civilians were killed, at least 3 million people have been internally displaced and at least 200,000 were forced to leave the country.

The Saudi-led coalition began its military campaign in Yemen, also called "Operation Decisive Storm", in March 2015 under the pretext of helping to restore the power of Yemen's "legitimate" president Abd Rabbu Mansour Hadi. However, not only has Mansour Hadi's presidency term expired, but he also resigned from the presidential post on January 22, 2015 and later fled to Saudi Arabia. Any claim by Saudi Arabia or its allies that they are supporting a legitimate government in Yemen is misleading, and in fact a pure lie.

The Saudi-led coalition, backed by the U.S., includes the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar, Egypt, Jordan, Morocco, Senegal and Sudan.

In April 2015, after a month of continuous indiscriminate bombing and destruction, Saudi Arabia announced the end "Operation Decisive Storm" and the start of a reconstruction effort named "Operation Renewal of Hope".

Brigadier-General Ahmed al-Asiri, the coalition's spokesperson, announced in a press conference "Operation Decisive Storm" was a "success" and that "the primary goals of the campaign have been achieved and sovereignty has been protected."

The reality of the situation on the ground in Yemen tells a different story. Saudi Arabia was unsuccessful in restoring to power their puppet, Mansour Hadi, and more importantly their bombings and killings failed to break



the spirit of the Yemeni resistance.

Announcing the beginning of "Operation Renewal of

Hope" is also complete farce and deception, as Saudi airstrikes resumed against the Yemeni people less than 6 hours after this announcement.

"Operation Renewal of Hope"= actually the UN's highest-level humanitarian emergency

On July 1, 2015, the UN declared the situation in Yemen to be at the highest level of humanitarian emergency.

In addition to the brutal bombing campaign, the Saudi-led coalition imposed an air, sea and land blockade on Yemen, which prevents aid from reaching the Yemeni people and creates shortages of fuel, food, water and medical supplies.

According to UN figures, 21.1 million people in Yemen, which is more than 80 percent of its population, are in need of aid. Around 14.4 million people lack access to adequate healthcare services and 19 million lack access to clean water and sanitation, which increases the risk of contracting diseases such as cholera.

The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) estimates that 8 children are killed or injured every day in Yemen and about 320,000 children face severe malnutrition.

In a recent address on the humanitarian situation in Yemen, the UN Under-Secretary-General and Emergency Relief Coordinator (USG/ERC) Stephen O'Brien said, "The humanitarian crisis in Yemen is one of the worst in the world... basic services and the economy are in near total collapse. Livelihoods have been destroyed, the price of basic goods has skyrocketed; imports of food, fuel and medicines are severely limited."

Despite the high civilian death toll and the dire situation for people in Yemen, the Saudi-led coalition continues its criminal bombing campaign and is constantly violating international humanitarian law.

The use, production, sale and transfer of Cluster bombs are banned under the 2008 Convention on Cluster Munitions, which has almost 100 signatory states. Of course it comes as no surprise that the U.S. and Saudi Arabia have not signed the convention. Civilians and particularly children have been the primary victims of such

weapons.

What is at stake?

Saudi Arabia and its allies have been justifying the criminal war on Yemen under the pretext of stopping terrorism and restoring legitimacy and stability to Yemen.

Mohammed bin Nawaf bin Abdulaziz, Saudi Arabia's ambassador to Britain wrote a piece for the Telegraph newspaper titled, "Saudi Arabia is bombing in Yemen to bring peace and stability."

It seems that Saudi definition of bringing peace to Yemen is by carpet bombing the country to the ground!

Saudi Arabia, the U.S. and the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) do not have the wellbeing of the Yemeni people in mind! Their main goal is to stop and destroy the popular opposition movement, in favor of the U.S. and Saudi backed government of Mansour Hadi. By labeling the movement against the Hadi government as "Iranian-backed Houthis", Saudi Arabia had tried relentlessly to undermine the broad popular movement for democracy and against corruption that started in Yemen in 2011.



Yemen after Saudi Arabian bombings.

The war on Yemen is part of a strategy by the U.S. and its imperialist allies to gain back and expand their hegemony over North Africa and the Middle East. They want to crash the Yemeni people's quest and struggle for democracy and independence by blocking the formation of an independent state in Yemen.

An independent and free Yemen also represents a potential threat to the shaky Saudi monarchy and other Gulf States monarchies. The Saudi government is using the war on Yemen domestically in the hopes of rally more support and to generate patriotism in its population, especially as they continue their crack down on peaceful protests in the eastern region of the country. The Saudi media's uncritical and widespread coverage of the "successful" military mission in Yemen also helps the Saudi regime to divert attention from its political and economic problems, rising youth unemployment, and the increase in austerity cuts.

U.S. proxy war by Saudi Arabia and UN lip service to Peace

It is important to remember that since 2002, the U.S. has been waging a covert "drone war" in Yemen in the name of fighting terrorism and killing al-Qaeda militants. To this day the US continues its drone strikes on Yemen with the most recent strike reported on September 23 2016.

From day one of the Saudi led bombing on Yemen, the White House posted a statement declaring: "President Obama has authorized the provision of logistical and intelligence support to GCC-led military operations."

As the Wall Street Journal reported: "American military planners are using live intelligence feeds from surveillance flights over Yemen to help Saudi Arabia decide what and where to bomb, U.S. officials said."

As much as the White House wants to hide it, the U.S. is at the forefront of the war on Yemen and is an accomplice to all of the crimes and atrocities committed by the Saudi-led coalition.

In an interview with "CBS This Morning" in September 2015, Saudi Arabia's foreign minister, Adel al-Jubeir, was asked about a Saudi-led airstrike that hit a Yemeni wedding party, killing more than 130 civilians. Adel al-Jubeir said that the coalition was "very careful in picking targets." He continued, "We have very precise weapons," and "We work with our allies, including the United States, on these targets."

The U.S. might not be the one pulling the trigger but it is providing the weapons, the ammunition and the targets!

Since 2010 Saudi Arabia has purchased more than \$100 billion in arms from the U.S., and has been replenishing its stockpile throughout

its bombing campaign against Yemen.

Further evidence from a headline from the Washington Post, which reads: "Saudi Arabia appears to be using U.S.-supplied white phosphorus in its war in Yemen."

Canada is no stranger to this imperialist game

On March 27, 2015, Rob Nicholson, the former Minister of Foreign Affairs in Canada, released a statement. In it he outlined, "Canada is concerned by the deteriorating situation in Yemen resulting from the ongoing military actions taken by Houthi rebels... Canada supports the military action by Saudi Arabia and its Gulf Cooperation Council partners and others to defend Saudi Arabia's border and to protect Yemen's recognized government at the request of the Yemeni president."

Make no mistake, the Trudeau Liberal government is continuing the same line and the same policies as their former Conservative counterparts. The Trudeau government is pretending to champion human rights while closing a blind eye to Saudi war crimes against the people of Yemen.

According to the government of Canada website: "Saudi Arabia is currently Canada's



One million demonstrate in Sana'a, Yemen against Saudi Arabian bombings. August 20, 2016

second largest export market in the region. Trade and economic interests continue to be at the forefront of Canada's bilateral relations with Saudi Arabia."

Alongside the U.S. and U.K. military support for Saudi Arabia, the Trudeau government announced that it is moving ahead with the world's second largest arms deal with Saudi Arabia, a \$15 billion deal to supply armored vehicles. In an interview on a French talk show, Canada's Prime Minister, Justin Trudeau dismissed the military vehicles as merely "jeeps"!

According to an article by the Globe and Mail newspaper, "The light-armoured vehicles, or LAVs, will be equipped with machine guns, medium- or high-calibre weapons or even big-barrel guns that can fire 105mm shells or anti-tank missiles."

With this sale, Canada isn't just selling Saudi Arabia weapons; it is also sending the Saudi government a message of political and

ideological support.

U.S., U.K., Saudi Arabia & Canada Stop Atrocities in Yemen!

According to the Guardian newspaper, Badran Sharah, 28, who is living in Sana'a as a refugee, lost his son and uncle in what he called this "ugly war". Sharan explains, "they died because of internationally banned bombs, cluster bombs." He further explained, "people in Yemen suffer from daily massacres committed by Saudi raids. I blame USA, UK, UN, and those who are taking part in Saudi's aggression, as well as the people all over the world for their silence about what is going on in Yemen. Yemen's future will be tragedy if the world keeps silent."

As peace-loving people living in Canada, the United States, and around the world, we can't afford to be silent anymore! We must support the struggle of the Yemeni people by demanding an end to the Saudi-led bombing campaign.

It is becoming increasingly difficult and embarrassing for the U.S., U.K. and Canada to unconditionally defend the Saudi-led coalition's actions and justify their war crimes.

Voices of opposition internationally are condemning the Saudi war on Yemen and the complicity of western governments.

Peace and social justice activist in the U.S., Canada and several European countries are organizing and mobilizing people against the bombing campaign on Yemen and against their respective governments' arms deals with Saudi Arabia.

Vancouver's peace coalition Mobilization Against War and Occupation (MAWO) has also been part of the international fight to support the people of Yemen.

MAWO has been organizing, rallies, petition drives and educational forums to demand an end to the Saudi-led bombing campaign against Yemen. MAWO has also been on the streets of Vancouver protesting and petitioning against Canada's \$15 billion arms deal with the Saudi monarchy.

The Yemeni people have shown brave resistance to the Saudi and U.S. war on their country. On August 20th, a massive crowd of over a million Yemeni people joined together in the capital, Sana'a defying Saudi fighter jets and demanding an end to the brutal bombing campaign on their country.

Let's join the people of Yemen in fighting back for their rights to freely choose the future of their country. The victory of the Yemeni people would represent a victory for people all around the Middle East, North Africa and the entire world. For Yemeni people the first step to freedom and democracy is to gain and enjoy their true self-determination, sovereignty and human rights.

Follow Azza on Twitter: @Azza_R14

FIRE THIS TIME'S EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW

HIS EXCELLENCY

WILMER OMAR BARRIENTOS FERNÁNDEZ

VENEZUELAN AMBASSADOR TO CANADA



Interview & Translation

By Alison Bodine

Below is Part 2 of an extensive interview by Fire This Time (FTT) with the Venezuelan Ambassador to Canada, His Excellency Wilmer Omar Barrientos Fernández. The first part of this interview was printed in the previous issue of Fire This Time (Volume 10, Issue 9 - September):

Fire This Time (FTT): What does the counter-revolutionary Venezuelan opposition really want to achieve in Venezuela?

Ambassador Barrientos: I have always said and repeated. Venezuela's opposition has no interest in the people, as they have shown when they promote laws such as the Amnesty Law. Do you know that they brought a law such as this?

An amnesty law implies forgiveness of a crime and its enactment involves "forgetting" the crimes committed by a person absolutely, in fact, they get out of the crime as well as all liabilities.

The political nature of the amnesty, whose enactment falls constitutionally on the legislature, would allow the new National Assembly to enact by decree, by this Law, forgiveness for the crimes committed. However, the Law was vetoed by the Supreme Court in an instance of judiciary power, as the supreme interpreter of the Constitution. It was vetoed with strong support and a full room.

Liability cases in murder, fraud, attempted coup d'état and corruption could be "forgotten" and this could promote impunity for crimes against the Venezuelan people. It would be in "favor of persons involved in criminal cases, administrative, disciplinary or police investigations, and subject to administrative or criminal proceedings and would mean the end of policies and procedures that disqualify people from parliamentary immunity." But why are they seeking this?

The main objective of this Law was to free the opposition leader Leopoldo López, re-

sponsible for the deaths of 43 people during 'las guarimbas' (violent riots) and obtain impunity for those involved in terrorist acts and those that promoted and participated in acts against the political stability of Venezuela, such is the case of Daniel Ceballos, convicted of the commission of the crimes of rebellion and conspiracy.

Many of those who would benefit from an amnesty law fled the country to avoid surrendering to justice and facing due process for the commission of "ordinary crimes." Currently 36 people that have been judicially prosecuted for their involvement in the coup of April 2002, the oil sabotage of December 2002 and January 2003, and other related crimes, expect to benefit from this measure.

The country's opposition only wants to recover what the people now controls, which are its natural resources, its wealth, its oil, its reserves of water, gas, gold and other resources that are no longer mortgaged nor handed over to capitalist governments in exchange for favors and concessions.

FTT: U.S. government officials are often quoted in mainstream media as saying that there are "political prisoners" in Venezuela and number of "opposition" leaders are in prison. What is your response to this?

Amb. Barrientos: In Venezuela there are no political prisoners. I have not met a single Venezuelan opposition politician or human rights defender that speaks of the crimes, disappearances, torture and other violations of human rights that were committed for political reasons from 1958-1998. Currently, the executions and killings of more than 5,000 Venezuelans who were killed in separate massacres such as "El Caracazo", "Cantaura", "Yumare," and so-called Theaters of Operation (TO), which were torture centers that operated under throughout the country, are under investigation.

On 12 February 2014, what began in Venezuela as a peaceful demonstration to the headquarters of the Venezuelan Public Pros-



ecutors' Office, was turned into a situation of chaos and violence, very distinct from peace and harmony that is guaranteed by the Constitution.

This incident was the beginning of a series of non-peaceful protests that resulted in the death of 43 people, one a public prosecutor and three national guards, plus 878 injured, of which 600 are civilians and 278 are police, military officers and government officials.

As a result of these acts of violence, the state security agencies made several arrests; not of people who are simply exercising their right to protest, but of people that were allegedly involved to some degree in violent actions, vandalism; or who have taken the lives of others. As of January 31, 2015, the Public Prosecutors' Office had presented 911 conclusive acts, involving 2,844 people.

Referring to specific aspects of violations of fundamental rights, prosecutors began investigations into alleged violations of human rights, of which, as of January 31, 2015, 216 final decisions were presented.

Notwithstanding, out of the 3,351 people arrested for alleged involvement in violent acts that have been taken to the Court of Control, 1,507 received injunctions, 59 received conditional suspension of the process, and 1,013 received full freedom, while only 41 have been deprived of their liberty, based on the seriousness of the crime.

In general terms, the damage caused by these acts of vandalism and terrorism at national level amounted to 20 billion bolivars, with the following being the most affected states of the country: the Metropolitan Area of Caracas, with severe damage to the offices of government agencies, burned police stations and

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LA ENTREVISTA EXCLUSIVA DE FIRE THIS THE TIME

EL EMBAJADOR DE LA REPÚBLICA BOLIVARIANA DE VENEZUELA SU EXCELENCIA WILMER OMAR BARRIENTOS FERNÁNDEZ



Entrevista
Por Alison Bodine

*** EN ESPAÑOL ***

A continuación se muestra la parte 2 de una extensa entrevista por Fire This Time (FTT) con el embajador de Venezuela en Canadá, Su Excelencia Wilmer Omar Barrientos Fernández. La primera parte de esta entrevista fue impreso en el última edición de Fire This Time (Volumen 10, Número 9 - septiembre):

Fire This Time (FTT): ¿Qué quiere lograr la oposición venezolana contrarrevolucionaria en Venezuela?

Sr. Barrientos: Lo he dicho y reiterado siempre. La oposición de Venezuela no tiene un interés en el pueblo, lo han demostrado cuando promueven leyes como la Ley de Amnistía. ¿Conoces de que trataba tal ley?

Una Ley de amnistía supone el perdón de un delito, y su promulgación implica el “olvido” de los crímenes cometidos por una persona de forma absoluta, de hecho, los delitos quedan eliminados al igual que todo tipo de responsabilidad.

La naturaleza política de la amnistía, cuya promulgación recae constitucionalmente en el poder Legislativo, le permitiría a la nueva Asamblea Nacional promulgar por decreto o por la Ley el perdón a los crímenes cometidos, sin embargo, esa Ley vetada por el Tribunal Supremo de Justicia, instancia del poder Judicial y máximo intérprete de la Constitución del país, de forma contundente y en sala plena.

Casos de responsabilidad en asesinatos, estafas, intentos de golpes de Estado y corrupción podrían ser “olvidados” y promover la impunidad de los crímenes contra el pueblo venezolano. Sería en “favor de personas implicadas en casos investigación criminal, administrativa, disciplinaria o policial, y sometidas a procedimientos administrativos o penales y que supondría la finalización de las inhabilitaciones políticas y los procedimientos relativos al allanamiento de la inmunidad parlamentaria”. ¿Pero que buscaban con ello?

El principal objetivo de esta propuesta de Ley era liberar al dirigente opositor Leopoldo

López, responsable de la muerte de 43 personas durante las guarimbas, así como obtener la impunidad para los implicados en actos terroristas que promovieron y participaron en actos contra la estabilidad política de Venezuela, tal es el caso de Daniel Ceballos, condenado por la comisión de los delitos de rebelión y agavillamiento.

Muchos de los que se beneficiarían con una ley de amnistía huyeron del país para evitar entregarse a la justicia y enfrentar el debido proceso por la comisión en muchos casos de “delitos comunes”. En la actualidad 36 personas implicadas y procesadas judicialmente por su participación en el golpe de Estado de abril de 2002, el sabotaje petrolero de diciembre de 2002 y enero de 2003, así como otros crímenes relacionados esperan beneficiarse de esta medida.

La oposición del país solo quiere recuperar lo que el pueblo ahora controla, que son sus recursos naturales, sus riquezas, su petróleo, sus reservas de agua, gas, oro y demás recursos que ya no están hipotecados ni entregados a gobiernos capitalistas a cambios de favores y concesiones.

FTT: Los funcionarios del gobierno de Estados Unidos dicen que hay “prisioneros políticos” en Venezuela y varios líderes de la “oposición” están en la cárcel. ¿Cuál es su respuesta a esto?

