

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



# Fire This Time!

## TOGETHER WE WILL WIN!



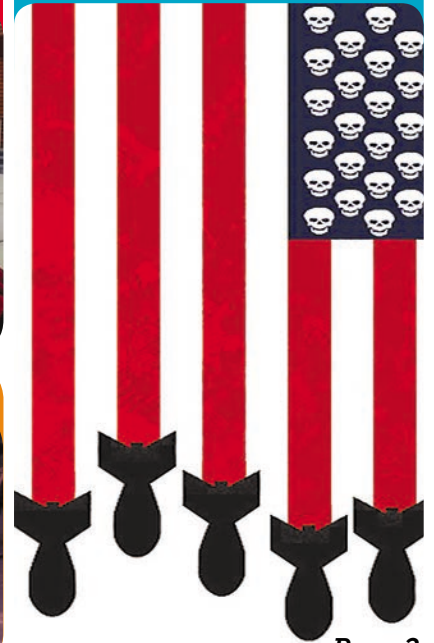
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## U.S. HANDS OFF VENEZUELA!





By Nita Palmer

After the September 11, 2001 attacks on the World Trade Centre, the US and their allies launched a 'global war on terror. Alongside this guns-blazing military campaign, though, there was also a softer, more idealistic goal: to "create a more secure, democratic, and prosperous world for the benefit of the American people and the international community". (Mission statement, US State Department, 2004).

Since then, the US, NATO members, and other allied countries have spent billions not only on their military campaigns but also on programs to build and promote democracy in the countries which they have invaded and occupied. In Iraq, Afghanistan, Libya, and elsewhere, old governments have been overthrown by the military might of these imperialist countries, but has this ushered in a new era of democracy? Let's examine the evidence.

### **Afghanistan**

When the United States and NATO invaded and occupied Afghanistan in 2001, building a 'stable and democratic

Afghanistan' was identified as one of their main goals in the Bonn Agreement, which set up a new government and state structure in Afghanistan under heavy US and NATO funding and influence.

Before the invasion of Afghanistan, stories emerged in the Western media detailing the villainy of the Taliban, who held power in the country at the time. While the Taliban certainly were not a beacon of progress and human rights, the situation in Afghanistan has improved little to date.

After a decade and a half of war and at least tens of thousands of lives lost, democracy remains elusive. Elections have been marred by fraud, vote-buying, and low voter turnout. Furthermore, the elected government holds little power or legitimacy outside of Kabul. Much of the country is now run by warlords who use strongmen and militias to enforce their own rule. Some of these warlords even hold ministerial positions in the Western-backed, 'democratic' Afghan parliament. These men are in many cases worse than the Taliban that preceded them, using the legitimacy brought to them by Western support to increase their wealth

and further their reign of terror over the Afghan people.

A 2016 report by the Special US Congress' Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR) found that, "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."

If the US and their allies were truly trying to build democracy in Afghanistan, they have by all accounts failed miserably. However, beyond the failures of these projects, we must also ask one critical question: how is it possible to build democracy in Afghanistan when the country is still occupied by 10,000 US troops and more than 100,000 military contractors? The ultimate power for any and all decisions in Afghanistan lies in the hands of the US and their allies who control these armed forces. It is truly impossible to have any legitimate, democratic government in Afghanistan (or anywhere else) when a foreign government holds the military and



*Afghan community in Toronto protests against US dropping the "Mother of All Bombs" on their country, April 16, 2017*

economic control in the land.

### **Iraq**

The US and UK invaded Iraq in 2003, promising to rid the country of the 'dictator', then-President Saddam Hussein. This goal was indeed achieved. But rather than ushering in a new era of democracy and prosperity, Iraq has over the past fourteen years plunged into chaos, instability, and sectarian violence. By 2016, 22.5% of Iraqis were living in poverty, according to the Iraqi Ministry

of Planning. An Iraqi parliamentary committee estimated last year that unemployment might be as high as 40%, with youth unemployment sitting around 60%.

Poverty, instability, and sectarianism have now given rise to ISIS/Daesh, a brutal group of Islamist extremists who are certainly no friends to democracy. What democracy is there for the millions of Iraqis who have been forced to live under the terror of Daesh, faced with the prospect of rape, torture, murder, or worse



*Aftermath of a suicide bombing in Kabul which killed over 150 people. May 31, 2017*

for daring to oppose the terrorists?

### **Libya**

The stark contrast between the Libya of today and the Libya of less than a decade ago is one of the most appalling examples of how imperialism has failed democracy. In 2011, NATO set its sights on removing Libyan President Muammar Gaddafi, labelling him a brutal dictator and once again claiming that his removal would bring democracy to the country.

Prior to NATO's intervention, Libya had risen from poverty to become the wealthiest nation in Africa. Life expectancy was the highest on the continent, and there were fewer people living below the poverty line than in Canada, the US, or most of Europe (CIA World Factbook, 2008).

The 2017 CIA World Factbook gives a grim depiction of the country today: "Libya's economic transition away from [Gadafi's] notionally socialist model has completely stalled as political chaos persists and security continues to deteriorate... Living conditions, including access to clean drinking water, medical services, and safe housing, have all declined as the civil war has caused more people to become internally displaced, further straining local resources... Extremists affiliated with the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) attacked Libyan oilfields in the first half of 2015; ISIL has a presence in many cities across Libya..."

According to the 2017 Factbook, a third of Libyans now live in poverty.

Once the wealthiest and most developed country in Africa, Libya is now ruled by ISIS/Daesh and a variety of gangs, many with ties to al-Qaeda. The NATO-installed 'democratic government' has virtually no power in most of the country. One of the few new booming industries in Libya is the slave trade. Migrants from West Africa en route to Europe are being captured and sold at slave markets.

This is the 'democracy' imperialist countries have built in Libya.

### **Syria**

Before the US and their allies began bombing and sending troops to Syria, we heard the same refrain yet again: Syrian President Bashar al-Assad was a 'dictator'



and a 'murderer', hell-bent on quashing any opposition to his government. After a sudden armed uprising against his government, imperialist countries and their allies such as Turkey and Saudi Arabia banded together to arm, train, fund, and lend legitimacy to these 'rebels'. Soon, though, these so-called 'moderates' dropped their masks and showed their true colours as extremist terrorist groups - the most prominent of which today are ISIS/Daesh and al-Nusra Front.

The Syrian government has spent the past six years battling these terrorists for control of the country. Despite all obstacles, Syria held elections in 2012. Syrians once again elected Bashar al-Assad to the presidency with an 88% majority for his party and a voter turnout of 73%. Yet the US and their allies continue to call for the removal of Assad and want to place control of the country in the hands of these terrorist groups!

### Yemen

For the past two years, the Yemeni people have been living under the terror of a brutal bombing campaign by Saudi Arabia, with financial, logistical, and intelligence support from the US.

In Syria, the US armed, trained, and funded small groups of so-called anti-government rebels. Yet when a mass movement for justice and democracy began in Yemen in 2011, the US stayed silent. Protests continued after absolutely illegitimate elections were held to confirm a new president (there was only one candidate, Mansur Hadi, supported by Saudi Arabia). After Hadi's term ended and he fled the country in 2015, Saudi Arabia began bombing Yemen under the pretext of bringing back 'stability' and 'democracy' to Yemen (restoring Hadi to power).

Nearly 13,000 people have been killed in the bombing campaign, and more are dying every day. Seventeen million people are on the verge of famine, according to the UN, and Saudi Arabia has frequently prevented the delivery of aid.

Saudi Arabia is carrying out the dirty work of the US with this war. But how will bombing and starving people bring democracy? The Yemeni people are being punished simply for daring to call for a government which would represent their interests and stand up to the US and Saudi Arabia.

### Imperialism: Incompatible with Democracy

All available evidence points to a complete and utter failure by imperialist countries to bring any sort of democracy to those

countries which they have invaded and occupied.

But we must ask: was 'building democracy' truly the goal in the first place? While Iraq, Afghanistan, Syria, Libya and Yemen have been attacked for their lack of democracy, the US and Canadian governments have no qualms about allying themselves closely with Saudi Arabia - a country which has never held national elections and is ruled by a ruthless monarchy with an atrocious record on human rights and women's rights.