Sr. Barrientos: En Venezuela no hay políticos presos. No he conocido un solo político de la oposición venezolana o defensor de derechos humanos que hable de los crímenes, desapariciones, torturas y otras violaciones de los Derechos Humanos que por razones políticas sucedieron en el periodo 1958-1998. Actualmente, se investigan las ejecuciones y asesinatos de más de 5.000 venezolanos que murieron en distintas masacres tales como “El Caracazo”, “Cantaura”, “Yumare” y en los denominados Teatros de Operaciones (TO), que eran centros de torturas que operaban en todo el país.

El 12 de febrero del 2014, lo que comenzó en Venezuela como una manifestación pacífica hasta la sede principal del Ministerio Público venezolano, fue convertida en una situación de caos y violencia muy distinta a la de paz y armonía que garantiza la Constitución.

Este incidente fue el comienzo de una serie de protestas no pacíficas que han traído como consecuencia la muerte de 43 personas, una de ellas un fiscal del Ministerio Público y tres guardias nacionales, además de 878 lesionadas, de las cuales 600 son civiles y 278 son funcionarios policiales, militares y funcionarios públicos.

Como consecuencia de estos hechos de violencia, los organismos de seguridad del Estado realizaron diversas detenciones; y no se han practicado sobre personas que simplemente están ejerciendo su derecho a la protesta, sino sobre quienes se presume han tenido, algún grado de participación en acciones violentas, en actos vandálicos; y que han atentado contra la vida de otras personas. El Ministerio Público hasta el 31 de enero del 2015, ha presentado 911 actos conclusivos que involucran a 2.844 personas.

En referencia a los aspectos específicos de violaciones de los derechos fundamentales, el Ministerio Público inició investigaciones por presuntas violaciones a los derechos humanos, de los cuales, al 31 de enero de 2015, se presentaron 216 actos conclusivos.

No obstante, los aprehendidos por estar presuntamente incurso en hechos violentos y que fueron presentadas en los tribunales de control, asciende a los 3.351; de los cuales 1.507 recibieron el beneficio de las medidas cautelares de libertad, 59 recibieron suspensión condicional del proceso, 1.013 recibieron libertad plena, mientras que sólo 41 han sido privados de libertad, por la gravedad del delito que se le ha imputado.

En términos generales los daños causados por estas acciones vandálicas y terroristas a nivel nacional ascienden a los 20 mil millones de Bolívares, siendo los Estados más afectados del país: el Área Metropolitana de Caracas con daños severos en las sedes de los organismos gubernamentales, incendio de unidades policiales y bancos, al igual que más de 61 estaciones del servicio de transporte público Metro y Metrobus afectadas; en Aragua resultó severamente afectada la infraestructura de la Alcaldía, zonas residenciales y estaciones de servicio de combustible; en Carabobo fue afectada la sede de Petróleos de Venezuela (PDVSA),

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U.S. HANDS OFF SYRIA!

SYRIA
سورية

*An excerpt of the talk by
Nita Palmer at Mobilization
Against War and Occupation
forum on Syria on September
27, 2016 in Vancouver,
British Columbia, Canada*



SYRIA, A TRAGEDY MADE BY IMPERIALIST INTERVENTION & AGGRESSION

Transcription by Alison Bodine

Hello everyone, thank you for coming this evening. We know from what we have seen in the news and what we have seen in the video clips here that Syria today is in a complete state of crisis. But, what is easy to forget amidst all this coverage is that just five years ago Syria was a peaceful country, one of the most advanced in the Middle East in terms of education, healthcare, and other social programs. It is a country of beautiful cities and ancient ruins and history. It was even considered to be a vacation paradise for Europeans.

All public education in Syria is free, including university. Before the war, school enrolment was at 93%, but today thousands of schools have been closed, teachers have fled the country and there are 4 million children out of school. Some children in Syria today have never been able to receive an education.

Healthcare is also free. Before the war Syria was making great improvements and advances in their in healthcare system. It was considered to be one of the best in the Middle East. But now, many hospitals have been destroyed, thousands of doctors have fled the country, and the pharmaceutical sector has been all but destroyed. Syria made the majority of their own medicines before the war, but there is now a massive shortage of medicines in the country. The security situation, particularly in the terrorist-controlled areas, has also prevented many Syrians from seeking medical aid.

The sanitation systems have been destroyed, and access to water limited in many areas. All of this has added up to a

massive public health crisis and people have begun dying from diseases like polio, which were eradicated until before the war.

On top of this, more than 400,000 people have lost their lives and nearly half of the country's population has had to flee their homes. There are about five million Syrian refugees outside of Syria, as well as another 6.5 million who are internally displaced within their country.

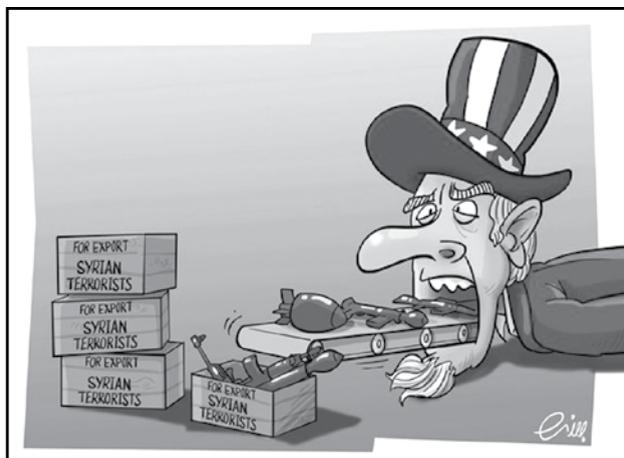
If you watch the news you will see videos from the White Helmets, which Ken talked about earlier, showing 'regime bombings,' and a lot of talk in the media about the so-called 'war crimes' of Russia and the Syrian government.

But, what they won't show you is the video of the so-called 'moderate rebels' in Aleppo beheading a 12 year old boy, on video, mocking him, saying, "we are worse than ISIS". They won't show you the coverage of clinics and apartment buildings torn apart by rebel shelling in Aleppo or the hundreds of people killed in these attacks.

They won't show you the numerous air strikes by the US and their allies in the country that have killed hundreds of civilians. We just saw the coverage in that video of the one man who lost almost all of his children in an air strike. The US denies that any civilians were killed in

this air strike and says that this father is not credible. Stories like his are multiplied by hundreds, thousands of times across Syria. All from people like him, to whom the US is saying that their lives, the lives of their children, don't matter.

The reporting of the war in Syria on the whole has been some of the most atrocious reporting that I have ever seen. It is not only one-sided and completely without context, it is not even reporting the truth. The mainstream media actually reported three different times that the last children's hospital in Aleppo, the Anadan hospital, had been destroyed. How can the same hospital have been destroyed three times? In reality, they have been showing pictures of other buildings which were damaged, and some of the hospitals they are claiming have been destroyed are other buildings or not even recognized hospitals. It is just complete lies, essentially, which are being reported, without any accountability, just for the goal of for-





warding the agenda of the US there.

The main source for their ‘facts’ that are used to say what is happening in Syria is also just coming from the opposition groups. There is very little independent investigation or anything that is being shown in the media as to what is really going on.

What about Aleppo?

What is going on in Aleppo has also been reported entirely without context. The tragedy in Aleppo, is not an isolated tragedy. It is happening within the context years of a so-called civil war in Syria, which is really a proxy war which has been completely created by the US and their allies.

The official narrative that we see in the news is, of course, that a civil war in Syria started when the Syrian government and President Bashar al-Assad launched a violent crackdown on peaceful protesters and that since then Syrian government has basically just been attacking its own citizens. And then somehow - this is never really explained other than vague mentions of it being Assad’s fault - ISIS has come to rise in Syria.

In reality, the war in Syria began with a so-called protest movement, which started not as most protest movements do, with a mobilization in the cities demanding rights and freedoms, but rather with a small group of armed rebels in a town near the Turkish border.

I want to read an excerpt from a report from a Dutch missionary who was in Syria from April 2012, who was later killed. He explains that, “Most of the citizens of Syria do not support the op-

position... you also cannot say that this is a popular uprising. The majority of people are not part of the rebellion and certainly not part of the armed rebellion. What is occurring is, above all, a struggle between the army and armed Sunni groups that aim to overturn the Alawite regime and take power. From the start the protest movements were not purely peaceful. From the start I saw armed demonstrators marching along in protests, who began to shoot at the police first. Very often the violence of the security forces has been a reaction to the brutal violence of the armed rebels.”

So, this is a first-hand account which has been echoed, of course, by many other activists and Syrians themselves, saying that the ‘opposition’, the so-called ‘moderate’ opposition, the so-called ‘supporters of democracy’ that the US are aiding, were, from the beginning, for the most part conservative Sunni Islamist groups who were opposed the liberal and secular Syrian government.

So this is the context for what has happened in Syria in the last five years that brings us to Aleppo today.

Aleppo has been at the heart of the war in Syria since the beginning. It is Syria’s biggest commercial centre and is also on important supply route from Turkey for the so-called rebels. The city has been divided between government-held and terrorist-controlled areas, but in the beginning of 2016, the Syrian army began to make gains against these terrorist groups that control half of Aleppo. By the end of July, the Syrian army had Aleppo surrounded and had cut off the last weapons supply route to the terrorists.

What about ceasefire?

The Syrian army, at that point, was really on the verge of winning what would have been a decisive battle in the war. At this point, the US government and media and the US-funded groups, like



US bombing of Kobani, Syria

But these groups did not act on their own: they received funding from Saudi Arabia, Turkey and the United States - funding, training and weapons. These groups were, and are, by definition, terrorists. The dictionary definition of terrorism is “the use of violence and intimidation in the pursuit of political aims,” which is exactly what these groups are doing.

the White Helmets, that are claiming to represent the ‘Syrian people,’ started campaigns in the media about Syrian government’s so-called atrocities.

The US supported a ceasefire, but used it only to buy time. Recall that the first RT video that we saw tonight was an interview with an Al-Nusra commander who was saying that they were using that time to receive training and arms. But the US broke the ceasefire with



the bombing of the Syrian army, which killed over 60 people, and then ignored the advances made by ISIS, or Daesh, in the wake of the bombing.

From the beginning it was clear that this ceasefire for the US was not because they really cared about the Syrian people, and they wanted to really try and work things out. It was simply an opportunity to buy some time to try and re-organize their forces because the Syrian government had been making gains against the ‘moderate rebels’ that they are backing.

The US has called for a ‘no fly zone,’ but we can see that it would really be more of the same thing. They don’t really want a ‘no fly zone,’ they basically want a ceasefire that is only for their opponents. They want a ceasefire that only applies to Russia and the Syrian government, not to themselves.

As the same time, as the US has been supporting these terrorist organizations in their campaign against the Syrian government, they have also been looking for an opportunity to expand their direct military intervention in Syria. They have tried many different ways to overthrow the Syrian government, but it still has the support of a majority of the Syrian people.

They are looking to further their intervention through ‘boots on the ground’ there. Although the US has claimed that they do not want to put boots on the ground in Syria, there are already 300 troops there.

They have been using their allies to do their dirty work for them. At the end of August, staunch US ally Turkey

launched a ground invasion of Syria with the excuse that they were ‘protecting Turkish border from Daesh.’ In reality, this was simply a way for the US and their allies to expand intervention in Syria.

Turkey’s foreign minister announced this week that they will be pushing farther into Northern Syria. This is a significant violation of Syrian sovereignty and an obvious way for the US to try and gain an upper hand in the situation.

So, what is the US interest in Syria?

They have claimed, of course, that it is a humanitarian interest, to bring peace and democracy and human rights to the people of Syria. But what human rights or democracy, or peace has been brought there?

The human rights situation in Syria is far, far worse today, with millions of refugees forced out of their homes; food, water, and medicine shortages; and schools, hospitals, all the basic things needed for life completely destroyed.

They claim that they are there to get rid of terrorism. But the US actions inside Syria have supported rise of Daesh, a dangerous terrorist organization, either directly or indirectly. They are supporting terrorist organizations like the al-Nusra front.

This is completely exposing what the US agenda is, and that they are not really fighting for human rights, or waging a ‘war on terrorism’. They, in fact, have broader strategic interests in Syria. Not just to access oil or resources, but also to re-colonize the Middle East. They want to eliminate the independent, anti-imperialist governments like Syria, like they have done with Libya. They want to turn Syria into essentially a military base next-door to Iran, which is a country that has been in the US sights for invasion or

overthrow of their independent government since the 1979 Iranian Revolution.

Syria today is also a situation where the US is really trying to gain an upper hand over its competitors, China and, particularly in Syria, Russia.

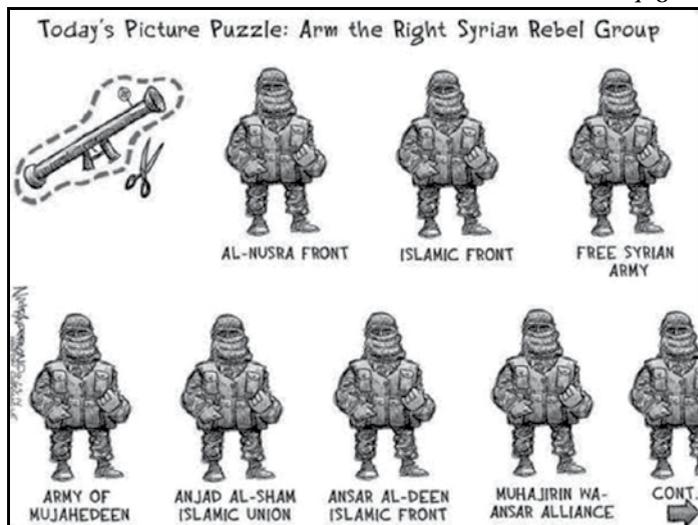
Essentially, the US and their allies, including Canada, which we must not forget, have absolutely destroyed a country which was one of the most advanced in the Middle East in terms of social development, until they came on the scene. Syria was not a perfect country, of course, and has its own internal issues, just like any country, just like Canada and the US themselves do. But, through their both direct and indirect interference, the US and their allies have created this massive crisis. They have not only destroyed the country, but they have allowed the rise of dangerous terrorist organizations like Daesh.

US, UK, France, Canada and all other imperialists hands of Syria

Really, I think the only option left for Syria in terms of how to move forward, of how to get out of this situation, is for the country to be left to the Syrian government and the Syrian people to decide what to do. The US and their allies have unequivocally proven that they are not interested in stopping terrorism, in bringing human rights, in bringing democracy to Syria.

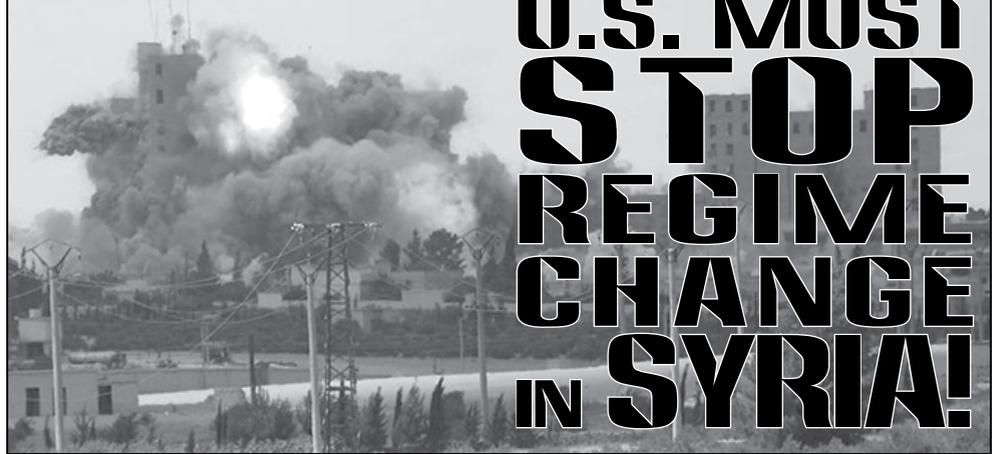
If Daesh is to be defeated, it must be by a Syrian-led force, with help from other countries only at the invitation of

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SYRIA سورية

US bombing of Aleppo, Syria, June 16, 2016



U.S. MUST STOP REGIME CHANGE IN SYRIA!

Transcription by Alison Bodine

Transcription from speech given at September 27th 2016 "U.S. Hands Off Syria" forum organized by Mobilization Against War & Occupation.

*By Ken Stone**

Thank you, Alison, for inviting me to participate in the meeting tonight. You asked me to talk about how Canada got involved in the dirty war in Syria.



Hopefully, on your screen now, you can see an article I wrote for Globalresearch.ca three years ago. It was the Harper government of Canada that got us involved in this dirty war against Syria, but it is our Canadian membership in NATO that routinely gets us involved in every war of the US Empire.

But here is the dirt on Harper, six points of how we ended up in this war of aggression against Syria.

In late 2011, after it became clear that the Syrian government was not going to fall, as was predicted of other governments during the so-called Arab Spring, Harper called upon Glenn Davidson, Canadian ambassador to Tunisia. Harper instructed him to organize a meeting, a pre-conference in Tunisia in December 2011, for a founding conference of an organization known as the Friends of Syria Group of Countries. That conference took place in February 2012.

What happened was that when the Syrian government didn't fall, NATO countries, under the leadership of Hillary Clinton, decided that they were going to make a war against the Syrian government for regime change, using terrorist mercenaries, planted inside the country to attack the country and occupy parts of it. Our Canadian Ambassador helped to organize this Friends of Syria Group, which divided up the tasks among the various countries involved. Saudi Arabia and Qatar with their deep pockets were going to fund the

operation; the United States was going to use its vast network for intelligence; the French and British were going to provide training for the terrorist mercenaries; Turkey and Jordan would allow training/supply bases and refugee camps on their territories; and the Canadian government was going to provide humanitarian aid for the refugees that would inevitably be created. Well, we know how that turned out. That was how we got involved in the war.

And the main point of contention with that war is that western NATO countries do not have the right to unilaterally decide to topple the government of any country they don't like. It's illegal under international law to do. Only the people of a sovereign country have the right to put into power or remove from power leaders they like or don't like.