The problem imperialist countries had with the governments of Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya, Yemen and Syria was not a lack of democracy, but the fact that they had not surrendered control of their countries to the political, military, and

*continued on page 38*



# Mobilization Against War & Occupation (MAWO) CONTINUES DEMANDING A WORLD WITHOUT IMPERIALIST WARS & OCCUPATIONS!

By Janine Solanki

On May 20th, 2017, US President Donald Trump arrived in Saudi Arabia, the first stop on his first foreign trip as US president. This trip signified the priorities of the new US president, especially as Trump made a deal to sell \$110 billion of weapons to Saudi Arabia. In US interventions and dangerous meddling in the Middle East and Africa, Saudi Arabia is often the US ally doing much of the dirty work for the US government, including over two years of war and bombing in Yemen with US support. By strengthening this alliance with his trip and arms deal, Trump is letting the world know that more war and destruction are coming.

For the antiwar movement this tells activists and peace-loving people around the world that now is a critical time to increase antiwar events and actions and to build the antiwar movement. In Vancouver, Canada, Mobilization Against War and Occupation (MAWO) organized two events in May to both discuss the tasks of the antiwar movement, and to protest the current wars and occupations.

## May 23 Forum

On May 23rd, MAWO held a forum and discussion titled "Escalating Imperialist Aggression & the New Era of War & Occupation: The Urgency of Building the Antiwar Movement". The forum started out with a series of video clips bringing the participants up to date on issues of war and occupation in the world today, including US President Trump's visit to Saudi Arabia, the Saudi-led bombing of Yemen and the US war on Syria and Iraq. The first speaker was Alison Bodine, MAWO chairperson, who spoke about the overall new era of war and occupation, starting from its beginning with the war and occupation of Afghanistan, and continuing with the invasion and war on Iraq, Libya, Yemen and now Syria, as well as threats and sanctions on Iran and Venezuela. The next speaker was Azza Rojbi, a social justice activist from Tunisia and executive member of MAWO. Azza went into detail on the hypocrisy of the elaborate events in Saudi Arabia for the visit of Trump, which celebrated their work together "for peace and against terrorism" when it is well documented that Saudi Arabia has been behind the funding of terrorist organizations, and is not only suppressing its own people violently but also protesters in Bahrain and bombing the people of Yemen. MAWO

executive member Janine Solanki spoke next to emphasize the importance of building the antiwar movement, given the critical situation of increasing wars and occupations discussed by the previous speakers. Janine also gave examples of MAWO's work over the last 14 years of organizing, with a focus on consistency, creativity and collaboration with other groups and communities, locally, nationally and internationally. The discussion after the talks raised more questions, including going more in depth on the industry of war and why imperialist countries are destroying humanity in favour of profit, new markets and cheap resources.

## May 26 Antiwar rally and petition campaign

While education and discussion are cornerstones in antiwar organizing, so is action. Every month MAWO organizes an antiwar rally and petition campaign in downtown Vancouver. On a sunny May 26th, activists and organizers setup banners and held picket signs in the busy Vancouver streets. The focus of this month's rally was against the wars on Iraq, Syria and Yemen, but so against US threats and interference in Venezuela and North Korea. Organizers went out in teams asking people passing by to take a moment to sign the petitions, directed towards the government of Canada to stop their military actions, and any interference in Yemen and Syria. This action brings antiwar politics onto the streets of Vancouver, where people going about their day go home knowing there is an antiwar organization actively opposing war and occupation, and that they can also get involved!

As May came to a close it was with the planning for the next month of antiwar actions. MAWO has already planned the next rally and petition drive for June 23rd, 5pm outside of the Vancouver Art Gallery in Downtown Vancouver. MAWO encourages all peace-loving people to come together and join us, to fight against war and occupation and for a better and more just world!

US Hands Off Syria and Iraq!

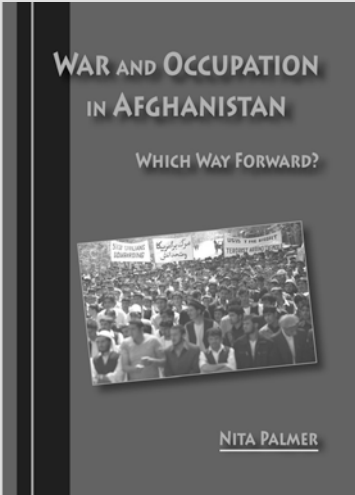
Saudi Arabia: Stop Bombing Yemen!

No to war and occupation, yes to self-determination!"

Follow Janine on Twitter:  
[@janinesolanki](https://twitter.com/janinesolanki)

*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.

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**STOP THE WARS AT HOME & ABROAD:  
BUILDING A MOVEMENT  
AGAINST WAR, INJUSTICE & REPRESSION!**




**The United National  
Anti War Coalition**  
UNAC

Join activists from the many domestic and international struggles as we build unity against the Trump Regime and the underlying system responsible for imperialist wars, poverty, racism, sexism, the oppression of LGBTQ people, attacks on Muslims and undocumented immigrants, environmental destruction and all forms of injustice.

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By Thomas Davies

If you've read the last two years of Fire This Time's coverage of Bill C-51, the controversial "anti-terrorism" law, you'll know we've always been critical of the Liberal Party's promises to address the human rights violations imposed by Bill C-51. When they announced they were finally going to do a national consultation on "Public Safety and National Security", we called it out as an empty public relations show. There was enough proof to do that given that the committee was not independent, their recommendations would be non-binding and there was actually very little opportunity given for meaningful public input.

For those who may have not been convinced, consider the fact that the recently released report on the consultation was actually prepared by a billion dollar public relations firm, New York-based Hill + Knowlton. In another act of manipulation. Minister of Public Safety Ralph Goodale proclaimed that the report was "produced by an independent third party," and it therefore presents "an impartial overview of what Canadians said".

"Independent third party"? Hill + Knowlton is infamous for being the primary architect of the US public relations campaign to justify the first Iraq War in 1990. They arranged for Nayirah al-Sabah, daughter of the Kuwaiti ambassador to the U.S., to falsely testify

before the U.S. Congressional Human Rights Caucus that she had witnessed Iraqi soldiers removing babies from incubators. Presented as an "independent" Kuwaiti girl, the story is credited as having a major impact on American public opinion going into the war against Iraq. By the time the truth came out, the US had already dropped 265,000 bombs and devastated the country.

#### Obvious Outcome

It's not surprising then that the report never directly addresses the question everyone thought should be asked, "Should we Repeal Bill C-51? Yes or No?" The consultation never sought to ask this directly, but were forced to admit that, "a majority of stakeholders and experts [not only opposed new powers but] called for existing [security measures] to be scaled back or repealed completely, particularly Bill C-51, the Anti-Terrorism Act, 2015..." Because they chose to mix "scaled back" and "repealed completely" together, the public relations report therefore justifies not recommending the full Repeal of Bill C-51, only some roll-backs and changes to some aspects of the

law.

#### We are still faced with:

- New, undefined powers of "disruption" for CSIS which includes breaking laws.
- "Preventative detentions" with lower standards of justification and increased times that someone can be jailed without evidence
- Private information sharing between 17 different government agencies
- Expanded No Fly-Lists

The bottom line is that even if all of the report's recommendations are accepted, our rights would still be significantly compromised, and there would continue to be a massive grey area which leaves the interpretation of human rights violations up to those who would be violating them



*PR firm Hill + Knowlton arranged the false testimony of Nayirah al-Sabah, daughter of the Kuwaiti ambassador to the U.S., to justify the 1990 US war against Iraq.*

– principally the RCMP and CSIS.

Justin Trudeau and the Liberals are completely fine with that.

### Nothing Concrete

It's also obvious there will be even more delays to the process. Public Safety Minister Ralph Goodale had said he was "hopeful" he would submit legislation regarding changes to Bill C-51 during the spring, but as summer approaches this is highly unlikely.

Meanwhile, government agencies, the police and spy agency still continue to use Bill C-51's broad, vague and reckless powers against people with minimal accountability, especially to the public. The Liberals are in no rush even to minimally improve human rights, and there are some upcoming events which might help explain why.

Kinder Morgan's hotly contested pipeline is slated to begin construction this fall, with many groups vowing to do whatever is necessary to stop the project. Having a full Bill C-51 gives the government more tools in its toolbox to suppress the protests to this unpopular pipeline it is attempting to force through, among other things.