The second way was that Canada volunteered to become the chair of the economic sanctions sub-committee of the Friends of Syria Group of Countries. In June of 2013, it organized a conference in Ottawa, which the Canadian government hosted with your tax dollars, brothers and sisters, to slap illegal economic sanctions against Syria. They were illegal because they were not sanctioned by the United Nations Security Council. They created such a miserable condition of life for people in Syria that manyhundreds of

thousands of people were forced to become refugees and leave the country.

A third way that Canada became involved was funding the "rebels," the so-called rebels. The Canadian government gave millions of dollars to the Syrian "rebels", that is to say, to sectarian terrorist mercenaries.

The fourth way was the part played by Canadian military brass in laying the plans for the US-led coalition, in which we are still, unfortunately, a part.

The fifth way that we became involved was that the Canadian government invited Syrian expatriates from abroad, who were involved with the so-called Free Syrian Army, to come to Canada and feted them and gave them a lot of publicity and help. Also, the Canadian government worked with Syrian expatriates in Canada who were opposed to the legitimate government of Bashar Al-Assad.

Finally, the Canadian government, through Harper and John Baird, did their utmost to demonize and de-legitimize the lawful Syrian government.

So, that is how we became involved in the war in Syria.

Now, I would like to put up a couple of slides from the slideshow which I created when I was launching my booklet, "Defiant Syria."



Antiwar protest of Syrian community in front of US Embassy in Ottawa, Canada.

SYRIA سورية

I have to point out to you that there is a real Civil Defence Organization in Syria. It was founded in 1953, and it was a founding member of the International Civil Defense Organization. So, these White Helmets are complete poseurs. They are pretenders and they are used for propaganda purposes. They are supposed to be really nice guys, people who are doing really great things. But, if you check the videos that Al Nusra terrorists post on line, you will see that bearded men who are in one video fighting the Syrian Army with assault rifles and RPG's are in the next video donning their white helmets and White Helmet uniforms. Their membership is very fluid. It's really a propaganda outfit. What they are doing is promoting a certain political line. Now, the Red Cross, the Red Crescent, don't take political lines, they serve people on all sides. But, that is not true of the White Helmets. The White Helmets call for the overthrow of Assad government. The White Helmets also called for a 'No-Fly Zone' over Syria, which is precisely the same tactic that NATO used in 2011 to destroy the Libyan state and turn it into the failed state where there are rival militias fighting each other and the population is piling into boats trying to get away to Europe. This is part of the refugee problem. The leader of the White Helmets is Raed Saleh. He was recently barred from entering the USA in April of this year to accept a prize on behalf of the White Helmets and deported directly from Dulles Airport in Washington, DC, straight back to Turkey. If the leader of the organization is barred from entering the USA, what does that tell you about the organization?

So, the White Helmets are a construct of the West. They were a creation of several



Wall Street publicity firms and the fact that they are getting coverage at the Toronto International Film Festival and by the NDP really is shameful because people are being duped, people are being asked to believe that this White Helmets organization is a force for good, when actually it is an appendage of Al-Qaeda.

I hope I've answered the questions that you put to me, Alison, for yourself and the brothers and sisters that are at your meeting. I wanted to let you know that my booklet, which you have there, are the very last of the print copies. If people want to read my account of being in Syria during April, the booklet is also available online. It is called "Defiant Syria" and you can get it at any major online book-selling site, such as Amazon, Kobo and iTunes for about \$3.

I hope that my presentation has been of some use to you and wish you all every success at your meeting.

**Ken Stone is an executive member of the Syria Solidarity Movement and treasurer of the Hamilton Coalition to Stop the War*

DEFIANT SYRIA: dispatches from the Second International Tour of Peace to Syria



by Ken Stone

Veteran, Canadian, anti-war activist Ken Stone has written a series of reports from the Second International Tour of Peace which visited Syria from April 12-18, 2016. The eye-witness reports document the observance of the Syrian parliamentary elections of April 13; the destruction and reconstruction in Homs; the peace and reconciliation efforts of the Syrian government towards the armed opposition; the damage wrought by ISIS upon the ancient world heritage site at Palmyra; and the defiant, upbeat, and resilient attitudes of Syrians about the future, despite five long years of foreign aggression against their country.

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Kobo and iTunes!

OUR HERITAGE



Alexandra Kollontai

1872-1952

Russian revolutionary leader

The capitalists always say: 'We must arm ourselves because we are threatened by war!' And they point to their sacred symbols: militarism on land, militarism on the high seas, and militarism in the air. They summon the spectre of war in order to put it between themselves and the red spectre. They call for war in order to free themselves from the spectre of social revolution.

But the International answers them with one united call: 'Down with war!' The workers know that behind the threat of war there stands the capitalist state that wants to burden the people with new taxes, there stands the war industry that wants to increase its profits...

And even if tsarism, if the Russian capitalists, did indeed venture to attack Sweden, we nonetheless still exist! We, the proletariat! Did we not survive the crisis in Morocco? And who was it then who impeded the threatened outbreak of war? Yes, the international proletariat, which threw out the challenge to the German and French governments, the German and French capitalists: 'Not one step further! We stand here, and if the capitalists dare to wage war, then the red spectre will turn into social revolution, and you yourselves will then be responsible!'

Excerpts from a speech at a meeting of the Swedish League of Socialist Youth and the left wing of the Swedish Social-Democratic Party, May 1, 1912



September 19th, 2016

The Syria Solidarity Movement unequivocally condemns and denounces the vicious US bombing attack on the Syrian army defending Deir ez-Zour, and we wish to make the following observations.

1. The attack killed at least 62 Syrian soldiers and wounded more than 100. This is larger than the number of casualties inflicted in any US bombing on any terrorist target in Syria since the US announced its “war on ISIS”.
2. The bombing inflicted no known casualties on ISIS, which the US says was its intended target.
3. The US has produced no evidence that it notified its Russian counterparts, as required by agreement. In fact, joint action against ISIS was not expected for another two days. This leads to suspicions that the US attack was intended to preempt the provisions of the agreement.
4. Syrian soldiers report seeing reconnaissance drones the previous day.
5. ISIS fighters were poised to begin fighting the Syrian army units as soon as the US bombing raids ended. How did they know what constituted the end of the bombing?
6. Although the Russian military presence in Syria is legal because it came at the invitation of the sovereign Syrian state, the US presence is illegal and was never approved, either by the Syrian government or by the United Nations. All US military actions in Syria therefore constitute an illegal invasion of Syrian territory, and must end now.

We find the US explanation of “unintended” targets, and especially the belligerent performance of Ambassador Samantha Power at the United

Syria Solidarity Movement Statement on the US Attack against the Syrian Army at Deir ez-Zour

Nations Security Council, to be false, disingenuous and counterproductive. The only credible explanation is that the US attack on Deir ez-Zour was intentional. The US has never seriously tried to fight ISIS other than to defend Kurdish fighters, with rare and largely ineffectual attacks against ISIS fighters in their strongholds, and none during the ISIS campaign against Palmyra, when they were very vulnerable by air.

We believe that the US intention is to dismember the sovereign Syrian state, and that the Syrian army base at Deir ez-Zour constitutes an obstacle to this plan, and is therefore a US target. In accordance with this plan, the US does not mind if ISIS continues to occupy a large portion of the Syrian Euphrates valley, and in fact prefers to maintain ISIS as a destructive force that weakens Syria and is available as a proxy fighting force for other US regional designs, in partnership with their Israeli allies.

We are doubtful that the US intends to honor its agreement with Russia, and implicitly with Syria. US strategists are seeking to weaken and threaten Russia and not to form cooperative and mutually beneficial agreements. Accordingly, the only option may unfortunately be to make the cost to the US too high to be acceptable, and thereby to force a change in its priorities.

There is another and more constructive alternative, as follows.

1. The US should immediately issue a formal apology to the government of Syria and offer restitution for damages, both to the Syrian government and to the families of the dead and wounded.
2. The US should withdraw completely from all Syrian territory and end its support for all fighting forces there.
3. The US should enforce its end user agreements on the use of its arms supplied to Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Qatar and other countries, to prevent their use in non-defensive roles outside their territories,

and in particular to prevent supplying them to subversive forces in Syria.

4. The US should use its influence in international banking and commerce to prevent the transfer of funds to terrorist forces in Syria and to prevent illegal trafficking by terrorists of oil and other Syrian assets from terrorist-held territory.

5. The US should try to develop a new and cooperative relationship with Russia, and to stop threatening Russia through its subversive actions in Syria, Ukraine and other places, including the stationing of bases and troops in countries on Russia’s borders. The US should end its commercial and financial sanctions against Russia and Syria.

6. The US needs to take action to end the internal bickering within its own government. International diplomacy is impossible when agreements negotiated by diplomats are undermined by other governmental agencies. Secretary of Defense Ash Carter and other US government figures should be fired for insubordination and replaced with figures that allow the administration to speak with a single voice and so that negotiated agreements can be assured of implementation.

The Syria Solidarity Movement advocates respect for and compliance with all international law, prosecution of international outlaws, an end to attempts to strengthen one country by destroying others, the use of diplomacy to settle international disputes, and the development of peaceful and constructive relationships among all nations. We hold these goals to be of the utmost priority at the present moment because, given the level of escalation to which the USA has pushed a confrontation with Russia (and China) over Syria, Ukraine, and the South China Sea, the threat to world peace has never been higher since 1939.

www.syriasolidaritymovement.org



September, 20 2016

The US-Russian negotiated cessation of hostilities has collapsed in Syria. The United States has intervened directly in ways that undermine any possibility of the ceasefire succeeding. On September 18, US forces, four Jets followed by a couple of helicopters, attacked a Syrian Arab Army (SAA) outpost near Deir Ezzor killing at least 82 soldiers and wounding 100 more and destroying their equipment. This was supposed to be a joint operation to go after ISIS, but under cover of this attack ISIS fighters stormed the SAA position and took the hilltops where they were stationed.

Just after this unprecedented attack on the Syrian Army by the United States, Israel launched an attack on SAA positions in the Golan where they were fighting Al Nusra, killing and injuring several more Syrian soldiers.

The United States claimed that the attack was an accident. Even so, US allies, Australia, Denmark and the UK- have confirmed that they too took part. All are assisting in imperialist murder.

The Russians called a meeting of the UN Security Council to discuss the US violation of both the current cessation of hostilities agreement' and the Geneva agreement on Syria. US Ambassador Samantha Power chose to boycott the meeting and instead held a press conference outside the door, which she opened by accusing the Russians of attacking civilians, schools and hospitals in Syria, before sarcastically accusing them of hypocrisy and calling the meeting a "stunt". She dismissed the murder of nearly 100 Syrians without a pause. Powers indignation was clearly intended for her US audience as few others in the world would find her sarcasm and her rejection of the international forum for dialogue acceptable.



One day later, on September 19th, a UN Aid Convoy was struck while passing through opposition held territories in Aleppo, and 18 workers were killed. A video of the wreckage was posted on the internet by the White Helmets, a US supported NGO that operates only in ISIS and Al Qaeda territories. The United States immediately blamed the Syrian air force, then the Russian air force, and finally "the Russians," who, after a few hours of public silence, released drone footage showing a truck armed with mortars riding in the shadow of the convoy as it entered hostile territory. They said that neither they nor the Syrians were in the vicinity of the convoy and that a full investigation would be necessary.

The US has moved from supporting proxies to direct intervention in Syria. It is the second time in as many months that they have killed nearly 100 Syrians in an air raid. They have betrayed a long negotiated treaty and when confronted, US Ambassador Samantha Power dissembled and attacked the messenger. It is clear that the United States remains committed to overthrowing the internationally recognized government of Syria. Pentagon planners have shown no respect whatsoever for international law or for the United States diplomatic commitments in Syria. They hope to prevent any resolution before a new president is inaugurated.

A few days before massacring the Syrian soldiers outside Deir Ezzor, the United

States attempted to insert 300 Special Forces troops with Turkish backed Free Syrian Army factions in the town of Ra'i near the Turkish border. The Americans were driven out by an angry mob of men calling out their hatred of Americans in between cries of 'Allahu Akbar'. Later in the day, US bombers 'accidentally' struck a nearby town where the hostile organizations were billeted. Shortly thereafter, US special forces returned to the town of Ra'i to join the remaining Free Syrian Army groups there.

The United States has been holding up the cessation of hostilities from reaching a full implementation and clearly has no intention of honoring it. The Syrian military has stood down in the vicinity of Aleppo, yet the US has made only a halfhearted effort to separate their so called 'moderates' from the mercenaries and fanatics of Al Nusra/Al Qaeda.

The negotiation was a sham and now the US continues to dissemble, buying time to reinforce their proxies and put more US soldiers on the ground. The Pentagon is sowing the seeds of open warfare against the legitimate government of Syria (and the threat of war with Russia) while exacerbating the horrific humanitarian crisis of the Syrian people.

The time to stop them is NOW!

Hands off Syria!

US Out of the Middle East!



Open Letter to Federal Caucus of the New Democratic Party re: “The White Helmets”

September 21, 2016

To the Federal Caucus of the New Democratic Party

Dear Members of Parliament:

It is with great disappointment and regret that we find ourselves calling into question your unanimous caucus decision,¹ announced by MP Nathan Cullen, to support the nomination of the White Helmets organization in Syria for the Nobel Peace Prize for 2016. After all, as an anti-war organization formed to oppose the Anglo-American attack on Iraq in 2003, our Coalition was founded in part by NDP members in the greater Hamilton/Burlington area and one NDP riding association in Hamilton. Many of our present executive and rank-and-file members either belong to and/or support the NDP.

In making his announcement, Cullen called the White Helmets “incredible civilians”, “connected to peace”, “the best of humanity”, “saving lives... in the midst of terror.”

Nothing could be further from the truth.

The White Helmets organization was founded by James LeMesurier, a British army officer formerly connected to the notorious Blackwater mercenary organization. The White Helmets describe themselves as “fiercely independent.” However, they are actually well-funded by the same governments who are waging the current aggression against Syria. In the past 2.5 years, they received £19.7m. from the British government and \$23m. from the US government. Millions more dollars in cash, equipment, and training were contributed by various European NATO countries (including \$4.5m. from the Netherlands).² Would the caucus members agree that these amply-documented facts prove the White Helmets are NOT fiercely independent?

The White Helmets operate only in terrorist-controlled areas of Syria. The organization is, in fact, deeply embedded in the Nusra (Al Qaeda’s official affiliate in Syria) and ISIS terrorist networks.

Is Mr. Cullen and the caucus unaware that

the White Helmet leader, Raed Saleh, was refused entry to the USA and deported from Dulles Airport in Washington, DC, on March 29, 2016, because immigration officials found that he had “terrorist connections.”³ Saleh has repeatedly called for a no-fly zone over Syria, the same tactic used by NATO in 2011 to bomb Libya into a failed state.

The White Helmets are first-responder poseurs. The REAL Syria Civil Defence was established in Syria in 1953 and was a founding member of the ICDO [International Civil Defence Organization] which is recognised by the United Nations. The White Helmets were only formed in 2013 by the UK, Turkey, and the US as part of their neocolonialist program in Syria. The White Helmets are not members of the ICDO.

In short, contrary to Mr. Cullen’s statement to the CBC, the White Helmets are not civilians. And they are not “connected to peace.” In fact, they were recruited as part of the illegal regime change operation in Syria responsible for nearly half a million deaths, 11 million displaced persons, and the widespread destruction of civilian infrastructure. They are part of the reason that over 25,000 Syrian refugees have had to look to Canada for resettlement. And, being embedded directly in Al Qaeda’s Syrian franchise hardly qualifies them to be “the best of humanity.”

To his credit, party leader Tom Mulcair argued on March 20, 2015, in the House of Commons against expanding the Canadian military mission in the Middle East to include the bombing of Syria:

Canada does not have the legal grounds to conduct airstrikes in Syria.

‘But our friends are doing it’ is simply not a defense. That sort of childish reasoning is more suitable to the schoolyard than it is to the House of Commons and the Prime Minister should know better.

The fact is, what this government is proposing will put our Canadian Forces in the dubious position of acting outside of international law.

New Democrats will not stand for it. ⁴

The White Helmets call for a no-fly zone over Syria, a policy much-favoured by the Pentagon, but completely at odds with the view (expressed above) of the NDP leadership in the House of Commons. For this reason, the NDP should also not stand in support of the White Helmets.

We note that your decision to support the White Helmets was taken unilaterally at a

closed caucus retreat held several days ago in Montebello, Quebec. This matter was NOT raised at the NDP policy conference in Edmonton only a few months ago in April 2016. In fact, at that conference, party leaders prevented a wide-ranging discussion of the Syrian and Palestinian conflicts from taking place, as well as the \$15 b. Canadian sale of arms to Saudi Arabia. A resolution, endorsed by several riding associations, for the party to engage in a wide-ranging foreign policy review was likewise prevented from even coming to the convention floor.

We would like to emphasize that the humanitarian tragedy in Syria has gone on for far too long: five and a half years. The White Helmet organization does NOT seek to end the tragedy. Instead, it’s part of the propaganda apparatus of the same western governments (which included the Harper government of Canada) that were responsible for causing the tragedy in the first place. They use the White Helmets organization to promote further violence and bloodshed against the Syrian people, up to and including a full-scale and direct western military intervention in Syria.

Judging by Cullen’s statement, it’s obvious that the caucus did not consider the partisan and fraudulent nature of the White Helmets. We urge you, then, to reverse your decision to support the nomination of the White Helmets organization for the Nobel Peace Prize. Further, our anti-war Coalition urges you to lobby for an end to Canadian economic sanctions against Syria and for a resumption of normal diplomatic relations with the government of Syria. We also hope that you will call for an end to Canada’s participation of the so-called “Friends of Syria” Group of Countries, which was put together in 2012, partly with the help of the Harper government, to wage a proxy war, using terrorist mercenaries, against the Government of Syria. And, we expect that the NDP in Parliament will continue to oppose the participation of the Trudeau government in the US-led coalition in Syria and Iraq.

Thank you for your consideration of this very important matter.

Yours truly,

Doug Brown

Co-chair, Hamilton Coalition To Stop The War
band@cogeco.ca or 905-632-4774

(after Monday, Sept 19, 1 pm)

¹ NDP pushes for Syrian ‘White Helmets’ to win Nobel Peace Prize

² Who are Syria’s White Helmets?

³ New York Times Article: Leader of Syria Rescue Group, Arriving in U.S. for Award, Is Refused Entry – The New York Times

⁴ March 30, 2015 – prepared text of speech to Parliament;

SYRIA سورية

Continued from page 10

the Syrian government; not countries coming in and conducting their own air strikes and military campaigns with their own interests as Canada and the US, Turkey and other countries have done.

I think that the demand for 'US Hands Off Syria!' and for an end to foreign intervention in Syria by the US and their allies is a very important and central demand for anyone who is concerned about peace and justice in the world today.

These wars that we see happening abroad are happening at the expense of people here at home, as well as around the world. We have seen austerity measures happening here in Canada, like cuts to healthcare, education, saying that 'there is no money for these programs,' when the Canadian government is funding terrorist organizations in Syria - terrorist organizations! -to the tune of 5.3 million dollars.

I think that Ken earlier did a really good job earlier of outlining exactly what Canada's role in Syria has been. I think that also makes it very important when we see how much that Canada has been behind supporting the US in this war and intervention in Syria. We, as people living here in Canada, have a responsibility to call for an end, not just to the US war in Syria, but also to the Canadian government's involvement. This is our duty as people here, when tax dollars of people here in Canada are being spent on this war.

I think it's also very important for Canada to open the doors to Syrian refugees,



Syrians gather to receive aid packages in Damascus

as well as refugees from other countries like Libya and Afghanistan, where the government of Canada and their allies have participated in wholesale bloodshed.

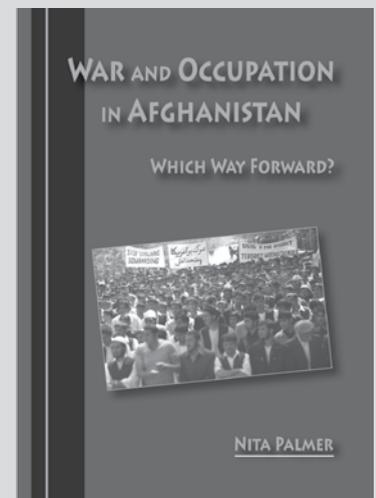
This war in Syria is really part of a new era of war and occupation, which is not just a concern for people in Syria or in the countries that are being bombed, but really needs to be a concern for every person around the world. It is very important that we, as people involved in the antiwar movement, as peace activists, continue to be out in the streets and demanding an end to the war on Syria and educating around this. Because so many people don't have a chance to see alternative media like we have, or come to these forums and are just seeing the news which is so completely biased and one-sided. It is really our responsibility to continue to push forward this demand and make it clear that the Canadian government is also complicit in these war crimes that are happening in Syria.

I want to really encourage everyone here to continue to come out to these events, if you don't already regularly, and also to take information that you learned here, and that we have at the back table, to share with your friends and family and colleagues. This is a very important issue for people to know about, and to see what the truth is about what is really happening in Syria.

SYRIA سورية

Battle of Ideas Press

WAR AND OCCUPATION
IN AFGHANISTAN
WHICH WAY FORWARD?



BY NITA PALMER

Nita Palmer is an author and researcher on the war in Afghanistan. She is a member of the editorial board of Vancouver, Canada-based social justice newspaper Fire This Time.

January 2010, paperback, \$7.00

155 pages, illustrated,

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CUBA WILL PERSEVERE ON ITS DEMAND TO HAVE THE ECONOMIC, COMMERCIAL AND FINANCIAL BLOCKADE LIFTED



KEY REMARKS BY ARMY GENERAL RAUL CASTRO RUZ, PRESIDENT OF THE STATE COUNCIL AND THE COUNCIL OF MINISTERS OF THE REPUBLIC OF CUBA, AT THE 17TH SUMMIT OF THE NON-ALIGNED MOVEMENT

Margarita Island, Venezuela, September 17, 2016

Esteemed comrade Nicolás Maduro Moros, constitutional President of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, Heads of State and Government,

Esteemed ministers, delegates and guests,

Ladies and gentlemen,

We are 120 Non-Aligned States which adhere not only to the Bandung Principles, but also to the Declaration of the Non Aligned Movement on Purposes, Principles and the its Role in the Current International Juncture approved at the 14th NAM Summit in Havana. Our enormous strength cannot be underestimated when we proceed in a concerted fashion.

In the 14th NAM Summit held in Havana in 2006, we rejected any attempt at 'regime change' and appealed to all countries to abstain from resorting to aggression or to the use of force.

Also in Havana, in January 2014, the heads of State and Government of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC) signed the Proclamation of Latin America and the Caribbean as a Zone of Peace thus reaffirming our commitment to the principles enshrined in the United Nations Charter and International Law as well as to the peaceful settlement of disputes and full respect for the inalienable right of every State to choose its political, economic, social and cultural system, as an essential premise to ensure coexistence among nations.

However, we are witnessing increasing attacks on Venezuela's sovereignty and self-determination. Cuba reaffirms its unconditional support to the Venezuelan Government and people, to the civic-military union and to constitutional President Nicolás Maduro Moros.

We strongly repudiate the judicial-parliamentary coup d'état engineered against President Dilma Rousseff, for it is an act of contempt against the sovereign will of the people who elected her with more than 53 million votes.

Our sister nation of Colombia may count on the full support of Cuba as it moves forward along the challenging path of the implementation of

the Agreement, and the consolidation of the stable, fair and lasting peace that Colombians deserve.

We express our confidence in the people of the Arab Republic of Syria for we know that they are capable of resolving their differences by themselves without foreign interference aimed at promoting 'regime change'.

Comrade President,

It is unacceptable that the Palestinian people are still victims of occupation and violence, and that the occupying power continues preventing the establishment of an independent Palestinian State with its capital in East Jerusalem.

Every attempt to secure the self-determination of the abused Saharawi people has failed, thus the international community needs to apply itself to resolving this issue.

We affirm our solidarity with the historical demand of the Puerto Rican people for self-determination and independence.

We also uphold our solidarity with the claim of the Republic of Argentina over the Falklands, South Sandwich and South Georgia Islands.

Esteemed comrade Maduro,

To Cuba, non-alignment means to struggle for the radical modification of an international economic order imposed by the big powers, the same that has made possible for 360 persons to accumulate an annual wealth exceeding the income of 45% of the world population. The gap between the rich and the poor keeps widening. Technology transfer from the North to the South countries remains an elusive goal while globalization basically privileges a special group of industrial nations. Meanwhile, the debt of the South countries, which never ceases to multiply, now amounts to over 1.7 trillion dollars.

At the moment, 2.9 billion people are forced into unemployment and extreme poverty, and millions of children perish every year from hunger and preventable diseases; nearly 800 million people remain illiterate while more than 1.7 trillion dollars are destined to military expenses.

Non-alignment also means to struggle for the reduction of the knowledge gap, and for the possibility to use information and communication technologies for development and cooperation. We reject the growing militarization of these technologies and their aggressive use against other countries.

Climate change continues to aggravate while in

the developed countries irrational production and consumption patterns persist that threaten the conditions required for the survival of our species.

On the other hand, the realization of human rights remains a dream for millions of people all over the world. The United States and Europe resort to manipulation, double standards, selective criteria and the politization of this issue while waves of refugees concentrate at European borders, waiting a for just, stable and permanent solution that can protect their lives and dignity.

Esteemed President Maduro,

Twenty-one months have passed since our simultaneous announcement with President Barack Obama of the decision to reestablish diplomatic relations between Cuba and the United States.

There have been some progress, mostly in the diplomatic area and cooperation on issues of common interest, but the same cannot be said of the economic and commercial sectors due to the limited, albeit positive, scope of the measures so far adopted by the U.S. Administration.

Cuba will persevere on its demand to have the economic, commercial and financial blockade lifted, a blockade that brings so much damage and hardship to our people, and which also has a negative impact on many other countries due to its extraterritorial implementation. By the same token, Cuba will continue urging the return to our sovereignty of the territory illegally occupied by the United States Naval Base in Guantanamo.

There will not be normal relations before that issue is resolved and other policies harmful to Cuba's sovereignty still in force are terminated, such as interventionist and subversive programs.

We reaffirm our disposition to engage the United States Government in a civilized relationship, but Cuba will neither renounce any of its principles nor compromise on its sovereignty and independence. Cuba will not cease defending its revolutionary and anti-imperialist ideals or supporting the self-determination of all peoples.

Comrade Maduro,

We wish our sister Republic of Venezuela full success in the leadership of the Non-Aligned countries. At the same time, we congratulate the Islamic Republic of Iran on its good work during this past term at the head of the Movement.

The only alternative to the enormous dangers and challenges lying ahead is unity and solidarity in defense of our common objectives and interests.

Thank you, very much.



* EN ESPAÑOL *

Discurso pronunciado por el General de Ejército Raúl Castro Ruz, Primer Secretario del Comité Central del Partido Comunista de Cuba y Presidente de los Consejos de Estado y de Ministros, en la XVII Cumbre del Movimiento de Países No Alineados.

Isla de Margarita, Venezuela, el 17 de septiembre de 2016.

Estimado compañero Nicolás Maduro Moros, Presidente de la República Bolivariana de Venezuela;

Jefes de Estado y de Gobierno;

Estimados Ministros, delegados e invitados;

Señoras y señores:

Somos 120 Estados No Alineados y contamos, además de los Principios de Bandung, con la Declaración sobre los Propósitos, Principios y el Papel del Movimiento de Países No Alineados en la Coyuntura Internacional Actual, aprobada en la XIV Cumbre en La Habana. No puede subestimarse nuestra enorme fuerza cuando actuamos concertadamente.

En la propia Cumbre, en 2006, rechazamos los intentos de “cambio de régimen” y llamamos a garantizar que todo país se abstuviera de recurrir a la agresión y al uso de la fuerza.

También en La Habana, en enero del 2014, los Jefes de Estado y de Gobierno de la Comunidad de Estados Latinoamericanos y Caribeños (CELAC), con la firma de la Proclama de América Latina y el Caribe como Zona de Paz, reafirmamos el compromiso con los principios de la Carta de las Naciones Unidas y el Derecho Internacional; con la solución de diferencias de forma pacífica y el pleno respeto al derecho inalienable de todo Estado a elegir su sistema político, económico, social y cultural como condición esencial para asegurar la convivencia entre las naciones.

Sin embargo, somos testigos de los crecientes ataques a la soberanía y autodeterminación de Venezuela. Cuba reafirma su incondicional respaldo al gobierno y pueblo venezolanos, a la unión cívico-militar y al presidente constitucional Nicolás Maduro Moros (Aplausos).

CUBA SEGUIRÁ RECLAMANDO EL LEVANTAMIENTO DEL BLOQUEO ECONÓMICO, COMERCIAL Y FINANCIERO

Rechazamos enérgicamente el golpe de Estado parlamentario-judicial en Brasil contra la presidenta Dilma Rousseff, que constituye un acto de desacato a la voluntad soberana del pueblo que la eligió con más de 53 millones de votos.

La hermana Colombia tendrá todo el apoyo de Cuba para avanzar en el difícil camino de la implementación del Acuerdo y la consolidación de la Paz justa y duradera que merece su pueblo.

Expresamos nuestra confianza en que el pueblo de la República Árabe Siria será capaz de resolver sus diferencias por sí mismo, sin injerencias externas dirigidas a promover un cambio de régimen.

Compañero Presidente:

Resulta inaceptable que todavía el pueblo palestino continúe siendo víctima de la ocupación y la violencia, y que la potencia ocupante siga impidiendo la creación de un Estado palestino independiente con Jerusalén Oriental como su capital.

Todos los intentos de garantizar la autodeterminación del sufrido pueblo saharauí se han frustrado, lo que requiere la acción de la comunidad internacional.

Nos solidarizamos con la histórica demanda del pueblo puertorriqueño en pro de su autodeterminación e independencia.

Respalamos también el reclamo de la República Argentina sobre las islas Malvinas, Sandwich del Sur y Georgias del Sur.

Estimado compañero Maduro:

Para Cuba, la no alineación significa la lucha por modificar radicalmente el Orden Económico Internacional impuesto por las grandes potencias, que ha conducido a que 360 personas posean una riqueza anual superior a los ingresos del 45% de la población mundial. La brecha entre países ricos y pobres crece. La transferencia de tecnologías del Norte al Sur es una aspiración esquivada.

La globalización favorece fundamentalmente a un selecto grupo de países industrializados. La deuda de los países del Sur se multiplica y suma más de 1 700 millones de millones de dólares.

Dos mil novecientos millones de personas son empujadas al desempleo y la pobreza extrema; millones de niños mueren cada año por causa del hambre y de enfermedades prevenibles; casi 800 millones de personas no saben leer ni escribir, mientras más de 1,7 millones de millones de dólares se dedican a gastos militares.

La no alineación significa también la lucha por eliminar las brechas del conocimiento y por el uso de las tecnologías de la información y las comunicaciones en pro del desarrollo y la cooperación. Rechazamos su creciente militarización y uso agresivo contra terceros países.

El cambio climático se agrava y persisten en los países desarrollados patrones irracionales de producción y consumo que amenazan las condiciones de existencia de nuestra especie.

La realización de los derechos humanos continúa siendo un sueño para millones de personas en todo el mundo. Estados Unidos y Europa emplean la manipulación, la doble moral, la selectividad y la politización, mientras oleadas de refugiados se agolpan en las fronteras europeas sin hallarse soluciones justas, estables y permanentes, que protejan su vida y dignidad.

Estimado presidente Maduro:

Han transcurrido 21 meses desde que anunciamos simultáneamente con el presidente Barack Obama, la decisión de restablecer las relaciones diplomáticas entre Cuba y Estados Unidos.

Ha habido algunos avances, sobre todo en el ámbito diplomático y de la cooperación en temas de interés mutuo, pero no ha sido igual en la esfera económico-comercial, debido al alcance limitado, aunque positivo, de las medidas adoptadas hasta ahora por el gobierno estadounidense.

Cuba seguirá reclamando el levantamiento del bloqueo económico, comercial y financiero, que tantos daños y privaciones nos causa y que afecta también a muchos países por su alcance extraterritorial; y continuará demandando que se devuelva a nuestra soberanía el territorio ilegalmente ocupado por la Base Naval de Estados Unidos en Guantánamo.

Sin esto no podrá haber relaciones normales, como tampoco será posible si no se pone fin a otras políticas aún vigentes que son lesivas a la soberanía de Cuba, como los programas subversivos e injerencistas.

Ratificamos la voluntad de sostener relaciones de convivencia civilizada con Estados Unidos, pero Cuba no va a renunciar a uno solo de sus principios, ni a realizar concesiones inherentes a su soberanía e independencia (Aplausos). No va a ceder en la defensa de sus ideales revolucionarios y antiimperialistas, ni en el apoyo a la autodeterminación de los pueblos.

Compañero Maduro:

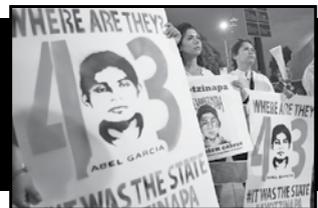
Le deseamos todo el éxito a la hermana República Bolivariana de Venezuela al frente de los Países No Alineados, a la vez que felicitamos a la República Islámica de Irán por su labor en el mandato recién concluido.

La única alternativa ante los enormes peligros y desafíos que tenemos por delante es la unidad y la solidaridad en defensa de nuestros objetivos e intereses comunes.

Muchas gracias (Aplausos).

2 YEARS SINCE 43 MEXICAN STUDENTS WERE DISAPPEARED

MEXICAN GOVERNMENT LIES CONTINUES



People and Relatives Demand Clarity and Transparency

By Noah Fine

#TODOS SOMOS AYOTZINAPA

On September 26th, 2014 a group of about 100 students from a small rural community in the state of Guerrero, Mexico called, Ayotzinapa, were traveling to participate in a protest. Upon arriving in the city of Iguala, police alongside Mexican drug Cartel thugs from Guerreros Unidos laid siege on the students. The siege, which all together lasted more than 3 hours, left 6 people dead including a 15-year-old boy, a bus driver and a woman in a taxi. After the dust settled 43 young students had been disappeared.

In the past two years since the tragic incident, the remains of two of the students who were disappeared have been recovered. The whereabouts of the other 41 youth remain well hidden in Mexico's greatest state cover-up.

However while the Government of Mexico works to bury the truth ever deeper, the people of Mexico led by families and friends of the 43 missing youth continue to work tirelessly to unbury the truth. What these fighters for truth and justice have uncovered in the last two years shows the dark reality of the Mexican State.

In their search, more than 60 mass graves have been uncovered containing the remains of between 10 and over 100 people each. According to the Toronto

Star more than 28,000 Mexican people mostly youth are believed to have been disappeared and over 100,000 murdered by the police, military and drug cartels. The 43 missing students are just the latest in the Mexican governments brutal war against its own people.

The 43 missing youth were student teachers from a small school in Ayotzinapa. The school serves a community that could not otherwise afford an education and these 43 students were studying to become teachers to carry on the tradition of educating Mexico's poorest and most underprivileged communities.

The very nature of their disappearance and the Mexican governments participation in their disappearance is an attack on the future of Mexico. These 43 students represented the struggle for a better life for people in Mexico. They were fighters for equality and justice for the millions of poor and oppressed people of Mexico.

For that reason hundreds of thousands of people in Mexico have taken to the streets over the past two years supported by actions from around the world demanding the government of Mexico release the truth of what happened the night they were disappeared.