### Dakota Access Parallel

Canada could easily be looking to take a page out of the US government's book on protest suppression. It has been revealed that a private contractor named TigerSwan was hired against a peaceful protest camp attempting to stop the Dakota Access pipeline in Standing Rock, North Dakota. TigerSwan referred to the camp members as "an ideologically driven insurgency with a strong religious component." Following up by saying the movement "generally followed the jihadist insurgency model while active".

Based on his hyper-exaggerated language, they justified using helicopters and drones for aerial surveillance and radio eavesdropping. They also infiltrated activist circles in various states by "using false names and identities," and forwarded the data to their employer. The firm has also reportedly targeted the movement through a "counter-information campaign" on social media.

This was all done with the consent of US law enforcement agencies, as TigerSwan was in "routine coordination and intelligence sharing with law enforcement" and "also aided prosecutors

in building cases against pipeline opponents." This was accompanied by a significant weaponization of the police presence, which actually included missile launchers.

Given that Bill C-51 has language which legal experts have said could basically be used to target anyone as a terrorist or "supporter" of terrorism, it's highly likely that if it is not repealed, Bill C-51 could be used against peaceful protestors in Canada much like anti-terrorism laws are used against peaceful protestors in the United States.

### PR Government

We are faced with a public relations government and a public relations Prime

Minister in Canada. They promised "Real Change Now" to get elected and now deliver "Some Changes Maybe". Given this, it's very important that we judge them based on what they do, not what they say. On the issue of Bill C-51 and human rights, they are failing miserably. It's therefore incredibly important that we continue to expose and oppose their manipulations and continue to demand a full repeal of Bill C-51.

**REPEAL BILL C-51!  
INDEPENDENT PUBLIC INQUIRY  
NOW!  
OUR SECURITY LIES IN  
DEFENDING THE RIGHTS OF  
ALL!**

*Follow Thomas Davies on Twitter:  
@thomasdavies59*



## **WEEKLY ACTION CAMPAIGN TO REPEAL BILL C-51 CONTINUES!**

The Working Group to Stop Bill C-51 has shown no signs of slowing down as summer approaches. The month of May saw the Committee reach 116 weekly actions, as it continues to alternate between petition drives and banner drops. May saw the Committee return to some successful locations from previous actions, as well as discovering new locations to bring the demand of "Repeal Bill C-51!"

Banner drops were held at a new location over the busy Lougheed Highway in Burnaby, as well as towards traffic coming of the Patullo Bridge into New Westminster. Now that the bridge has been fully re-opened the response was loud and supportive, despite the heavy rainfall that day.

The Working Group also visited

Gilmour Station for the first time in Burnaby, and found a receptive crowd among the many students and workers passing through the station. Once again 22nd Street Station in New Westminster continues to be an important location. Despite printing extra leaflets the Working Group had distributed absolutely every one within an hour, but continued collecting petition signatures and chanting.

As the Trudeau government continues its policy of "Delay, Delay, Delay" on Bill C-51, the Working Group to Stop Bill C-51 continues its own policy of, "Organize, Organize, Organize." When it comes to human rights, the Committee refuses to back down.

**REPEAL BILL C-51!**

By Tamara Hansen

On May 26, 2017 Cuba's "Henry Reeve International Medical Brigade" was awarded one of the World Health Organization's most prestigious and lucrative prizes, the Dr. Lee Jong-wook Memorial Prize. This award includes a \$100,000 prize and is reserved for individuals or organizations whose work in public health has "extended far beyond the call of normal duties." What does going beyond the call of duty mean? Since its founding in 2005, this Cuban internationalist emergency medical team has travelled to 21 countries to help more than 3.5 million people affected by disasters and epidemics. This international recognition is very significant, not only for the Internationalist Henry Reeve Brigade, but also the work of the revolutionary Cuban government and its Ministry of Public Health, who are putting people's health before profit.

#### **What is the Henry Reeve International Medical Brigade?**

On August 29, 2005, Hurricane Katrina hit the United States at full force, devastating the people of New Orleans. Rather than helping, the U.S. government was neglectful of the enormous damage and needs of

people, as a result over 2,000 Americans died. Meanwhile, many countries and NGOs reached out to the U.S. with offers of assistance, including Cuba. On September 5, 2005 Comandante Fidel Castro, at the time the President of Cuba, announced that the U.S. had not responded to Cuba's promise to send over 1,100 doctors and 26 tons of aid to help the victims of Hurricane Katrina. The Cuban medical professionals were actually waiting, backpacks in hand, for approval from the United States, then under President George W. Bush, however the U.S. completely ignored Cuba's offer.

This was the birth of the Henry Reeve International Medical Brigade (HRIMB). According to a CNN article written at the time, "Castro has named the Cuban rescue team the Henry Reeve Brigade in honor of an American who fought with Cuba's rebel forces during the Cuban War of Independence against Spain that began in 1895." Since 2005, the HRIMB has boasted 7,400 voluntary healthcare workers and among the 3.5 million people served, they have directly saved an estimated 80,000 lives.

The HRIMB has served in disaster areas around the world. For example, during the Ebola outbreak in West Africa (2014-2016), the Brigade sent 250 medical professionals.

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), this revolutionary medical force constituted the single largest medical operation on the ground in Sierra Leone, Guinea and Liberia.

But that is not all! Some other examples from the Guardian Newspaper's article "Cuba's extraordinary global medical record shames the US blockade":

In 2005, after the earthquake in Pakistan, "Cuba sent 2,400 medical workers to Pakistan and treated more than 70% of those affected; they also left behind 32 field hospitals and donated a thousand medical scholarships."

In 2010, after the devastating earthquake in Haiti, Cuba sent the largest medical contingent. Cuba provided care to almost 40% of the victims of the quake.

#### **What is so special about Cuban Healthcare?**

Interestingly, Cuba is not only providing medicine around the world. The WHO further reports that, "Cuba is also globally recognized for its preventive, community based approaches to primary health care, disease prevention and medical education." The WHO report further states, "the

# ***QUBA'S INTERNATIONALISM WINS IMPORTANT UNITED NATIONS WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION (WHO) PRIZE!***



*Cuban Henry Reeves Brigade doctors reutrn from international mission in Haiti*



international assistance provided by Cuba does not detract from the care of its own population which benefits from a National Health System which is universal and free at the primary, secondary, and tertiary levels and has a total of 493 368 health workers, with a ratio of 80.2 doctors, 15 dentists and 79.3 nurses per 10 000 inhabitants.” These important statistics show that although Cuba is a developing, or third world, country, their dedication to providing healthcare services to every member of Cuban society has proven immensely successful by all global standards.

Despite this success, an ongoing challenge for Cuba’s medical system in the U.S. blockade on Cuba. In place since just after the triumph of the Cuban revolution, this unjust U.S. policy towards Cuba continues in full-force despite the reestablishment of formal diplomatic relations between the two countries. According to Cuba’s Granma International, “the accumulated financial losses to the Cuban Public Health sector currently stand at around 2.5 billion dollars since the blockade was first imposed in 1960.”

In the past couple of weeks, there has also been new threats from Washington towards Havana. Many news organizations are reporting that U.S. President Donald Trump is planning to rip up the agreements established between the U.S. and Cuba since the formal reestablishment of diplomatic ties. While these plans seem to be mostly rumor at this time, if the Trump administration decides to cut diplomatic ties with Cuba, it could be used to further entrench their continued hostile blockade on Cuba.

At the same time, it is impossible to calculate the true impact of the blockade on Cuba’s healthcare system. It impacts Cuba’s ability to buy medicine from the U.S., as well as, many medical supplies. Cuba is also unable to purchase any medical equipment that has over 10% of its components made in the U.S. Of course, Cuban creativity helps, as throughout the country medical professionals and technicians go to great lengths to maintain their equipment so that it lasts longer, however this is a Band-Aid solution. International scientific exchanges and collaboration are also a challenge due to the U.S. blockade. Travel limitations for both Cubans and Americans between the two countries, limits the scientific community’s ability to share and learn from each other. There is also difficulty in transferring money to various journals and organizations (in the U.S. and internationally) that Cuba wishes to have partnerships with, as the blockade thwarts Cuba’s use of American dollars and electronic bank transfers.