Throughout the course of the families search for justice, supported by agencies from around the world helping to investigate the crime the governor of Guerrero State has had to step down for his role in covering up the tragedy as it was uncovered that he gave the orders to the police to attack the students. The head of the government commission to investigate the incident was also forced to step down under suspicion of tampering with evidence related to the crime.

Every further light that has been shed on the crime illuminates deeper what the families of the 43 were already sure of from the beginning: "Fue el estado", or "it was the state."

Two years since the tragedy the families and friends of the 43 are as steadfast as ever in their pursuit of justice. Their demands are clear when they chant "They took them alive, we want them back alive!" However the Mexican government is also persistent in its' attempts to bring the case to a close announcing the 'historical truth' of what happened has been resolved. In reality, the Mexican government knows what the people of Mexico know, if the truth of what happened to the 43 students is uncovered, uncovered as well will be the collusion between the State and drug cartels... the connection of the state to the tens of thousands of disappeared in Mexico and the murder of hundreds of thousands of innocent people.

The fight for justice and truth of the families and friends of the 43, backed by millions of people in Mexico must continue to be a world-wide struggle.

Two Years after the brutal forced disappearance of the 43 we continue to demand:

Vivos se los llevaron! Vivos los queremos!

They took them alive! We want them back alive!



Follow Noah on Twitter: @noahfine

“I believe that this President is my last hope for freedom”



Sisters, brothers, friends and supporters:

June 26 marks 41 years since the long summer day when three young men were killed at the home of the Jumping Bull family, near Oglala, during a firefight in which I and dozens of others participated. While I did not shoot (and therefore did not kill) FBI agents Ronald Williams and Jack Coler, I nevertheless have great remorse for the loss of their young lives, the loss of my friend Joe Stuntz, and for the grieving of their loved ones. I would guess that, like me, many of my brothers and sisters who were there that day wish that somehow they could have done something to change what happened and avoid the tragic outcome of the shootout.

This is not something I have thought about casually and then moved on. It's something I think about every day. As I look back, I remember the expressions of both fear and courage on the faces of my brothers and sisters as we were being attacked. We thought we were going to be killed! We defended our elders and children as they scattered for protection and to escape. Native people have experienced such assaults for centuries, and the historical trauma of the generations was carried by the people that day — and in the communities that suffered further trauma in the days that followed the shootout, as the authorities searched for those of us who had escaped the Jumping Bull property.

As the First Peoples of Turtle Island, we live with daily reminders of the centuries of efforts to terminate our nations, eliminate our cultures, and destroy our relatives and families. To this day, everywhere we go there are reminders — souvenirs and monuments of the near extermination

of a glorious population of Indigenous Peoples. Native Peoples as mascots, the disproportionately high incarceration of our relatives, the appropriation of our culture, the never-ending efforts to take even more of Native Peoples' land, and the poisoning of that land all serve as reminders of our history as survivors of a massive genocide. We live with this trauma every day. We breathe, eat and drink it. We pass it on to our children. And we struggle to overcome it.

Like so many Native children, I was ripped away from my family at the age of 9 or so and taken away to get the “Indian” out of me at a boarding school. At that time, Native Peoples were not able to speak our own languages for fear of being beaten or worse. Our men's long hair, which is an important part of our spiritual life, was forcibly cut off in an effort to shame us. Our traditional names were replaced by new European-American names. These efforts to force our assimilation continue today. Not long ago, I remember, a Menominee girl was punished and banned from playing on the school's basketball team because she taught a classmate how to say “hello” and “I love you” in her Native language. We hear stories all the time about athletes and graduates who face opposition to wearing their hair long or having a feather in their cap.

With this little bit of my personal history in mind, I think it is understandable that I would then, as a young person in the 1960's and 70's, be active in the Indigenous struggle to affirm our human, civil, and treaty rights. Our movement was a spiritual one to regain our ceremonies and traditions and to exercise our sovereignty as native or tribal nations. For over 100 years some

of our most important ceremonies could not be held. We could not sing our songs or dance to our drum. When my contemporaries and I were activists, there were no known sun dances. Any ceremony that took place had to be hidden for fear of reprisals. One of our roles as activists for the welfare of our Peoples was to create space and protection for Native peoples who were trying to reconnect to our ancient cultures and spiritual life. This was dangerous and deadly. It meant putting our lives on the line because people who participated in these ceremonies, and people who stood up for our elders and our traditional way of life, were brutally beaten, killed or disappeared. Paramilitary groups and death squads ruled some reservations and each day was a battle. If an uninvited, unknown or unrecognized vehicle pulled up to your house, the first reaction was that you were being visited by someone who meant to do you harm in some way. This was learned behavior on the reservations. This was excruciatingly true in the 1970's.

Hey, I don't want to be all doom and gloom here. I see over the decades that in some important ways, life has improved for our Peoples. President Obama's extraordinary efforts to forge a strong relationship with our Tribal Nations is good cause for a new sense of optimism that our sovereignty is more secure. By exercising our sovereignty, life for our people might improve. We might begin to heal and start the long journey to move past the trauma of the last 500 years. But what will we do if the next Administration rolls back those gains made over the past eight years?

I often receive questions in letters from supporters about my health. Yes, this last year has been particularly stressful for me and my family. My health issues still have not been thoroughly addressed, and I still have not gotten the results of the MRI done over a month ago for the abdominal aortic aneurysm.

As the last remaining months of President Obama's term pass by, my anxiety increases. I believe that this President is my last hope for freedom, and I will surely die here if I am not released by January 20, 2017. So I ask you all again, as this is the most crucial time in the campaign to gain my freedom, please continue to organize public support for my release, and always follow the lead of the International Leonard Peltier Defense Committee.

Thank you for all you have done and continue to do on my behalf. In the Spirit of Crazy Horse...

Leonard Peltier

Liberal Government and Bill C-51: Buying Time, No Change



By Thomas Davies

Have you participated in the Canadian government's public consultation on Bill C-51? Do you know when the consultation began? When it will end? What it looks like? How you can participate?

No? Don't worry, you're in numerous and good company.

Almost a year after being elected, and over a year and half after voting in favour of Bill C-51, the Liberals have apparently followed through on their ageing promise for "public consultation" on the controversial law. However, it's become obvious that they put a lot more effort into publicizing the fact that they were going to have a public consultation, than publicizing when they actually began one.

While they might not appreciate the comparison, this lack of transparency follows very closely the line taken by the Conservative government before them, when the supposed "Anti-Terrorism" law was rammed through parliament despite obviously widespread public opposition. This was despite the fact that the human rights concerns regarding freedom of speech, assembly, privacy and more were numerous and being made by countless respected legal and human rights organization in Canada and internationally.

Back then the Liberals voted in favour of Bill C-51 while promising that if elected, they would make "substantive" changes. A year and a half later and CSIS, the RCMP and other government agencies are happily using their new undefined powers of "disruption", detention and data collection, and have little to no responsibility to inform the public as to how.

Consultation

"Public Safety Minister Ralph Goodale says he wants our input regarding changes to the national security framework so the government can "get it right." It all sounds terribly democratic and inclusive but just why does he need to consult us to learn that we want our democratic rights, privileges, privacy, representation and our will to be respected and protected? We remain innocent until proven guilty. No need for further investigation."

- Randy Gostlin, letter to Toronto Star (September 14, 2016)

For argument's sake let's say the Liberals weren't already sabotaging their own public consultation by not informing people about a difficult to find online survey and a promise of face to face meetings which have yet materialize. Let's say everyone knew about the public consultation, would it be a worthwhile undertaking?

Unfortunately no. If the Liberal government was sincere in a wanting genuine public consultation would repeal Bill C-51 and start the discussion from a clean slate.



As the quoted letter to the editor pointedly asks, is there really a lot of confusion regarding people wanting their human rights respected? Every major poll before Bill C-51 became law showed an obvious majority of people against it. There were never any rallies in favour of Bill C-51. There were however huge national days of action against Bill C-51, and continuing opposition in cities like Vancouver, where there has been 82 weeks straight of actions against the law. The online petition against Bill C-51 gathered more than 300,000 signatures, making it one of the most popular political petitions in the history of Canada.

It's also important to reiterate that the idea of consulting people about sensitive issues regarding freedom of speech and privacy, while the most blatant violation of freedom of speech and privacy remains a law, doesn't make any sense.

Green Paper Blues

The Liberals also released a "Green Paper" on National Security and Human Rights which is on the same hard to find website as the online poll. It is supposed to outline the current state of both of those things after Bill C-51, and their ideas on how to address public concerns regarding them.

The paper begins with the same fear mongering that the Conservatives used to justify Bill C-51 in the first place:

"In Canada, we are not isolated from the terrorist threat."

"New terrorist groups – including the so-called Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) – have emerged and engineered chaos and destruction in many parts of the world."

"Indeed, the principal terrorist threat to Canada remains the possibility of violent extremists carrying out attacks within our borders."

A more accurate characterization of the current situation would be more like this recent Globe and Mail editorial on the same topic:

"Last year in Canada, 381,000 people were victims of a violent crime. That included 604 murders, 774 attempted murders and 219,000 assaults. According to Statistics Canada, there were also 1,154,000 crimes against property, including more than 159,000 break and enters, nearly 79,000 motor vehicle thefts, and 72,000 cases of impaired driving."

"By any reasonable count, the number of terrorist attacks in Canada in 2015 was zero, or close to zero."

The rest of the the Green Paper is more of a white washing of the ugly truths about Bill C-51. Support for undefined powers of "disruption" for the secret police, justification of private information sharing between 17 government agencies, lowering the bar on evidence required for targeting and detaining individuals and hints to expanding government systems for unauthorized data collection. "Beyond C-51, what we see in the consultation is Santa's wish list from the police and intelligence agencies about all the extraordinary powers they would like have under their Christmas tree," observed Micheal Vonn of the BC Civil Liberties Association.

Accountability. Accountability. Accountability.

In Volume 10, Issue 8 of Fire This Time we gave three simple criteria for evaluating any so called public consultation on Bill C-51:

Is the consultation independent?

Is the government bound to implement its

findings?

Is there a timeline for government implementation of the findings?

This consultation meets none of these criteria. With no plan for how the input will be used and no promise of any changes there is basically no chance for this so-called consultation to be meaningful. One of the biggest reasons we oppose Bill C-51 is its disregard for government accountability to the people. This consultation takes that unaccountability another step further.

New Solutions?

Almost one year into the Liberal's term in the office and the NDP Member of Parliament Randal Garrison had now introduced a private member's bill calling for a piece by piece repeal of Bill C-51. A private member's bill is a bill introduced to the House of Commons by an MP who is not a cabinet minister. There are extreme time restrictions on time devoted to them (very few get more than a 60 second introduction), although 20 are chosen at random to receive priority in debate. In recent times around 1.5% of these bills have passed, with the majority of those being for the purpose of changing the names of the riding represented by a particular MP.

So it's highly unlikely that this NDP bill will be

effective in repealing Bill C-51. What it could be is the focal point of a national campaign for the repeal of Bill C-51. As the largest, most-organized, national "progressive" organization in Canada, the NDP would be best placed to initiate a push such a campaign. There's already a proven base of grassroots support, and a trail of broken promises by the Liberal Party to capitalize upon. Unfortunately the NDP has so far devoted about as much energy promoting Mr. Garrison's Bill as the Liberals have to promoting the public consultation. Not much.

Unfinished Business

In the end it's important to remind ourselves of the lessons we have already taught ourselves. The dynamic and diverse movement which sprang up to oppose Bill C-51 before it became law did not wait for any political party to take the lead and solve the problem. Thousands organized their own actions, coalitions and campaigns because they understood the threat of Bill C-51 and the importance of defeating it. A year and a half later and any illusion that Justin Trudeau is going to fix this mess he voted for should be laid to rest. We need to continue to educate, organize and mobilize to demand a full Repeal of Bill C-51. It's the only way we will win.

Follow Thomas on Twitter: @thomasdavies9

Vancouver Activists: We We Will Fight and Fight and Fight Until Bill C-51 is Repealed!

By Thomas Davies

After promising for a year to engage in some sort of public consultation about Bill C-51, the Liberal government quietly put a survey online in September. If they were really interested in understanding the public response, they could have come to any one of the 82 consecutive weekly actions organized by the Working Group to Stop Bill C-51. They would have then seen that public opposition to the controversial bills continues to be widespread.

September was another busy month, as organizers held four actions: two pickets and two banner drops. Once again they were spread out across the Lower Mainland and took place in downtown and South Vancouver, Burnaby and New Westminster.

Response was loudest at the banner drop at the busy Willingdon overpass over the #1 Highway. Commuters returning home after a long day of work and many semi-trucks headed for a long night of work still found time to honk their horns repeatedly and give

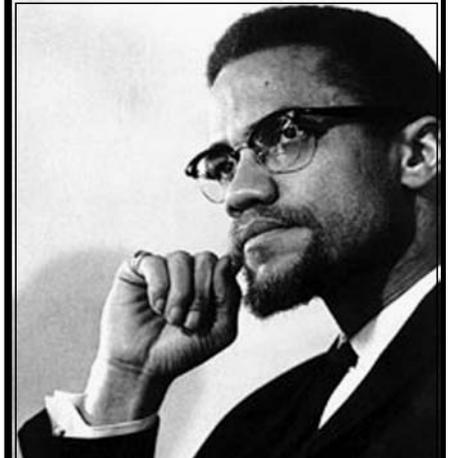


organizers the "thumbs up".

Picket actions at the Main Street Skytrain Station in downtown Vancouver and the 22nd Street Skytrain Station in New Westminster encountered a mix of those who still had questions about what Bill C-51, and many others frustrated with the inaction and broken promises of the Liberal government on this issue. Organizers were thanked many times for continuing the campaign to Repeal Bill C-51.

As the days get colder and shorter into the October, organizers have some new plans to keep the actions visible and dynamic. As we fast approach 100 weekly actions, everyone is still welcome to join the fight to, "Repeal Bill C-51!"

"By Any Means Necessary..."



MALCOLM X SPEAKS

Excerpt from "The Ballet or the Ballet" speech. April 3, 1964

"Well, I am one who doesn't believe in deluding myself. I'm not going to sit at your table and watch you eat, with nothing on my plate, and call myself a diner. Sitting at the table doesn't make you a diner, unless you eat some of what's on that plate. Being here in America doesn't make you an American. Being born here in America doesn't make you an American. Why, if birth made you American, you wouldn't need any legislation; you wouldn't need any amendments to the Constitution; you wouldn't be faced with civil-rights filibustering in Washington, D.C., right now...

No, I'm not an American. I'm one of the 22 million black people who are the victims of Americanism. One of the 22 million black people who are the victims of democracy, nothing but disguised hypocrisy. So, I'm not standing here speaking to you as an American, or a patriot, or a flag-saluter, or a flag-waver -- no, not I. I'm speaking as a victim of this American system. And I see America through the eyes of the victim. I don't see any American dream; I see an American nightmare.

These 22 million victims are waking up. Their eyes are coming open. They're beginning to see what they used to only look at. They're becoming politically mature. They are realizing that there are new political trends from coast to coast."



THE WORLD STANDS WITH STANDING ROCK!

**FROM VANCOUVER BC TO NORTH DAKOTA!
FIRE THIS TIME GOES TO
STANDING ROCK/SACRED STONE CAMP!**

By Thomas Davies

We woke up in sleeping bags in the front seats of the car to foggy windows and bright light. It was early morning, but already the sun seemed to be high over the Sacred Stone Camp in Standing Rock, North Dakota. We had arrived at 3am after driving 22 hours straight from Vancouver, and our plan had been to wait for morning before approaching the camp we'd heard so much about.

However, before we knew it the spotlights and automatic weapons of the National Guard checkpoint on the road towards the camp had appeared out of the inky darkness and it seemed like stopping there would be a bad idea. The soldiers had let us through, and it hadn't been much farther down to where the alert, firm and friendly faces of the Sacred Stone Camp security had received us. What a contrast! We pulled into the camp and fell asleep with the realization that this place didn't seem to sleep, and visitors who had travelled great distances and arrived at odd hours were nothing out of the ordinary here.

The idea to drive down to Standing Rock had taken root quickly. I had written an article about this struggle of indigenous nations



**STANDING ROCK: A REMINDER OF THE BEAUTY OF STRUGGLE FOR JUSTICE AND FREEDOM
SACRED STONE: A POINT OF HUMAN RESISTANCE TO CORPORATE GREED AND ENVIRONMENTAL DESTRUCTION**

and their allies in defence of their self-determination and the environment in the last issue of Fire This Time. We watched closely as the camp, which was established by the Standing Rock Sioux in April, kept growing as part of efforts to block the Dakota Access Pipeline (DAPL). We watched as heavy equipment dug up burial sites and police guns were drawn, arrests made, pepper spray fired and attack dogs sicked on those peacefully demanding the halt of the unapproved construction of a pipeline which plans to transport 450,000 barrels of hydraulically fracked crude oil per day.

We watched as government and corporations pretended to turn a blind eye to repeated

reaffirmations that this pipeline has not received, free, prior and informed consent from the indigenous nations whose traditional territories it was literally bulldozing through. We watched as they ignored the obvious – that the proposed pipeline route which runs under the Ogallala Aquifer (one of the largest aquifers in the world) the Missouri River (the longest river in the United States) unnecessarily jeopardizes the lives and water supply of millions of people.

The Journey to Standing Rock

We watched until we could watch no more. When the article was finished and the newspaper sent to press, the Fire This Time Editorial Board agreed that Noah and I should go to Standing Rock. We took off after his nightshift - headed South and East to a place we'd never been to stand with and record a struggle which had become an important and inspiring focal point of the international movement against pipelines and for climate justice.

As we rolled through Washington State, Idaho, Montana and finally into North Dakota we listened to the radio and checked social media updates from the #NoDAPL hashtag. The skies were clear, but it felt like we were headed towards a storm as we heard news that a U.S. District Court Judge had denied the request for an injunction against pipeline construction by the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe. Soon after news came that the

Photo by Dallas Goldtooth





Department of Justice, the Department of the Army and the Department of the Interior had issued a statement asking for a halt of pipeline construction for 20 miles on either side of the Missouri River while they reviewed the permits already granted. We also found out that a warrant had been issued for the arrest of Amy Goodman, a Democracy Now reporter who had documented on video the assault of camp members with pepper spray and attack dogs by a private security firm hired by the Dakota Access pipeline company.