However, despite this consistent attack on their healthcare system, the Cuban

people and their revolutionary socialist government, have continued pushing forward, demonstrating to the world that it is possible to have a medical system that successfully puts health before capitalist corporate profit.

Cuban healthcare continues to advance!

Just three days after winning the prominent WHO award, the Henry Reeve International Medical Brigade announced it was sending a team of 23 medical professionals specializing in preventing the spread of epidemics to Peru to assist people in the areas affected by serious rains and floods. They took with them 4.2 tons of medicine and medical supplies, including 5 million chloride tablets to help render the water drinkable in remote communities.

Just as the Cuban people are continuing to push forward their revolutionary internationalism through their ‘army’ of doctors.

Here in Canada, we have a responsibility to defend the people of Cuba against U.S. aggression and the illegal U.S. blockade on Cuba. We also have a responsibility to remind the various levels of government in Canada that our healthcare system is not for sale! Cuba reminds us that a broader and more accessible universal healthcare system



*Dr. Roberto Morales, Cuban Minister of Public Health and Dr. Felix Báez Sarria, who contracted the Ebola virus while on a medical mission in Sierra Leone, received the award on behalf of the HRIMB*



*Cuba’s Infant Mortality Rate is 4.3 per 1000 live births. One of the best in the world, and better than the U.S. despite the blockade.*



*1,586 Cuban doctors from the HRIMB ready to assist the United States after Hurricane Katrina, August 2005.*

is both necessary and possible. Like Cuba we must put humanity before capitalist market profit.

*Follow Tamara Hansen on Twitter:  
@THans01*

**THE NEW ERA OF WAR & OCCUPATION**

# **TRUMP'S FIRST INTERNATIONAL TRIP TO BOOST WAR & OCCUPATION AROUND THE WORLD**

## **Why Should Trump's War Drive Concern Everyone?**

By Azza Rojbi

On May 19, US president Donald Trump started his trip abroad, the first international trip of his presidency. He visited Saudi Arabia, Israel, and Europe. The trip itinerary and agenda made it very clear that Trump's administration with the help of Saudi Arabia and NATO countries are preparing for more wars and occupations.

Trump's first stop was the Saudi capital Riyadh. Upon his arrival Trump was met with fanfare, red carpet and the big smile of the Saudi King and dignitaries. Saudi Arabia went above and beyond to provide a lavish royal welcome to the US president. Several news media reported that "prior to Trump's arrival, the capital of Riyadh was flush with banners and billboards depicting Trump" and that "the cost of this extravagance is not known precisely, though an initial bill for \$68m has been leaked". The Saudi government has even created a special website to promote this visit with a countdown worthy of the release of an action movie.

### **Why the trip to Saudi Arabia?**

One wonders why is Saudi Arabia going

above and beyond to please US president Donald Trump. The same Donald Trump that ran a campaign of fear mongering and bigotry against Islam and people from Middle East & North Africa. Suddenly now Saudi Arabia is trying to portray Trump as a friend of Islam and Muslim countries. The reality is that neither the Saudi government nor the Trump administration really care about the well being of people in the Middle East and North Africa.

With the full backing of the United States, Saudi Arabia has been waging an illegal and criminal bombing campaign against the people of Yemen for over two years under the pretext of bringing stability back to the country. They have only brought more death and destruction. Yemen's Legal Center for Rights and Development, estimates the civilian death toll at over 12,000 people. The US has been supporting this bombing campaign, both politically and militarily. According to The Intercept, "the U.S. has supplied Saudi Arabia with more than \$20 billion worth of weapons during its Yemen campaign, including thousands of MK-82 bombs."

Outside of the lavish, awkward and over-exaggerated photo-ops of Trump and the Saudi royals, one highlight from Trump's

visit was the signing of a \$110 billion weapons deal between Saudi Arabia and the US. The Washington Post reported that this deal forms part of a 10-year, \$350 billion agreement in a "strategic vision" between the two countries. The White House said in a statement that the arms deal will bolster "the Kingdom's ability to contribute to counter terrorism operations across the region, reducing the burden on the U.S. military to conduct those operations."

The US is clearly giving the green light to their Saudi puppets to carry on with their war on Yemen and their funding of the so called 'rebels' in Syria and Libya. The US wants to gain complete hegemony over countries of the Middle East and North Africa, arming Saudi Arabia and supporting their military endeavours is part of that strategy.

### **Why the trip to Israel?**

Trump's next tour stop was Israel where he was warmly welcomed by Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu. In brief remarks Trump gave during a ceremony upon his arrival, he said he had come "to reaffirm the unbreakable bond between the United States and the state of Israel". Trump and Netanyahu praised each other and spoke of

hopes for stability and a peace deal in the region, keeping tradition with the over 25 years long illusion of peace negotiations. These endless peace talks ignore the demands and reality of the Palestinian people and serve as a cover for the Israeli government to continue its illegal expansion in Palestinian land.

The Palestinian people were not fooled by Trump and Netanyahu's rotten olive branch. As Trump was meeting with Israeli officials, Palestinian businesses were closed in the West Bank as part of a general strike in solidarity with hunger-striking Palestinian political prisoners in Israeli jails. Protesters took to the streets and blocked roads in the West Bank in what was called the 'Day of Rage'. Banners and signs held by protesters read "Trump's visit is for selling illusion and stepping on Palestinian rights" and "Resistance is not terrorism".

Trump's short stop at Bethlehem and his meeting with the Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas has not appeased the anger of the Palestinian people, nor did it dupe them into thinking that the United States cares about their lives and well being. Trump's visit to Israel is no sign of peace, its goal is to give assurance to Israel to pursue their killing of Palestinians and the theft of their land.

#### Trump & NATO countries

After his visit to the Middle East, Trump flew to Europe to participate at the G7 and NATO meetings. The mainstream media focused on covering "Trump's European Misadventures", his awkward handshakes, his shoving of the Montenegro Prime Minister to get in the front of a photo and his asking of NATO countries to "pay their fair share".

Behind all this media frenzy, Trump's request from other NATO countries to increase their military spending is not strange to US policy. President George W. Bush and Barack Obama both pressed NATO to increase military spending. Trump might not be the smooth and charismatic speaker that Barack Obama was but he is basically continuing and increasing the US drive for war and occupation. Trump is all full of empty threats and rhetoric! The actions of his administration are the proof that the United States ultimate goal is for further expansion and enlargement of NATO.

On April 11, 2017, President Trump signed the treaty allowing the country of Montenegro to join NATO, after the US Senate on March 28 voted overwhelmingly to back this move. If the Trump administration was truly worried about NATO countries not contributing enough why is it so keen on admitting a new NATO member that will have, by far, the smallest



*Massive protest against US-Saudi bombing of Yemen during Trump's visit. Sana'a, Yemen.*

military budget in the alliance? The US and NATO countries do not diverge in their goal to increase their hegemony over eastern European countries and flex their military muscles against Russia.

#### Trump is a war president

The US has been leading a new era of war and occupation for the last 16 years which has caused death and destruction in Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya, Syria, Yemen and many other countries. Trump is continuing and accelerating this war legacy. His boost to the US defense spending in the 2018 budget and his first international trip are a clear signal of his warmongering agenda.

As progressive, antiwar and human loving people we need to step forward and unite to resist and fight back against this new bloody and criminal war drive by the US government and their puppet allies.

US Hands Off the Middle East  
US hands Off North Africa!

No to war and occupation! Yes to self-determination!



*Billboard in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia*



*Trump and Netanyahu*



*Protest against Trump's visit in Palestine*

Follow Azza Rojbi on Twitter:  
@Azza\_R14

# We Will Win! Together - Let's Defeat the Kinder Morgan Pipeline!



November 19, 2016



May 28, 2017



May 14, 2016



January 28, 2017

By Thomas Davies

Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and Environment Minister Catherine McKenna were among the first to line up and loudly declare their “disappointment” with U.S. President Donald Trump’s announcement that he was taking that country out of the international Paris Climate Agreement. The move was hypocritical given that while they publicly champion the Paris Agreement, their government will completely miss its own modest climate commitments if the resources extraction projects it has approved since taking office are able to be built. Fortunately this has been met with considerable opposition - and the fight to save the environment is currently centred in British Columbia and opposition to the Kinder Morgan pipeline. With both Kinder Morgan and Justin Trudeau promising to start construction in the fall, this summer looks to be especially critical in stopping the project and protecting the environment.

## Climate Deception

While Trudeau and McKenna took photos with kids and kayaks to celebrate World Environment Day, a new report by the Columbia Institute details the extent of the government’s misleading climate claims.

“The unfortunate truth is that Canada is behind,” said Charley Beresford, executive director of the Columbia Institute. “Canada’s

current targets are not science based. They will not meet the global test of the Paris agreement requirements.”

The report points to a line graph from the federal governments’ national inventory report on greenhouse gas emissions, published in spring 2017, which shows that even with proposed measures to reduce emissions, Canada will miss its 2030 target without “additional measures.”

The targets are insufficient already. Canada’s current target is to cut 30 per cent of emissions from 2005 levels by 2030. This is much less than what the Institute refers to as the “international scientific consensus” which says that industrialized countries need to cut emissions by 80 per cent from 1990 levels by 2050 in order to stabilize carbon dioxide in the atmosphere and prevent catastrophic global warming.

That’s a very big gap!

## The Kinder Morgan Pipeline Precedent

That’s why the fight to stop Kinder Morgan’s 7.4 billion dollar pipeline expansion, which would ship dirty tar sands oil from Edmonton to Burnaby, has taken on so much significance. On one side there is the growing public understanding that a pipeline that commits Canada to dirty oil for decades to come is incredibly dangerous and unnecessary. On the other side are the oil corporations and Trudeau’s government who have realized that if the Kinder Morgan pipeline is stopped, it jeopardizes all of their plans for further environmentally unsustainable projects.

The Globe and Mail newspaper summarized

the challenge as the oil industry sees it, “As renewable energy technology becomes economic and efficient beyond any predictions made just a few years ago, and growth in the global demand for oil slows, Canada needs to capture market share while the worldwide appetite for oil still exists.”

## Low Confidence

While Kinder Morgan has tried to put on a confident public face by saying that it will start pipeline construction this fall, several factors have given more hope to the growing grassroots movement opposing the pipeline.

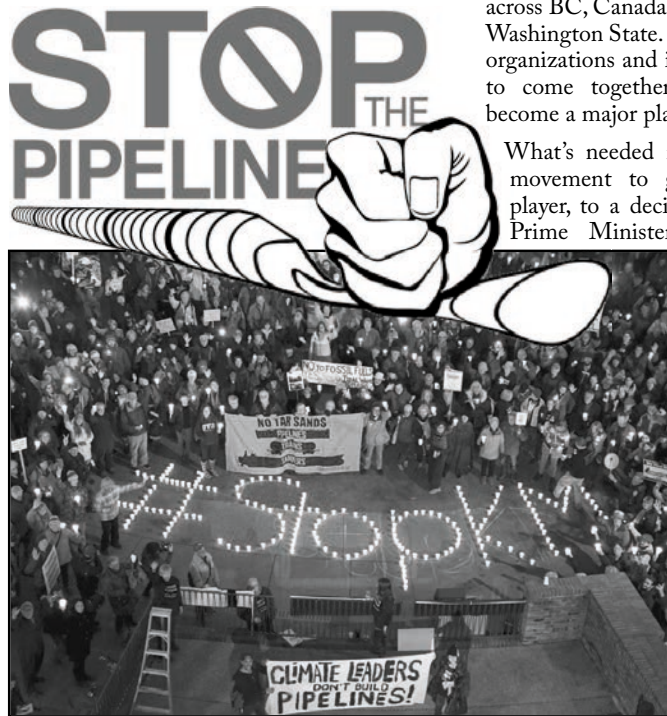
Kinder Morgan was barely able to raise 1.75 billion on its initial public offering of stocks in the project, and only after it was forced to heavily discount the stock, which then closed lower than the opening price. In Kinder Morgan’s required investment “prospectus” to potential investors, it was also forced to admit that:

“An investment in Restricted Voting Shares should only be made by persons who can afford a significant or total loss of their investment.”

Its long list of risks includes, “Inabilities to overcome challenges posed by or related to regulatory approvals by federal, provincial or municipal governments, difficulty in obtaining, or inability to, obtain permits (including those that are required prior to construction such as the permits required under the Species at Risk Act), Land Agreements, public opposition,

blockades, legal and regulatory proceedings (including judicial reviews, injunctions, detailed route hearings and land acquisition processes), delays to ancillary projects that are required for the Trans Mountain Expansion Project (including power lines and power supply), increased costs and/or cost overruns, inclement weather or significant weather-related events (including storms and rising sea levels (potentially resulting from climate change) impacting the Business' marine terminals) and other issues."

Kinder Morgan is probably not thrilled at the agreement made between the BC NDP and BC Green Party, which gives them a majority in the provincial parliament. One of the initial points of agreement is that the parties will "immediately employ every tool available" to stop the project.



### Indigenous Resistance

The company is also facing at least 19 separate lawsuits from indigenous nations and municipalities, with potential for many more. When Alberta NDP Premier Rachel Notley brazenly stated, "Mark my words, that pipeline will be built, the decisions have been made," Grand Chief Stewart Phillip of the Union of BC Indian Chiefs immediately responded, "Mark my words. The Trans Mountain pipeline expansion project will never see the light of day."

"She's speaking out one side of her mouth that they need to uphold and embrace the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, and then on the other hand completely rejecting the notion that we have the right to free, prior and informed consent to protect and defend the health,

safety and well-being of our people and the environmental integrity of our respective territories," Phillip continued.

Squamish Chief Ian Campbell agrees, "It's the willful destruction of the environment where we've seen nothing but a gold rush mentality upon arrival of Europeans to this part of the world, where they continue to claim our lands and waters."

### Growing Movement

Most importantly, widespread opposition to the pipeline has become a major issue for anyone considering the issue, whether that be oil corporations, government, investors, media or poor and working people. Prime Minister Trudeau has been unable to go anywhere in Canada without climate justice protestors "greeting" him, and major demonstrations continue to happen regularly across BC, Canada, and even in neighbouring Washington State. Led by indigenous nations, organizations and individuals have continued to come together and mobilize to truly become a major player in this issue.

What's needed now is for the grassroots movement to go from being a major player, to a decisive one. Kinder Morgan, Prime Minister Trudeau and Alberta Premier Notley are all doubling down on their commitment to force the Kinder Morgan pipeline through, and so we need to double down and expand our organizing as well.

We cannot wait and hope that either the provincial or federal government solve this issue for us. If we do not organize, the deep-seated interests which are pushing this pipeline forward will have their way. We are a broad and

powerful movement with a huge potential to grow. Especially when we further expose the legacy of broken environmental and "job creation" promises of these oil companies and their government backers.

When Trudeau was elected he famously declared "Canada is back" at the United Nations Climate Summit which produced the Paris Agreement. He would have been more accurate to say, "We are at the back, and we will stay there as long as possible." Our planet and our communities require bold action, and ensuring the Kinder Morgan pipeline is not built can be a major precedent setting victory. Let's work together to ensure a better future for all of us!

No Kinder Morgan Pipeline!  
Climate Justice Now!

Follow Thomas on Twitter: @thomasdavies59

## OUR HERITAGE



**Evelyn Reed**  
Revolutionary leader and  
women's revolution theorist

The Myth of Women's Inferiority (1954)  
The Fourth International

"On the basis of this historical situation, certain false claims regarding the social superiority of the male sex have been propagated. It is often set forth as an immutable axiom that men are socially superior because they are naturally superior. Male supremacy, according to this myth, is not a social phenomenon at a particular stage of history, but a natural law. Men, it is claimed, are endowed by nature with superior physical and mental attributes.

An equivalent myth about women has been propagated to support this claim. It is set forth as an equally immutable axiom that women are socially inferior because they are naturally inferior to men. And what is the proof? They are the mothers! Nature, it is claimed, has condemned the female sex to an inferior status.