The Life of the Camp

So when we had woken up that morning and cracked open the doors for the first time, we were not quite sure what to expect. What we found was a camp and a community committed to the long term struggle against the pipeline, and aware of the insanity of leaving the future of people and planet up to corporations and their friends in government.

We found massive support from other indigenous nations who are all undergoing their own struggles of land and water defence in their territories, but who understood the importance of Standing Rock as an example and precedent for the overall fight. As we walked through that huge camp for the first time, we saw tents, trailers, teepees and people from practically every state and province who had come to be part of the camp. We also found immediate friendliness and greetings, and no one who was particularly impressed by



An unexpected encounter with members of the 1491s Indigenous Sketch Comedy group.

our 22 hours of travelling. Many had done the same or longer. Most had been in the camp for quite some time and had no plans of leaving.

The road through the camp was lined with hundreds of flags which different nations had brought when they arrived to support the camp. When the strong winds picked up through the valley, the sight of the flags taking up a big patch of the sky and the sound as they rippled in the air was something we will never forget. By the time we left the camp the entire road in was almost completely filled with flags, which also included one from Palestine and another from the Veterans for Peace group.

Three weeks later and I still have the familiar smell of fire and ash on my clothes. There was an important central fire in the camp's main gathering area, which was kept lit around the clock. When delegations arrived they would be received here. Most shared their reasons for coming to the camp, what they had brought for donations, as well as prayers and

their own dances and songs. Important camp announcements about news developments, camp updates and volunteer requests were all made here as well. Late into the night people came in front of the fire to share their own songs, stories dances, and ideas about the struggle before us.

The other fires that never went out were those of the kitchen adjacent to the main meeting area. It never slept either, as there was always wood to be chopped, dishes to be done, and preparations done for the next meal. Feeding thousands of people 3 meals a day is no easy task, but it was always done and always delicious.

A few times a day there would be an announcement on the microphone asking for volunteers to help unload a new truck or van full of donations. They've also raised over \$850,000 dollars through online crowdfunding for legal fees and the expenses of running a 24/7 camp which feeds and accommodates literally thousands every day. Standing Rock North Dakota could be pretty easily described as the middle of the middle of nowhere – but the camp felt incredibly connected to the outside world.

This was even though you had to walk up “Facebook Hill” to get cell phone data reception. It's also where the media tent was located and where we heard Dallas Goldtooth of the Indigenous Environmental Network give a press conference about the recent developments. Young, articulate and passionate – he was a good example of a lot of the movers and shakers within the camp. Our interview with him is also printed in this issue of Fire This Time.

We were also able to interview several other people to try and give some voice to the strength





Making new friends with members of the Pueblo Action Alliance.

and unity within the camp. We interviewed Big Mike, an indigenous hip-hop artist from California who understood exactly how the fight at Standing Rock fit into the overall historical abuse of indigenous nations by the US government. Jean Roche, of the Leonard Peltier Defense Committee gave an update on the struggle to free Leonard after 40 years as a political prisoner, and how this connects to Standing Rock. We also interviewed four young Pueblo women from Arizona who had come together for the trip to Standing Rock and have now created a new group called the Pueblo Action Alliance. They have now already sent 5 caravans to Standing Rock, as well as coordinating their own campaigns for environmental justice in New Mexico. Reyes, Ahjani, Towana and Tamara were the last people we interviewed, and their sincerity and conviction were powerful to see. If these were the voices which were readily available when people turned on the television or radio, many would have a different perspective on the depth and importance of these issues.

There is a Fire Which Never Goes Out

Trying to summarize the camp is challenging. It was beautiful to climb up a hill with new friends and look over the land and the river, and how perfectly the camp fit into the landscape. It was beautiful to see young children who could explain why the camp was important, elders sharing their experiences, and young

people leading a fight they knew would have huge implications. It was beautiful to see the life of the camp as horse races were organized, comedy groups performed and veteran support groups met.

As we pulled out to leave the camp on what must now be the busiest intersection in North Dakota, preparations were already being made to dig in for the long, harsh winter. Everyone there is aware that there has never been a pipeline project stopped after it was under construction, but no one feels like this is a good reason not to stop this one.

A Facebook post from the Sacred Stone Camp put out after the announcement of the government delay summarized the perspective, "Let's be cautious about celebrating this. ... We have seen time and time again a consistent strategy from the State in these situations: string out the process, break it to us gradually to avoid a big confrontation, present the illusion of careful thoughtful review of the case, tempt us with promises of modern reforms...but then in the end make the same decision that serves money not people. So far this is just talk, not actions, and actions are all we should care about. Stop

the pipeline, then we'll celebrate."

Moving Forward

The 22 hour drive home involved a lot of reflection. Finally able to connect to the internet for more than 5 minutes, we were flooded with all of the updates of Standing Rock solidarity actions happening around the world. As I write this the camp is still going strong and the solidarity actions keep flowing, but the pipeline is still being constructed in other areas and many more arrests have been made by increasingly militarized police against peaceful land defenders.

We arrived in Vancouver just in time for Noah to get to work and myself and others to participate in a Standing Rock solidarity rally in Vancouver. The lessons are clear: We need to fight, we need to fight united and we need to know that any victory in defence of self-determination and the environment is everybody's victory. So many indigenous nations are doing the "heavy lifting" of the fight for climate justice, but there needs to be strong, consistent support from non-indigenous forces who understand that we all need water to drink, air to breath and a healthy planet to live on. There is already another period of international solidarity actions called from October 8 to 13. We should all participate. We absolutely cannot leave the important decisions about the future of humanity and our planet to those corporations whose only motive is profit and who have already shown such a blatant disregard for both. We must demand, "System Change Not Climate Change!" and "People and Planet Before Pipelines and Plunder!"

To the organizers of the Sacred Stone Camp: Thank-you for allowing us to participate and document the struggle. We will be back! For current updates check:

www.sacredstonecamp.org
 @SacredStoneCamp #NoDAPL
www.facebook.com/SacredStoneCamp

Follow Thomas on Twitter: @thomasdavies59





REPORT BACK FROM STANDING ROCK RESISTANCE

By Thomas Davies

On September 17, less than a week after organizers returned from the Sacred Stone Camp in Standing Rock, North Dakota, Fire This Time Movement for Social Justice organized a Report back to discuss their experiences in the camp and the overall implications of the fight against the Dakota Access Pipeline. The result was an exciting and informative event which did its best to reflect the spirit, unity and dynamism of the ongoing struggle in North Dakota.

It would have been difficult to miss – as the Culture Saves Lives drum group opened the evening with several songs around the big drum that spelled out onto the street and could be heard all over the surrounding neighbourhood. The room was packed and every available chair was taken by a diverse crowd of indigenous, non-indigenous, younger and older participants who were eager to hear about this important struggle.



VANCOUVER ACTIVISTS SHARE THEIR EXPERIENCE WITH THE SUPPORTERS OF ENVIRONMENTAL AND INDIGENOUS STRUGGLE

One of the drummers, Rupert Richardson, had also travelled to Standing Rock. He spoke of his own reasons for feeling an urgency to participate and support the camp. He also observed that the struggle in Standing Rock is nothing new for indigenous people, who have been fighting for the land and self-determination for hundreds of years.

Videos were all shown of the history of the camp, as well as interviews and footage taken while there the week previous.

Fire This Time organizer Noah Fine discussed the initial decision to send two organizers to the Sacred Stone Camp to participate and document the struggle, as it became increasingly obvious what a crucial role the land defenders were playing there. He walked through the layout of the camp and how people were coming together and organizing.

longtime indigenous and media activist Kelly White had the whole room standing and shouting, “NO DAPL!” Her songs reflected the struggles she participated in from the 1960’s today, including her connection to the Dakotas and the campaign to free indigenous political prisoner Leonard Peltier.

Fire This Time organizer Thomas Davies wrapped up the presentations by emphasizing the importance of the example of the Sacred Stone Camp, especially in a country like Canada where the government has made many promises regarding respecting indigenous rights and the environment, yet continues approving pipelines and resource extraction projects which break all of these promises. “The people of Standing Rock have made a decision to fight, and to fight together, just as we must do in our own struggles on this side of the border.”

The forum wrapped up with an open discussion period that involved questions, observations, prayers, songs and a feeling of optimism for the struggles ahead. To modify a quotation from Che Guevara, “We need, two, three, many Standing Rocks!”

No Dakota Access Pipeline!

Water is Life!

System Change Not Climate Change!

Coast Salish
elder and

Follow Thomas Davies on Twitter:
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A SHORT INTERVIEW WITH DALLAS GOLDTOOTH OF THE INDIGENOUS ENVIRONMENTAL ALLIANCE

Interview by Thomas Davies

Why specifically did your organization feel it was so important to support this camp as strongly as you have?

Well for me, I have family from here. I have family from Standing Rock Sioux Nation. I've been coming here ever since I was a little baby. We played a big part in the fight against the Keystone XL pipeline and supporting our frontline communities here, but also supporting our frontline communities in Northern Alberta fighting the tar sands. So it's no different. This is about families. This is about relatives and relationships.

Our organization was a fiscal sponsor and really helped with the set up of this camp back in April. It was just to support those families here who wanted assistance and wanted to stand up in defence of the water and the land around here.

So that's why I'm here. I'm here because it matters to me because my family is

from here

This camp has become a focal point for a lot of different struggles here and Canada as well. What's the mood in the camp? How does it feel going forward, and what's it like to know that so many different organizations and struggles are looking to what's going on here right now?

It feels awesome! I'm going to tell you, you here the stories of why people come here and it's beautiful. This is just the natural evolution of our fight for climate justice and social justice both in Canada and the United States - where there's a movement for recognition of our rights as indigenous peoples and that the benefits of that recognition are not only for us as native people but also for our non native

relatives as well. Through the recognition of our rights as indigenous peoples there is a greater and stronger effort to protect our natural resources, the land, and the sacred integrity of the world around us.

So its beautiful to see, as indigenous communities have always done, and that is leading the frontline fight against climate change and leading the frontline fight for system change and just being an advocate for what is possible for us. That's the greater scope of all of this. I hope this conversation and this fight leads us to that conversation about what 'just transition' looks like for our society, for our community - towards more renewable, sustainable, livable economies for our communities.

Thanks so much Dallas!

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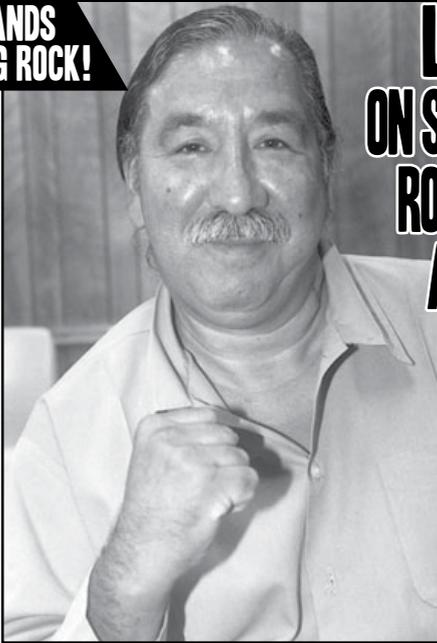
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LEONARD PELTIER: ON SOLIDARITY WITH STANDING ROCK, EXECUTIVE CLEMENCY AND THE INTERNATIONAL INDIGENOUS STRUGGLE

Greeting Sisters and Brothers:

I have been asked to write a SOLIDARITY statement to everyone about the Camp of the Sacred Stones on Standing Rock. Thank you for this great honor. I must admit it is very difficult for me to even begin this statement as my eyes get so blurred from tears and my heart swells with pride, as chills run up and down my neck and back. I'm so proud of all of you young people and others there.

I am grateful to have survived to see the rebirth of the united and undefeated Sioux Nation at Standing Rock in the resistance to the poisonous pipeline that threatens the life source of the Missouri and Mississippi Rivers. It is an honor to have been alive to see this happen with you young people. You are nothing but awesome in my eyes.

It has been a long, hard road these 40 years of being caged by an inhuman system for a crime I did not commit. I could not have survived physically or mentally without your support, and I thank you from the bottom of my heart and the depths of my soul for encouraging me to endure and maintain a spiritual and legal resistance.

We are now coming to the end of that road, soon arriving at a destination which will at least in part be determined by you. Along the lines of what Martin Luther King said shortly before his death, I may not get there with you, but I only hope and pray that my life, and if necessary, my death, will lead my Native peoples closer to the Promise Land.

I refer here not to the Promise Land of the Christian bible, but to the modest promises of the Treaties our ancestors secured from enemies bent on their destruction; in order to enable us to survive as distinct peoples and live in a dignified manner. Our elders knew the value of written words and laws to the white man, even as they knew the lengths the invaders would go to try to get around them.

Our ancestors did not benefit from these Treaties, but they shrewdly and persistently negotiated the best terms they could get, to protect us from wars which could only end in our destruction, no matter

how courageously and effectively we fought. No, the Treaties were to the benefit of the Americans, this upstart nation needed the Treaties to put a veneer of legitimacy on its conquest of the land and its rebellion against its own countrymen and king.

It should be remembered that Standing Rock was the site of the 1974 conference of the international indigenous movement that spread throughout the Americas and beyond, the starting point for the United Nations Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. The UNDRIP was resisted by the United States for three decades until its adoption by the UN in 2007. The US was one of just four nations to vote against ratification, with President Obama acknowledging the Declaration as an aspirational document without binding force under international law.

While some of the leaders of this movement are veterans of the 1970s resistance at Pine Ridge; they share the wisdom of our past elders in perceiving the moral and political symbolism of peaceful protest today is as necessary for us as was necessary for the people of Pine Ridge in the 1970s. The 71-day occupation of Wounded Knee ended with an agreement to investigate human rights and treaty abuses; that inquiry and promise were never implemented nor honored by the United States. The Wounded Knee Agreement should be honored with a Truth and Reconciliation Commission established to thoroughly examine the US government's role in the "Reign of Terror" on Pine Ridge in the 1970s. This project should be coordinated with the cooperation of the many international human rights organizations that have called for my immediate and unconditional release for more than four decades.

I have to caution you young people to be careful, for you are up against a very evil

group of people whose only concern is to fill their pockets with even more gold and wealth. They could not care less how many of you they have to kill or bury in a prison cell. They don't care if you are a young child or an old grandmother, and you better believe they are and have been recruiting our own people to be snitches and traitors. They will look to the drunks, the addicts, and child molesters, those who prey on our old and our children; they look for the weak-minded individuals. You must remember to be very cautious about falsely accusing people based more on personal opinion than on evidence. Be smart.

I call on all my supporters and allies to join the struggle at Standing Rock in the spirit of peaceful spiritual resistance and to work together to protect Unci Maka, Grandmother Earth. I also call upon my supporters and all people who share this Earth to join together to insist that the US complies with and honors the provisions of international law as expressed in the UNDRIP, International Human Rights Treaties and the long-neglected Treaties and trust agreements with the Sioux Nation. I particularly appeal to Jill Stein and the Green Parties of the US and the world to join this struggle by calling for my release and adopting the UNDRIP as the new legal framework for relations with indigenous peoples.

Finally, I also urge my supporters to immediately and urgently call upon President Obama to grant my petition for clemency, to permit me to live my final years on the Turtle Mountain Reservation. Scholars, political grassroots leaders, humanitarians and Nobel Peace Laureates have demanded my release for more than four decades. My Clemency Petition asks President Obama to commute, or end, my prison term now in order for our nation to make progress healing its fractured relations with Native communities. By facing and addressing the injustices of the past, together we can build a better future for our children and our children's children.

Again, my heartfelt thanks to all of you for working together to protect the water. Water is Life.

In the Spirit of Crazy Horse...

Doksha,
Leonard Peltier

banks, as well as more than 61 stations of the Metro and Metrobus public transport affected; in Aragua, the infrastructure of the Mayor, residential areas and fuel stations were severely affected; in Carabobo the headquarters of the "Oil workers of Venezuela" (Petroleos de Venezuela -PDVSA) and the network of "Mercal" supermarkets were affected, as well as five food distribution trucks were destroyed, the headquarters of the state electricity company (Corpoelec) was destroyed and 22 company vehicles were burned, the Polytechnical Experimental National University of the National Armed Force (UNEF) and public transportation units were severely affected, plus private vehicles and motorcycles; in Merida, the headquarters of the national telephone company (CANTV), the National Institute of Parks, the Hotel Venetur, the former headquarters of Administrative Service for Identification (Saime), and the branches of the Bicentennial, Venezuela, Foreign and Banesco banks were completely destroyed; finally, in Zulia and Táchira states, the headquarters of the National Electoral Council (CNE) and public transportation stations, as well as the network of Bicentennial State supermarkets, libraries, clinics for low-income sectors in Barrio Adentro 1 and 2, were all affected, among others.

People apprehended for acts of violence have all been presented in front of a judge within 48 hours following their arrest, which is the period established in our legislation, and after competing their respective forensic medical examinations to determine the health status. Also, we have addressed those who have reported being victims of abuse during detention; and once the complaint has been taken, an investigation starts immediately by prosecutors that specialize in fundamental rights.

It is for this reason that 42 criminal investigations, against officials from various state security agencies, have begun in which it is alleged, in some cases, that they are responsible for the violation of human rights; noting that of the persons deprived of their liberty that I mentioned above, 14 are staff members of various security bodies that would be allegedly involved in human rights violations.