This is a falsification of natural and social history. It is not nature, but class society, which lowered women and elevated men. Men won their social supremacy in struggle against and conquest over the women. But this sexual struggle was part and parcel of a great social struggle – the overturn of primitive society and the institution of class society. Women's inferiority is the product of a social system which has produced and fostered innumerable other inequalities, inferiorities, discriminations and degradations. But this social history has been concealed behind the myth that women are naturally inferior to man."

# "System Change Not Climate Change!" Fire This Time Holds Critical and Dynamic Discussion in Vancouver

By Alison Bodine

Look around the world today and it is clear that something has got to change if human life on planet earth is going to continue. For more than two centuries capitalism has been wreaking havoc on the fragile balance between humanity and the environment. Today the question is impossible to avoid: Environment. Humanity. Capitalism. For how long can they continue to co-exist?

On May 12, 2017 Fire This Time held a public forum in Vancouver to discuss this question and the serious challenge that climate change is posing to the humanity's sustainability and very survival.

After beginning the evening with films and multimedia about the reality and causes of climate change around the world, the forum featured presentations by two leading organizers in the environmental movement in Vancouver.

Gordon August, spoke first as a Hereditary chief from Shísháhlh (Sechelt), organizer with the Fight C and Climate

Convergence Coalitions and a social justice and environmental activist for nearly four decades. Gordon's presentation was focused on the environmental and human destruction that would be caused by the construction of the Site C Dam in BC, and his passion and clarity about the necessity of ending this disastrous project came through clearly in his words.

Following Gordon, Thomas Davies, a member of the Editorial Board of the Fire This Time newspaper, founding member of the Climate convergence coalition and a unionized pipefitter spoke. Thomas highlighted the role of the governments of the US and Canada in perpetuating the climate crisis, but he also focused on the importance of building a fight back against environmental destruction as well as the violation of indigenous rights and sovereignty. From the struggle against the Kinder Morgan pipeline here in BC, to the tar sands expansion in Alberta, to the Dakota Access Pipeline in South Dakota, Thomas reminded everyone that



*Gordon August, Thomas Davies & Alison Bodine at the May 12, 2017 Fire This Time public forum.*

the climate just movement is stronger when people are united and mobilized.

Their critical perspectives were followed by an energetic discussion that especially highlighted the necessity to maintain a consistent and dynamic movement for climate justice, no matter what government may form in British Columbia following the May 9 election.

By the end of the forum, one important idea was crystal clear, as capitalism continues to send us all towards environmental and human catastrophe, we have no other choice but to organize and fight back. We need to change the system, not the climate.

*Follow Alison Bodine on Twitter: @Alisoncolette*



## VANCOUVER PROTESTS TRUDEAU...AGAIN!

Justin Trudeau's presence in Vancouver was protested yet again on May 18. This is sure to be an ongoing tradition as long as the Prime Minister maintains his pro-pipeline policies. Trudeau has not been able to come to Vancouver without a protest since his decision to approve the Kinder Morgan and Line 3 pipelines last year.

Organized on four days notice by the Vancouver Climate Convergence coalition, 300 protestors chanted loudly and held large banners outside of a fancy downtown hotel while Trudeau spoke at a \$750 a plate Liberal fundraising event inside.

The chant of, "Hey Hey, Trudeau, Kinder Morgan has Got to Go!" has become a familiar sound in Vancouver and across Canada, and once again rally participants confirmed their determination that the Kinder Morgan pipeline will never be built regardless of his attempts to force the project through.

# Venezuela Under Attack



## VIOLENT COUNTER-REVOLUTIONARIES ON THE BRINK OF DESPERATION

By Alison Bodine

On May 20, 2017, Orlando José Figuera, a young Black Venezuelan man was lit on fire by a violent mob of over 100 right-wing “protestors” in Caracas, Venezuela. This atrocious hate crime left severe burns on 80% of Orlando’s body. He was brought to the edge of his life, just for declaring that he was a Chavista (a supporter of the Bolivarian revolution).

Despite her grief, Ines Esparragoza, his mother, still knew exactly who was responsible for this brutal racist attack. “Who am I going to blame?” she told the news outlet Telesur. “The opposition. Because they are the ones that threw gasoline on my son like an animal ... if it wasn’t my son it would have been someone else.”

The President of Venezuela, Nicolas Maduro, also spoke about this racist and inhuman attack. “They doused him with gasoline, they burned him alive. What does [Organization of American States General Secretary] Luis Almagro say? What does [Colombian President] Juan Manuel Santos – who every day opines about Venezuela – have to say? What does Donald Trump say?”

Of course, the US government and their imperialist allies had nothing to say about this unthinkable act of violence, it was a crime carried out by their mercenaries.

### Escalating Right-Wing Violence and Terrorism in Venezuela

Over the last two months, over 70 people have been killed, and over 1000 people injured in Venezuela as a result of increased counter-revolutionary right-wing violence and terrorism such as the horrific burning of Orlando José Figuera. These right-wing thugs have committed murder, torture, and arson, as well as committed targeted kidnappings and assassinations of leaders of the Bolivarian revolution and National

Guard officers.

These paid mercenaries of Venezuela’s capitalist class have also carried out attacks on Venezuelan homes, private businesses, public transportation buses, and public institutions. This included a brutal 3-hour long assault on the Hugo Chavez Maternity Hospital in Caracas. As the director of the hospital, Rosalinda Prieto, described “We were attacked by violent groups who launched a rain of stones and blunt objects at us. Afterwards, they burned a great quantity of rubbish in front of the hospital and the smoke got inside the facility. There were recently born babies there in the emergency area, some in observation.”

It is clear that these right-wing thugs have no regard for human life, and know nothing of the “democracy” and “human rights,” that Venezuela’s criminal opposition claims to be defending. However, not only have Venezuela’s leading counter-revolutionary opposition figures not said a word about the terrorist acts carried out by these violent rioters, some of the people arrested have even admitted to being paid directly by opposition political parties themselves.

*Photos above: A man set on fire by opponents of Venezuela’s President Nicolás Maduro runs away in Caracas, Venezuela, May 20, 2017; Right-wing violence escalates in Venezuela.*

As President Maduro stated on his weekly television program, “The opposition, by silence, is complicit in criminal terrorism that murders innocent people in the streets,”... “The ultra-right is held hostage by terrorist groups that they themselves created.”

Extreme violence and terrorism have become the method of choice for the capitalist class and counter-revolutionary opposition in Venezuela to achieve their ultimate goal: the overthrow of President Nicolas Maduro and the end to the Bolivarian revolutionary process in Venezuela.

### Venezuela’s Counter-Revolutionary Opposition Calls for International Intervention

The unthinkable acts committed by the criminal thugs of Venezuela’s pro-US intervention right-wing are in sharp contrast to what mainstream media in the US and Canada is reporting about Venezuela. Turn



## U.S. Hands Off Venezuela!

on CNN or CBC and you will see masked youths holding fire bombs elevated to the status of “pro-democracy” and “human rights” protesters in need of international and US support.

Another distortion, also meant to popularize the idea that international intervention is necessary in Venezuela, is that Venezuela is today in a state of complete chaos.

In fact, the National Post printed an article on May 10, 2017 about Venezuela called, “A country on the brink.” The article goes on to claim, without any proof, that Venezuela is a country with “an economy in shambles, lethal street crime, dungeons packed with political prisoners and South America’s worst refugee crisis,” and to refer to the right-wing acts of terrorism as mere “street rebellions.”

Really, the title of the article should be “Venezuela: an opposition on the brink.” The escalating counter-revolutionary violence and terrorist attacks in Venezuela are a sign that the right-wing is actually becoming more and more desperate. They have not been successful through other means to overthrow President Maduro, so now they must turn to the most extreme actions in order to achieve the overthrow of President Maduro and to reverse the gains of the Bolivarian revolution.

In their desperation, the violent and criminal right-wing in Venezuela also increasingly reveals that they are not alone in their campaign of violence and destruction in Venezuela; they are the mercenaries not only of Venezuela’s capitalist class, but also of US imperialism.

On April 7, 2017, one leading opposition figure, David Smolansky, the Mayor of a Caracas municipality sent this Tweet: “Attention to the international community: @NicolasMaduro has started to use chemical weapons just like they did in Syria” (translated from the original Spanish). What is most alarming is that this Tweet was sent just one day after the US bombed a Syrian airbase under the pretext that the government of Syria was using chemical weapons. Would this right-wing Mayor like the US government to also bomb Venezuela?

It may seem unthinkable that any political so-called leader would call for the US to come and bomb their own country, but this gross appeal is not the only one that the counter-revolutionary opposition has made calling for war on their country.

An op-ed for the New York Times on May 30, 2017, by a US-based lawyer for Venezuela’s opposition also echoes this call for US intervention in Venezuela. The title of the op-ed gets right to the point, “Venezuela Needs International

Intervention. Now.” In between calls for so-called “humanitarian assistance,” in Venezuela the op-ed directly calls on the United Nations to threaten Venezuela using the “responsibility to protect,” doctrine for “crimes against humanity under the category of “other inhumane acts” that intentionally cause great suffering or death,” that have supposedly been carried out by the government of President Maduro.

Not only is this statement a complete lie and fabrication, these are extremely dangerous words. “Responsibility to protect” has been used as a pretext by imperialist governments and organizations around the world to bring wars, occupations and devastation countries all over the Middle East and North Africa. It is the same justification given for the NATO/US/Canada/France bombing campaign against Libya in 2012 that has completely destroyed the country and devastated the lives of millions of people.

### Imperialist Intervention in Venezuela Continues

Ever since the beginning of the Bolivarian Revolution in Venezuela with the election of Hugo Chavez in 1998, the US government and their imperialist allies have been working hand-in-hand with Venezuela’s violent opposition to overthrow the revolutionary government.

Their efforts have included the backing of a short-lived and failed coup d’état against President Chavez in 2002, financial and political support for Venezuela’s violent opposition political parties, and a constant campaign of sanctions and military threats.

With the passing of Hugo Chavez in 2013, and the severe drop in oil-prices beginning in 2014, the US government saw an opportunity to increase their campaign of intervention in Venezuela. As Venezuela’s economy has suffered from the loss of oil revenue,

they have re-doubled their campaign of sanctions, and their attempts to isolate Venezuela on the international market.

In 2015 US President Obama issued an executive order that declared Venezuela to be a “threat to the national security of the United States,” a ludicrous claim, later renewed in 2016, which has damaged the ability of Venezuela to secure international loans. This executive order has also enabled the US to enact sanctions against Venezuela. In May, US President Trump introduced yet another round of US sanctions against Venezuela.

The US has also continued to give financial and political support to the violent opposition that has began an escalated campaign of violence and terrorism on the streets of Venezuela. These same counter-revolutionaries are also waging an economic war against Venezuela. Venezuela’s capitalist class still controls the production and distribution of the vast majority of basic goods and food in Venezuela. This has allowed them to wage a campaign of sabotage that has included the hoarding, a slow-down in production of basic goods and food in Venezuela as well as the growth of massive smuggling operations that bring super-profits to criminals and Venezuela’s rich, and leave poor and marginalized people standing in long lines.

In May, a bill called the “Venezuela

**7 TACTICS**  
VENEZUELA'S RIGHT WING

**Protesting, or Anti-Democratic and Criminal?**

- 1 Using a violent coup to overthrow President Hugo Chavez in 2002, leaving 19 people dead
- 2 A months-long oil lockout that cost Venezuela's oil industry US\$13 billion in 2002-2003
- 3 Refusing to participate in elections or refusing to accept the results in 2004, 2005, 2006, 2009, 2013
- 4 Resorting to violence in 2013 to oppose the outcome of democratic elections, leaving 7 dead
- 5 Seeking to violently overthrow the government in 2014, leaving 43 people dead
- 6 Walking away from talks with the government in early 2017 brokered by the Pope
- 7 Fomenting violent protests since April 2017 that have led to deaths, injuries and destruction





*May 2017 Rally in Venezuela. The sign reads: "Artisan bakers united to support the Constituent Assembly."*

Humanitarian Assistance and Defense of Democratic Governance Act" was introduced into the US Senate. This bill would give \$10million to 'democracy promotion' in Venezuela, a not-so-veiled code word for financial support for Venezuela's violent opposition. Some of this money would also be directed at further US funding for targeting Venezuela within the Organization of American States (OAS).

This is by no means that first time that funding from the US government has gone to Venezuela's counter-revolutionary opposition. In fact, this type of funding is typical of the congressional budget allotment to the US State Department. As reported by the Telsur Latin American news agency, "Since at least 2009 the U.S. Department of State has budgeted at least US\$49 million in total to support right-wing opposition forces in Venezuela"

### **US and Canada Hands Off Venezuela!**

On May 5, 2017, the Globe and Mail newspaper in Canada printed an editorial from Lillian Tintori, the wife Leopaldo Lopez of a member of the opposition that is currently in prison in Venezuela for his criminal and violent actions during violent street riots in Venezuela in 2014. The editorial was called "Canada can help save Venezuela's democracy." Her message to people in Canada is clear – international intervention in Venezuela is what is needed.

Within the editorial, her praise for actions of the government of Canada so far is also clear. No wonder, considering that Canada has joined the US throughout their campaign of increasing imperialist intervention.

This can especially be seen in Canada's recent disgraceful actions within the Organization of the American States (OAS), a regional diplomatic body. Over the last few months,

the US and Canada have been working closely with the Secretary-General of the OAS, Luis Almagro, to try and invoke the so-called "inter-American Democratic Charter" against Venezuela. This would be tantamount to intervening in the internal affairs of a sovereign and independent country, a fact that a majority of member-states in the OAS have recognized during numerous illegitimate meetings and forced debates within the organization.

In the end, US-puppet Almagro was not successful in his maneuverings as Venezuela has announced that they will be leaving the OAS, an organization widely seen throughout Latin America and the Caribbean as being governed by US interests.

Venezuela's violent opposition has also found support for their counter-revolutionary actions from the diplomatic mission of Canada in Venezuela, which regularly uses their Twitter account to promote their counter-revolutionary demands.

The interests of the counter-revolutionary opposition in Venezuela are the same as that of the governments of the United States and Canada: to overthrow the democratically elected government of Nicolas Maduro and roll-back the gains of the Bolivarian revolution. The US government and their allies cannot

afford to have the Bolivarian revolution continue in Venezuela, or for it to continue to inspire more revolutions for independence and self-determination throughout the world, especially those in Latin America and the Caribbean.

The US government is no stranger to fomenting chaos and destruction in the name of "democracy" and "human rights" – we need to look no further than the last 16 years of wars and occupations from Afghanistan and Iraq to Libya, Syria and Yemen to know that. For imperialist countries like the US and their allies, there is no crime that is too heinous.

Viva Venezuela!

In the face of increasingly violence, terrorism and a vicious economic war, the revolutionary people of Venezuela led by the United Socialist Party of Venezuela (PSUV) are continuing to mobilize on the streets of Venezuela in defense of President Nicolas Maduro and the Bolivarian revolution.

We must not be intimidated by the counter-revolutionary pro-US thugs that have attacked supporters of the Bolivarian revolution in the US, Italy, Spain, Australia and here in Vancouver, Canada. We cannot allow the US government and their allies to continue to bring death, destruction and chaos to Venezuela. International solidarity with Venezuela is needed now more than ever before!

**PRESIDENT TRUMP REPEAL THE EXECUTIVE ORDER AGAINST VENEZUELA NOW!**

**U.S. AND CANADA RESPECT THE SOVEREIGNTY & SELF-DETERMINATION OF THE VENEZUELAN PEOPLE!**

**LONG LIVE THE VENEZUELAN BOLIVARIAN REVOLUTION!**

*Follow Alison Bodine on Twitter:  
@Alisoncolette*



*Indigenous women at a rally supporting Venezuelan President Maduro*

# HAVANA SHALL NOT BE GENTRIFIED

By Manuel Yepe\*

Proof that neoliberal capitalist domination is universal lies in the real estate speculation that underlies the neoliberal dream that “wealth is easy in the capitalist world”.

The most common evidence is finding a sumptuous building being built where previously there had been many modest homes and/or small businesses. If there is not a billboard to inform you, investigate and you will find that the new construction will house or serve a small number of families in very sumptuous conditions.

This phenomenon of capitalism is called “gentrification.” Sometimes it affects whole neighborhoods of humble population and leaves beautiful spaces that certainly can make wide sectors of the citizenship proud—even popular sectors—despite the fact that they hurt the sensitivity of those who worry about the worsening situation of those who previously inhabited those areas.