Violent and terrorist acts in Venezuela caused "unnecessary deaths" that were used by the opponents of the government to spread the desire for revenge against the national government. The events that occurred in the vicinity of the Attorney General of the Republic triggered violence, leading to the prosecution of Leopoldo López and his collaborators for their responsibilities in such events, as was determined by the 2nd, 41st and 45th national prosecutors. Narda Sanabria, Franklin Nieves and Juan Cannelloni found sufficient evidence to indict Leopoldo López, and other promoters of violence, for the crimes of arson, damage, public incitement and conspiracy. The judges of the Public Prosecutors' Office had 21 expert testimonies, 5 reports, 67 testimonies and 42 experts from different areas of criminal investigation at the trial. Sufficient evidence was presented in the indictment to prosecute the right leader, who has been in prison since the 18 of February, 2014.

Similarly regarding the violence generated in our country, the Attorney General of the Republic found that foreigners and groups of citizens who were posing as students were receiving a daily allowance of up to 5,000 bolivars per day (or equivalent to \$793 US dollars) to generate violence or generate 'guarimbas'; foreign citizens were following the orders of authorities in their respective countries.

The most well-known promoters of terrorist 'guarimbas' in Venezuela is the citizen Leopoldo López. The criminal record of violence of this citizen includes active involvement in the events that led to the coup d'état against President Hugo Chávez in April 2002. Leopoldo López, who at that time was mayor of the affluent Chacao municipality east of Caracas, took its authority to initiate a hunt for Chavista leaders, including the Interior Minister of Chávez, Ramon Rodriguez Chacín, and revolutionary deputy Tarek William Saab, who were arrested the day after the coup by officers of the Police of Chacao itself commanded by Leopoldo López.

In a television interview broadcast on April 12, 2002, Lopez confessed to having led an operation in which Chacao police officers to stripped drivers of the keys to their vehicles, and used their cars to impede a battalion of troops and tanks loyal to President Chavez

from coming to Caracas. Leopoldo López' history of criminal conspiracy also includes active participation in violent protests called the "Guarimba Plan," in 2004. In addition, he ignored the results of the recall referendum that favored President Chávez in 2004.

It was this character who gave voice to the plan for

insurrection that was executed against the democratic government of Venezuela, which, on January 23, 2014, called on people to stay in the streets until the overthrow of President Nicolas Maduro; "Venezuelans are obliged to demand the ouster of a corrupt government."

Leopoldo López

The Attorney General of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela accuses him of the following elements stipulated in the penal code of our country:

- Public incitement
- Property damage
- Arson
- Criminal association

Evidence against him:

1. As part of evidence to support the charges against Leopoldo Eduardo López Mendoza (43), experts of the Criminology Unit Against the Violation of Fundamental Rights of the Public Prosecutors' Office and the Body of Scientific, Penal and Criminal Investigations (CICPC) determined that blunt objects were thrown at the headquarters of the Public Prosecutors' Office; on 12 February this year.

2. The CICPC reported to the 28th Circuit Court of the Metropolitan Area of Caracas that, with their expertise, they had found hydrocarbon accelerants (fuel) in the clothing of the accused students.

3. Another element that demonstrated the central participation of López in these events, were the calls made by him on January 23 and February 2, 2014, public calls for a march from Plaza Venezuela to the headquarters of the Public Prosecutors' Office; which is to say that if no one had called the protest, people would not have even come to an event that was announced as a peaceful and ended with destruction and severe damage.

4. When the alleged peaceful march reached its destination, they only met the unarmed security personnel of the institution who were under the belief that the protesters were going to deliver a document that requested freedom for students detained by the Control Court of Táchira.

5. None of the 29 videos provided by commissioned prosecutors show that there was ever any intention to deliver a document, demonstrating the fact that from the outset, the intention of the protest was to attack the Public Prosecutors' Office and begin the escalation of attacks against the representatives of public power.

Carlos Vecchio

The Attorney General of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela accuses him of the fol-

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lowing elements stipulated in the penal code of our country:

- Inciting crime
- Arson
- Public incitement
- Criminal association

Carlos Vecchio, coordinator of the Popular Will party, left the country despite having an arrest warrant to be prosecuted for various crimes. On February 17, 2014, an arrest warrant was issued against the opposition leader for events that had occurred from February 12.

Daniel Ceballos

The Attorney General of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela accuses him of the following elements stipulated in the penal code of our country:

- Civil rebellion
- Conspiracy

Finally, I've always wondered, what would happen in a country such as this, if a citizen generates so much collective violence, leaving them at deaths door and damages infrastructure worth thousands of dollars. Perhaps they would give him a medal of honor?

FTT: In March of 2015 U.S. President Obama issued an Executive Order declaring Venezuela to be a "threat to U.S. national security." The U.S. government has also imposed sanctions on Venezuela and continues their financial and political support for the Venezuelan counter-revolutionary opposition, among other forms of intervention. What is the purpose of imposing sanctions on Venezuela by United States? Why is the U.S. government supporting the Venezuelan counter-revolutionary opposition?

Amb. Barrientos: It would be impossible to have a Latin American political analysis of the twentieth century and not to mention the extraordinary significance of the legacy of Hugo Chávez and the Bolivarian Revolution in the process of the transformation of the Latin American experience at the local and regional level; without mentioning the impact it has had on world political expression, by following participatory democracy, grassroots organization, redistribution of income, achieving greater equity and combating the perverse neoliberal capitalist culture that threatens the dispossessed mercilessly.

In his inaugural speech, February 2, 1999, Chávez called for "creating a government of and for the people." Bolívar's dream was the integration of all America as a great nation. Today Venezuela continues the struggle to maintain independence as our eternal Commander Hugo Chavez said, we have regained this independence after 200 years thanks to

the people that have awoken and thanks to the united armed forces we have regained our homeland.

President Chávez continued the Bolivarian dream of the integration of a united America by proposing a new mechanism of integration within the framework of the Summit of the Americas held in Quebec City on April 22, 2001. He did this with the creation of ALBA, which I was formalized in 2004, then with the creation of Petrocaribe in 2005, and in 2006 with the entry of Venezuela into Mercosur. In 2007 there was the creation of UNASUR and finally in 2011 the creation of CELAC. Since then, Venezuela has been a bad example to the United States. Because we have been



an example of independence, sovereignty, self-determination and obviously, they did not expect this from a country that was a main supplier of energy to imperialist countries.

Venezuela is not and cannot be a threat to anyone when we are working for the poorest and we fight against adversity that is imposed or created by hegemonic powers which have our fellow countrymen under their control, people who never worked for the good of the country, but for their own interests.

Venezuela has demonstrated irrefutable signs that were a peaceful country committed to world peace efforts, as has been recognized by all international, regional and national authorities. For example, we call for an end to violence in the Middle East, promote peace talks in Colombia, call for an end to military intervention in Syria, overwhelming reject of coups d'états, call for an end to the global arms race, especially in countries that are pioneers in uranium enrichment, denounce attacks against the Palestinian people. This goes all the way up to our establishment of a peace and dialogue talks to resolve internal conflicts in Venezuela.

A notable recognition of the peaceful management of Venezuela, and its permanent peace promotion, has been its re-election to a seat on the Security Council of the UN, reflecting Venezuela's belief in brotherhood, respect for self-determination and sovereignty of States, therefore we can say that we love peace and

love.

International solidarity in support of the role of Venezuela in promoting peace did not delay the decree made by the government of the United States that considers Venezuela "a threat to national security and foreign policy of the United States." The global reaction rejection of this measure was demonstrated forcefully just a few days after their arbitrary decision.

Millions of expressions of solidarity came swiftly, and they joined a campaign that began in Venezuela, as an initiative of President Nicolás Maduro, called "Obama Repeal the Decree Now!" which intended to collect 10 million signatures to demand the repeal of the decree. Just a month after his call, we were able to collect 13,447,651 signatures worldwide in support of Venezuela; from Canada alone, this campaign generated 163,000 Tweets rejecting the interference and classification of Venezuela as a threat.

Various organizations around the world strongly condemned this action of the United States, among which are the public statements of the G77 and China, the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), MERCOSUR, ALBA-TCP, UNASUR and CELAC. Notably, all of them called on the US to respect relationships, make a commitment not to intervene directly or indirectly in the internal affairs of any other State and to observe the principles of national sovereignty, equal rights and self-determination of peoples.

This ratification of support for the homeland of Bolívar was also seen in seventh edition of the Summit of the Americas, held in Panama in April, when 33 of the 35 participating countries expressed in their speeches a demand for the repeal of the Executive Order signed by the President of the United States, Barack Obama. Only two countries prevented a unanimous decision.

FTT: How can we in Canada help to defend the Bolivarian Revolution in Venezuela?

Amb. Barrientos: As I have always told my Canadian brothers and sisters and other Latin Americans in Canada, do not believe me, investigate, inquire, look in the history books, at the statistics about what was Venezuela and what it is today. Go and visit Venezuela, because after that trip you will come with the truth. You will see in Venezuela a country that respects a diversity of opinion, that we are a land of peace and our ultimate goal is to continue bringing love to our people.

FTT: Thank you very much for taking the time for this interview. We look forward to our continued work together to defend the Venezuela Bolivarian Revolution.

la red de supermercados Mercal, fueron quemados 5 camiones para la distribución de alimentos, fue destruida la sede de la empresa estatal de electricidad (Corpoelec) y más de 22 unidades de transporte de esa institución resultaron incendiadas, de igual forma resultó severamente afectada la Universidad Nacional Experimental Politécnica de la Fuerza Armada Nacional (Unefa) y unidades de transporte público, además de vehículos y motos de propiedad privada; en Mérida fue destruida en su totalidad la sede de la compañía telefónica nacional (CANTV), el Instituto Nacional de Parques, el Hotel Venetur, la antigua sede del Servicio Administrativo de Identificación, Migración y Extranjería (Saime), y las agencias de los bancos Bicentenario, Venezuela, Exterior y Banesco; finalmente en los estados Zulia y Táchira resultaron afectadas las sedes del Consejo Nacional Electoral (CNE), unidades de transporte público, y las red supermercados del Estado bicentenario, bibliotecas, ambulatorios para los sectores de bajos recursos Barrio Adentro 1 y 2, entre otros.

De las personas aprehendidas por los hechos de violencia, todas han sido presentadas dentro del plazo de 48 horas siguientes a su aprehensión, que es el lapso establecido en nuestra legislación, y previa realización de los exámenes médicos forenses respectivos, para determinar el estado de salud. Así mismo, hemos atendido a quienes han denunciado haber sido víctimas de maltratos durante el proceso de detención; y una vez tomada la denuncia, de inmediato se ha dado inicio a la investigación a través de los fiscales especializados en protección de derechos fundamentales.

Es por esta razón que se han iniciado 42 averiguaciones penales contra funcionarios de distintos organismos de seguridad del Estado que se presume, en algunos casos, como responsables en la violación de los derechos humanos; destacando que de las personas privadas de libertad que he mencionado anteriormente, 14 son funcionarios de diferentes cuerpos de seguridad que estarían presuntamente involucrados en violaciones a los derechos humanos.

Los hechos violentos y terroristas en Venezuela provocaron los “muertos innecesarios” que fueron usados por los adversarios del gobierno para propagar el deseo de venganza en contra del Gobierno Nacional. Los hechos ocurridos en las inmediaciones de la Fiscalía General de la República, hecho con que se dispara la violencia nacional, condujeron al enjuiciamiento de Leopoldo López y sus colaboradores, por su responsabilidades en tales sucesos, como fuese determinado por los fiscales 2°, 41° y 45° nacionales, Narda Sanabria, Franklin Nieves y Juan Canelón, quienes encontraron suficientes indicios para acusar a Leopoldo López, y demás promotores de la violencia, por los delitos de incendio, daños, instigación pública y asociación

para delinquir. Los jueces del Ministerio Público promovieron para el juicio 21 experticias, 5 informes, 67 testimoniales y 42 expertos de diferentes áreas de investigación criminalística. Los suficientes elementos presentados en la acusación, justificaron el pase a juicio del dirigente de la derecha, quien permanece en prisión desde el 18 de febrero 2014.

De igual forma en los hechos violentos generados en nuestro país, la Fiscalía General de la República encontró que extranjeros y grupos de ciudadanos que se hacían pasar por estudiantes, recibían una asignación diaria de hasta 5.000 bolívares diarios (o su equivalente a 793\$ US dólar) por generar violencia o generar guarimbas; los ciudadanos extranjeros fueron puestos a la orden de la autoridad en sus países respectivos.

El más reconocido de los promotores de las guarimbas terroristas en Venezuela es el ciudadano Leopoldo López. El prontuario de violencia de este ciudadano incluye su participación activa en los hechos que condujeron al golpe de Estado contra el presidente Hugo Chávez en abril de 2002. Leopoldo López, que para ese momento era alcalde del opulento municipio Chacao, al este de Caracas, aprovechó su autoridad para iniciar una cacería de dirigentes chavistas, entre ellos el ministro del Interior de Chávez, Ramón Rodríguez Chacín, y el diputado revolucionario Tarek William Saab, quienes fueron detenidos al día siguiente del golpe por funcionarios de la Policía de Chacao comandados por el propio Leopoldo López.

En una entrevista televisiva transmitida el 12 de abril de 2002, López confesó haber liderado una operación que consistía en emplear a agentes de la Policía de Chacao para despojar a conductores de las llaves de sus vehículos y atravesar sus automóviles de manera que impidiesen la salida de tropas y que el batallón de tanques leales al presidente Chávez llegara a Caracas. El historial conspirativo de Leopoldo López incluye su participación activa en las protestas violentas del denominado Plan Guarimba, en el año 2004. Además, desconoció los resultados del referéndum revocatorio que favoreció al presidente Chávez en 2004.

Fue este personaje el que dio la voz de partida al plan insurreccional que se ejecutó en contra del gobierno democrático de Venezuela, con su llamado hecho el 23 de enero de 2014, a permanecer en las calles hasta lograr el derrocamiento del presidente Nicolás Maduro. “Los venezolanos están obligados a exigir la salida de un gobierno corrupto”.

Leopoldo López

La Fiscalía General de la República Bolivariana de Venezuela lo acusa de los siguientes elementos

estipulados en el código penal de nuestro país.

- Instigación Pública
- Daños a la propiedad en grado de determinador
- Incendio en grado de determinador
- Asociación para delinquir

Pruebas en su contra:

1. Como parte del acervo probatorio para sustentar la acusación contra Leopoldo Eduardo López Mendoza (43), los expertos de la Unidad Criminalística contra la Vulneración de Derechos Fundamentales del Ministerio Público y del Cuerpo de Investigaciones Científicas, Penales y Criminalísticas (Cicpc), determinaron que efectivamente fueron lanzados objetos contundentes contra la sede de la institución el 12 de febrero de este año.
2. El Cicpc informó ante el Tribunal 28° de Juicio del Área Metropolitana de Caracas que le correspondió efectuar una experticia para determinar la presencia de hidrocarburos acelerantes (combustible) en las prendas de vestir de los estudiantes acusados, la cual resultó positiva.
3. Otro elemento demostrativo de la participación fundamental de López en tales hechos, lo representan las convocatorias por él realizadas los días 23 de enero y 02 de febrero, cuando hizo un llamado público, notorio y comunicacional a marchar desde la Plaza Venezuela hasta la sede del Ministerio Público, lo cual quiere decir que si no convoca a esa protesta ninguna persona hubiese acudido a un evento que se anunció como pacífico y terminó con destrozos y daños severos.
4. Cuando la supuesta marcha pacífica llegó a su destino, solo se encontró con el personal de seguridad de la institución, que no porta armas de fuego, bajo el alegato de que se iba a entregar un documento en el que se solicitaba la libertad de estudiantes privados de libertad por un tribunal de control del estado Táchira.
5. Los 29 videos ofrecidos por los fiscales comisionados, en ninguno se observa actitud de que se pretenda entregar algún documento, hecho demostrativo que desde un primer momento la intención era arremeter contra el Ministerio Público y comenzar así la escalada de agresiones contra las cabezas de los poderes públicos.

Carlos Vecchio

La Fiscalía General de la República Bolivariana de Venezuela lo acusa de los siguientes elementos estipulados en el código penal de nuestro país:

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- Delitos de determinador,
- Incendio,
- Instigación pública
- Asociación para delinquir.

Carlos Vecchio, coordinador del partido Voluntad Popular, se fue del país a pesar de tener orden de captura para ser procesado por varios delitos. El 17 de febrero de 2014, fue emitida una orden de captura contra el dirigente opositor por los hechos registrados desde el 12 de febrero.

Daniel Ceballos

La Fiscalía General de la República Bolivariana de Venezuela lo acusa de los siguientes elementos estipulados en el código penal de nuestro país.

- Rebelión civil
- Agavillamiento

Finalmente, siempre me he preguntado, que pasaría en un país de estos, si un ciudadano genera tanta violencia colectiva, dejando a su paso muertes y daños a la infraestructura de un país valorados en miles de dólares. ¿Quizás le entregarían una medalla de honor?

FTT: En marzo de 2015 Presidente Obama emitió la Orden Ejecutiva declarando que Venezuela es una “amenaza para la seguridad nacional de EE.UU.”. El gobierno de EE.UU. también ha impuesto sanciones a Venezuela y continúa su apoyo financiero y político a la oposición contrarrevolucionaria venezolana, entre otras formas de intervención. ¿Cuál es el propósito de imponer sanciones a Venezuela por Estados Unidos? ¿Por qué el gobierno de EE.UU. apoya a la oposición contrarrevolucionaria venezolana?

Sr. Barrientos: Sería imposible hacer un análisis político latinoamericano del siglo XX, sin hablar del significativo extraordinario del legado de Hugo Chávez y la Revolución Bolivariana en el proceso de transformación que a nivel local y regional experimenta América Latina, sin que impacten la expresión política del mundo, seguido por la democracia participativa, la organización popular, la redistribución de la renta, logrando una mayor equidad y combatir la perversa cultura capitalista neoliberal, que atenta contra los desposeídos sin piedad.

Chávez en su discurso de toma de la presidencia, el 02 de febrero de 1999, llama a “crear un gobierno del y para el pueblo”. El sueño de Bolívar fue la integración de la América toda como una gran nación. Hoy Venezuela sigue la lucha por mantener la independencia que como lo dijo nuestro comandante eterno Hugo Chávez, hemos recuperado después de 200 años gracias a que el pueblo despertó y gracias a las fuerzas armadas unidas hemos recuperado nuestra patria.

El Presidente Chávez dio continuidad al sueño Bolivariano en la integración de una América unida y por eso propone un nuevo mecanismo de integración en el marco de las Cumbres de las Américas en Quebec City el 22 de Abril de 2001, con la creación del ALBA, que se oficializó en el año 2004, seguidamente con la creación de Petrocaribe en el año 2005, y en el año 2006 se firma el protocolo de adhesión de Venezuela al Mercosur, en el año 2007 la creación de la UNASUR y finalmente en el año 2011 la CELAC; desde entonces Venezuela ha sido un mal ejemplo. Porque hemos sido ejemplo de independencia, soberanía, autodeterminación y obviamente esto no puede esperarse del país que fue el principal suplidor de energía para los países imperialistas del mundo.

Venezuela no es y no puede ser una amenaza para nadie, cuando estamos trabajando por los más desposeídos y luchamos contra la adversidad que son impuestos o creados por poderes hegemónicos a los cuales se han plegado connacionales que nunca trabajaron por el bien de la Patria sino por los intereses propios.



Venezuela ha dado muestras irrefutables de ser un país pacífico, y ha empeñado esfuerzos en la paz mundial que ha sido reconocida por todas las instancias internacionales, regionales y nacionales. Por ejemplo, el llamado a la no violencia en el Medio Oriente, la promoción de las mesas de diálogo para la búsqueda de la paz en Colombia, la detención del intervencionismo militar en Siria, el rechazo contundente a los golpes de Estados, la detención de la carrera armamentista mundial, en especial de los países que son pioneros en el enriquecimiento de uranio, los pronunciamientos contra los hechos dolorosos cuando se arremete contra la población palestina, hasta el establecimiento de mesas de diálogo y paz para resolver los propios conflictos internos.

Un notable reconocimiento a la gestión pacifista de Venezuela, y a su promoción permanente a la paz ha sido la reelección para ocupar un puesto en el Consejo de Seguridad de la ONU, lo que refleja su convicción de hermandad, respeto a la autodeterminación y a la soberanía de los Estados, por ello podemos decir que nosotros amamos la paz y el amor.

La solidaridad internacional en apoyo al rol de Venezuela en la promoción de la paz, no se hizo esperar al anuncio que hiciera el gobierno de los Estados Unidos, al considerar a Venezuela “Una amenaza a la seguridad nacional y a la política exterior de los Estados Unidos”. La reacción mundial en rechazo de esta medida, se demostró con contundencia a escasos días de la decisión arbitraria.

Millones de expresiones de solidaridad no se hicieron esperar, y se sumaron a una campaña que comenzó en Venezuela, como iniciativa del Presidente de la República Nicolás Maduro, llamada “Obama Deroga el Decreto Ya”, que tenía como propósito recaudar 10 millones de firmas para solicitar la derogación del decreto. A tan solo un mes de su convocatoria se lograron recaudar 13.447.651 firmas a nivel mundial en apoyo a Venezuela; solo desde Canadá se generaron 163.000 Twittees, para rechazar la injerencia y la tipificación de Venezuela como amenaza.

Diversas organizaciones del mundo condenaron firmemente tal señalamiento, entre las que destacan los comunicados públicos del G 77 y China, el Movimiento de Países de los No Alineados (MNOAL), MERCOSUR, ALBA-TCP, UNASUR y CELAC, siendo destacable los llamados al respeto de las relaciones, el compromiso de no intervenir directa o indirectamente en los asuntos internos de cualquier otro Estado y observar los principios de soberanía nacional, la igualdad de derechos y la libre determinación de los pueblos.

La ratificación de este notorio apoyo a la Patria de Bolívar, se testimonio en la séptima edición de la Cumbre de las Américas, realizada en Panamá en el mes de abril, cuando 33 de los 35 países asistentes manifestaron en sus discursos la derogatoria de la orden ejecutiva firmada por el presidente de los Estados Unidos, Barack Obama. Solo dos países, evitaron que se diese una decisión unánime.

FTT: ¿Cómo podemos en Canadá ayudar a defender la Revolución Bolivariana en Venezuela?

Sr. Barrientos: Como siempre he dicho a mis hermanos canadienses y demás latinoamericanos en Canadá. No me crean, investiguen, indaguen, busquen en los libros de historia, en las estadísticas qué era Venezuela y qué es hoy Venezuela. Vayan y visiten Venezuela, pues después de ese viaje llegaran diciendo la verdad. Verán en Venezuela un país donde se respeta la diversidad de opiniones, que somos una tierra de paz y nuestro fin último es seguir llevando amor a nuestro pueblo.

FTT: Gracias por esta entrevista. Esperamos que nuestro trabajo continuado juntos para defender la Revolución Bolivariana.

CUBA SOLIDARITY IN VANCOUVER: FROM ACTION

US Lift the Blockade of Cuba

By *Janine Solanki*

On September 9th, 2016, Cuban Foreign Minister Bruno Rodriguez said in a news conference that the US blockade of Cuba, which cost Cuba \$4.6 billion last year alone, is “the main cause of the economy’s problems and obstacle to development.” Many people will read that statement and think, hold on, isn’t the blockade over?

Yes, US President Obama made a significant step in the right direction on December 17, 2014, when he announced that the US would be normalizing relations with Cuba. Yes, another positive step was made when the US and Cuba opened embassies in each

others countries and reestablished diplomatic relations on July 20, 2015. However, as we near almost two years since Obama’s historic 2014 announcement, the US blockade on Cuba still stands. In fact, during the 2015 United Nations General Assembly vote to end the US blockade



on Cuba, the US still voted against! With a vote of 191 to 2, the resolution was approved in favour of Cuba for the 24th consecutive year, and the only other country to join the US in voting against ending the blockade was Israel.

Monthly Picket

On September 17, 2016 Friends of Cuba Against the US Blockade – Vancouver (FCAB-Van) held a monthly picket action in front of the US consulate in downtown Vancouver. Cuba solidarity activists and supporters raised picket signs, banners and chants, energetically calling on the US to end their blockade on Cuba and to return Guantanamo to Cuba. Rounds of picketing were combined with speakers, including a voice message from activists from Ottawa

Vancouver Activists in Defence of the Venezuelan Revolution

By *Janine Solanki*

Venezuela today is engaged in a struggle between the past and the future. The Bolivarian Revolution is working to take Venezuela forward to a future of equality, dignity and progress. The US-backed right wing forces are using an economic war, media manipulation, violence and terrorism to take Venezuela back to massive inequality and poverty before Bolivarian Revolution. Venezuelans have seen and felt the gains of the Bolivarian Revolution, such as a new constitution which was their first to be approved by popular referendum, in which human rights, women’s rights, Indigenous rights and even environmental rights are enshrined. Thanks to a popular campaign that eliminated illiteracy, everyone is now able to read and write. Venezuelan Missions have made huge gains to provide housing, education, healthcare, literacy and subsidized food for low income people and even to promote art and culture.

With threats of violence, the opposition called for a “takeover of Caracas” on September 1st 2016. In response, the Venezuelan revolutionary government called on people to hold peaceful protests in support of the Bolivarian Revolution on the same day. This call was answered with massive rallies in cities throughout Venezuela, which demonstrated the will of the Venezuelan people to defend their revolution. The Committee for International Solidarity (COSI) in Venezuela called for global days of action in defense of the sovereignty and self-determination of Venezuela from August 29 to September 4.

Action One:

In Vancouver, Canada, Fire This Time’s Venezuela Solidarity Campaign answered this call and organized a petition drive and information table in Downtown Vancouver on September 2nd. Armed with Venezuelan flags, picket signs and banners reading “US Hands Off Venezuela” and “Yes to Peace!” the presence of solidarity with Venezuela was impossible to miss for anyone walking by. Supporters and activists handed out information on Venezuela and many people stopped to sign a petition against US sanctions and threats against Venezuela, including against the threatening and hypocritical US Executive Order which decrees that Venezuela is an “unusual and extraordinary threat to the national security and foreign policy of the United States”. Supporters also participated in a twitter campaign, tweeting photos of themselves with signs reading #ElChavismoSeMueve (Chavismo is moving) and #NoAlGolpeEnVenezuela (no to coup in Venezuela).

Action two:

Alongside organizing this emergency action, FTT’s Venezuela Solidarity Campaign continued with a monthly protest that has been organized since December 2015, in defense of the sovereignty and self-determination of the people of Venezuela and the Bolivarian Revolution. On September 9th, the protest action began outside of the US Consulate in Downtown Vancouver. Protesters picketed and chanted “US Hands Off Venezuela!” and “Obama Repeat the Decree Now!” Following the picket, protesters setup down the street outside of the Vancouver Art Gallery for the petition drive and info display “Maduro is our President!”. This monthly

action aims to combat the demonizing media campaign against Venezuela, and to engage in discussions with people passing by about what is really happening in Venezuela.

In addition to direct actions in defense of Venezuela’s Bolivarian Revolution, Fire This Time has also supported initiatives promoting the art and culture of Venezuela. On September 22nd the Consulate of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela in Vancouver organized “Venezuela in Motion”, the 3rd edition of a cinematic event highlighting new Venezuelan films. Fire This Time attended and supported the event, as well as had an informational table at the event with brochures from FTT’s Venezuela Solidarity Campaign and articles in defense of Venezuela’s Bolivarian Revolution. Fire This Time members, along with others in the audience, can attest to Venezuela’s talent in film-making and appreciate the support of the Venezuelan government for their vibrant film scene.

Fire This Time’s Venezuela Solidarity Campaign encourages all peace-loving people to join in defending Venezuela and the Bolivarian Revolution. For more info on the campaign, check out www.firethistime.net, and join us for the next protest action!



TO ART

Cuba Connections, who have also taken up monthly picket actions on the same day in front of the US Embassy in Ottawa.

This action also included a twitter campaign initiated by the Cuban Institute of Friendship with the Peoples (ICAP). Vancouver joined this international campaign, taking photos in front of the doors of the US Consulate and tweeting them around the world with the hashtags #SolidaridadVsBloqueo (solidarity vs blockade) and #YoVotoVsBloqueo (I vote vs blockade). For more information on this campaign and to add your vote against the blockade, visit www.cubavsbloqueo.cu

VLAFF

Cuba solidarity in Vancouver also took to the big screen in September. The 14th annual Vancouver Latin American Film Festival (VLAFF) presented the 2015 Cuban/Irish made film “VIVA” on September 2nd and 4th. As a community partner of the screenings, Vancouver Communities in Solidarity with Cuba (VCSC) spoke to the audience before the screenings, and were at the theater with a Cuba solidarity informational table. The film, a beautiful and emotional story, raised the topic of LGBT (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans) issues in Cuba. As members of VCSC had recently returned from attending Cuba’s events marking International Day Against Homophobia, VCSC was able to speak to the audience from this experience on the progress and leadership that the Cuban revolution has taken for LGBT rights and against homophobia in Cuba.

Join Us

From protesting against the US blockade on



Cuba to promoting Cuban art and culture, Vancouver is standing alongside Cuba in solidarity with this exceptional revolutionary island. To find out about upcoming events and actions, visit www.vancubavsbloqueo.org and www.vancubasolidarity.com, or follow on twitter @NoBloqueoVan and @VanCuba_VCSC

Follow Janine on Twitter: @janinesolanki

Mobilization Against War and Occupation: Speaking Truth for Peace Against Lies for War

US/Saudi Arabia Hands Off Yemen! US Hands Off Syria!

By Janine Solanki

Mainstream news today has two distinct methods to manipulate public opinion, especially on matters of war and occupation which are far away from the first hand experience of the general public. The first is the sophisticated and well-practiced method of deception. Misinformation and manipulated, misconstrued facts are hammered down in constant, leading reports, thick with heart-wrenching images and narratives to pull at our heartstrings. We are taught to view issues with a narrow view and no sense of a bigger picture or background, instead of being critical and fully informed. The conclusions of Western media dictate what is going on without an objective view of the situation, but a view that is in the interests of the imperialist ruling class and their corporations. The second method is much more simple – ignore it. There are major, worldwide events right now which are impacting humanity in so many ways, yet the mainstream media is outright ignoring them. While atrocities are being committed, instead of doing their duty to report on them, mainstream media is tossing these issues into the wastebasket not because they are not newsworthy, but because telling these stories goes against the interests of those profiting off the imperialist war drive.

As an antiwar coalition, the job of Mobilization Against War and Occupation (MAWO) is to combat the misinformation and deceptions, in the interests of oppressed people fighting back against this new era of war and occupation. This last Sep-

tember, MAWO was on the streets and in discussions and debates, armed with facts, information and the truth.

US/Saudi Arabia Hands Off Yemen!

On Saturday September 24, MAWO held a monthly antiwar rally and petition campaign outside of the Vancouver Art Gallery in downtown Vancouver. Banners reading “US/Saudi Arabia Hands Off Yemen!” and picket signs held by activists demanded “Stop Bombing Yemen!” brought attention to a war which is purposefully ignored by mainstream news. For the last year and a half, a Saudi-led coalition has been bombing Yemen almost daily, indiscriminately destroying civilian areas, vital infrastructure and even world heritage sites that were once gems of human history and civilization. Alongside constant airstrikes, Yemen, which is already one of the poorest countries in the region, has been subjected to an air, land and sea blockade which prevents aid, food, medicine and fuel from entering Yemen and has created one of the worst humanitarian crises in the world, according to the United Nations. The destruction caused by the Saudi bombings, as well as the heroic opposition of Yemeni people who have rallied and protested in massive numbers, were on display in a photo exhibit at the Vancouver demonstration. Many people stopped to see the images which are not reflected in our newspapers or on our TV screens, and to find out more about this “forgotten war”.

Not only does the media turn a blind eye to the atrocities committed by Saudi Arabia, but also turns a blind eye to the support for Saudi Arabia by imperialist governments like the US and Canada. The US is quietly providing weapons, surveillance and intelligence support for Saudi Arabia’s war on Yemen, and continues to launch deadly drone strikes in Yemen. Canada has a \$15 billion deal with Saudi Arabia to sell so-called “light” armoured vehicles, making Canada the second largest arms dealer to Saudi Arabia, after the US. Canada’s arms deal with Saudi Arabia was a main



focus for MAWO’s petitioning, with many people coming up to the information table or talking to teams of activists who were collecting signatures demanding that Canada stop its arms deal with Saudi Arabia.

US Hands Off Syria!

On September 27th, MAWO organized a public forum and discussion titled “U.S. Hands Off Syria”. In comparison to the war on Yemen, Syria is on the news daily, and US President Obama and other officials of imperialist countries are constantly making statements on the situation in Syria. A good first question to ask is, why do Western government officials and the mainstream media care about Syria, but not Yemen? A good second question is, what point are they making about what is happening in Syria? To approach these questions, the forum presented alternative media video clips to give more background and facts on the situation in Syria. The first speaker was Ken Stone via video conferencing from Hamilton, Ontario. Ken Stone traveled to Syria in early 2016 as part of a solidarity tour, is an executive member of the Syria Solidarity Movement and the treasurer of the Hamilton Coalition to Stop the War. A transcript of Ken Stone’s talk is available to read on page 13 of this issue of Fire This Time. The second speaker was Nita Palmer, author of “War & Occupation in Afghanistan: Which Way Forward” and Editorial Board member of Fire This Time Newspaper. Nita Palmer’s talk can be found on page 10. Following the speeches, participants engaged in a lively discussion on the war on Syria.

We need to come together to fight for lasting peace and fight lies with truth, deceptions with information, and organize, educate and mobilize to end decisively and effectively this new era of war and occupation.



U.S.A. HANDS OFF VENEZUELA!



REPEAL THE DECREE NOW! REPEAL ALL SANCTIONS NOW!



FRIDAY OCTOBER 14 ²⁰¹⁶

PROTEST ACTION

4-4:45pm

U.S. CONSULATE

1075 W PENDER ST

PETITION DRIVE

5-6pm

VANCOUVER ART GALLERY

ROBSON AT HOWE ST



FIRE THIS TIME VENEZUELA SOLIDARITY CAMPAIGN
WWW.FIRETHISTIME.NET

#yovotvsbloqueo #solidaridadvsbloqueo

#CUBAVSBLOQUEO #VANCOUBA #CUBAVSBLOQUEO

**WORLDWIDE DAY OF ACTION
END THE U.S.
BLOCKADE ON CUBA!**

#yovotvsbloqueo #solidaridadvsbloqueo
#tenemosmercer #solidaridadvsbloqueo
#CubaVsBloqueo #yovotvsbloqueo #SolidaridadVsBloqueo
#CubaVsBloqueo #FemenosMemoria #FlashMobsVsBloqueo #CubaVsBlockade #VanCuba

JOIN THE CONVERSATION ON TWITTER:

#CubaVsBloqueo #yovotvsbloqueo #SolidaridadVsBloqueo
#FemenosMemoria #FlashMobsVsBloqueo #CubaVsBlockade #VanCuba

2 Vancouver Events!

1> PICKET & FLASHMOB

Monday October 17

U.S. Consulate

1075 W. Pender St.,

Downtown Vancouver, Canada

4:00pm

2> PUBLIC FORUM & WEBINAR

Monday October 17

Joe's Cafe

(Large North Hall)

1150 Commercial Dr.

Vancouver, Canada

7:00pm

LEARN THE #FlashMobVsBloqueo DANCE:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=egJFpua7Kkg>



#solidaridadvsbloqueo
#FlashMobVsBloqueo

#yovotvsbloqueo #solidaridadvsbloqueo

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#WWW.VANCUBAVSBLOCKADE.ORG
#yovotvsbloqueo #solidaridadvsbloqueo