I remember that, shortly after the triumph of the revolution in Cuba, more than half a century ago, for the first time, I heard of this from a young dreamer named Eusebio Leal.

If I am not mistaken, he, being a history lover, began working as an assistant to the elder historian of the city of Havana, Emilio Roig de Leuchsenring (1889-1964). Eusebio devoted himself so thoroughly to his work that he became, first, a faithful and indispensable assistant to this erudite figure and, after his death, his replacement.

The process of restoration of the historical center of Havana City has gone through several stages after the Office of the Historian was founded—with managerial and operational autonomy—in 1938, on Dr. Emilio Roig de Leuchsenring’s initiative. Its purpose was the promotion of the culture of Havana and the

conservation of the valuable monumental legacy that the capital of the country treasures.

Eusebio added to his mentor’s teachings his own considerations and theories about the course to be applied to the conservation, reconstruction, and development projects of the capital city of all Cubans. He did it with such brilliance that it soon became clear that no one but he could undertake the complex task of conducting the work.

He was officially appointed Historian of the City when he had already demonstrated, in daily practice, that he was the ideal person to carry out the ambitious projects that were only in his mind but which he described as *fait accompli*.

So many people had to be convinced that the need to save Havana was so pressing that it would have to be taken on as a priority together with the education, public health and defense of the country.

This implied such tasks of convincing and promoting that made Eusebio Leal excel as a tribune and diplomat as well as administrator and builder.

Of course, the works and projects of the Office of the Historian of Havana earned enthusiastic patronage from the highest political leadership of the Cuban state, including that of the top leader Fidel Castro, who gave them their full support whenever necessary.

With Eusebio’s personal participation in every promotional detail, the historic center of the Cuban capital was declared a World Heritage Site by UNESCO in 1982. This fueled a process of restoration that has transcended the patrimonial conservation framework and became an example of sustainable local development.

The restoration process had, as a central aim, the concept that the historic center would be not only an act of

high architectural and urban value, but also the creation of a site with great cultural, economic and social potential. Eusebio was convinced that a successful rehabilitation should be self-financing and socially participatory.

The restoration process of the Historic Center of Old Havana—based on a model of self-management with a participatory and community approach—has been successful in the Cuban patrimonial context. It has contributed to the objective of guaranteeing the social achievements of the Cuban people within the socialist revolution.

One undoubted social impact of the restoration process is that it created a new awareness about the value of the city, its potential and the feasibility of its recovery.

The restoration of old hotels, the creation of hostels and extra-hotel services of various kinds has created the most visible side of the economy of the historic center. These, together with the commercial activity and handicraft production, have formed a profile that describes the historic center of the city.

Havana will not be gentrified. The population that has given it worldwide fame for its joy, traditions, hospitality, generosity and solidarity will continue to be the absolute owner of the increasingly beautiful and welcoming city.

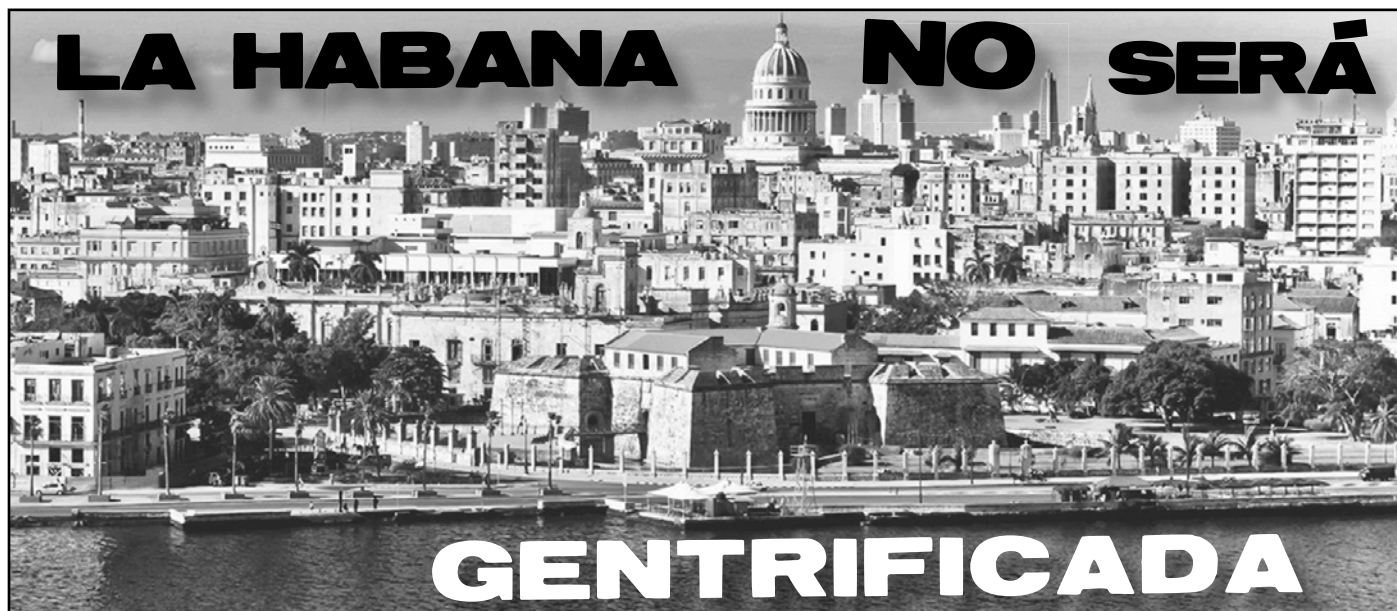
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A CubaNews translation

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Por Manuel Yepe\*

Una prueba de que el capitalismo neoliberal es universal en su dominación, está en la especulación inmobiliaria que fundamenta el sueño neoliberal de que la riqueza es fácil en el mundo capitalista. Lo más común es encontrar un suntuoso edificio construido donde antes hubo muchas viviendas modestas y/o pequeños comercios. Si no hubiera una valla que se lo informe, investigue y generalmente conocerá que la nueva construcción alojará o dará servicio a un reducido número de familias pero en condiciones muy suntuosas.

Este fenómeno propio del capitalismo se llama “gentrificación”. A veces afecta a barrios enteros de población humilde y deja bellos espacios que ciertamente pueden constituir orgullo de amplios sectores de la ciudadanía –incluso sectores populares– aunque hieran la sensibilidad de quienes se preocupan por la peor situación en que quedaron quienes habitaban esas áreas.

Recuerdo que poco después del triunfo de la revolución en Cuba, hace más de medio siglo, oí hablar por vez primera de este fenómeno a un joven soñador nombrado Eusebio Leal, quien –si no me equivoco– por ser aficionado a la historia, comenzó a trabajar como asistente del anciano historiador de la ciudad de La Habana, Emilio Roig de Leuchsenring (1889 – 1964). Se entregaba con tanto esmero a su labor que se convirtió, primero, en fiel e imprescindible ayudante de este sabio y, luego de su muerte, en su sustituto.

El proceso de restauración del centro histórico de Ciudad de La Habana ha pasado por varias etapas desde que, en 1938, se fundó con carácter autónomo la Oficina del Historiador por iniciativa del Dr. Emilio Roig de Leuchsenring, con el propósito de

fomentar la cultura habanera y promover la conservación del valioso legado monumental que la capital del país atesora.

Eusebio incorporó a las enseñanzas de su mentor sus propias consideraciones y teorías acerca del curso que debía aplicarse a los proyectos de conservación, reconstrucción y desarrollo de la ciudad capital de todos los cubanos con tal brillantez que bien pronto se hizo evidente que nadie más que él podría asumir la compleja tarea de conducir esos trabajos. Fue designado oficialmente Historiador de la Ciudad cuando ya había demostrado, en la práctica cotidiana, que era la persona idónea para impulsar los ambiciosos proyectos que apenas bullían en su mente pero que ya describía como hechos consumados. Había que convencer a tanta gente de que la necesidad de salvar a La Habana era tan presionante que tendría que ser asumida de manera prioritaria y simultánea con las de educación, salud pública y defensa del país.

Ello implicaba un trabajo de convencimiento y promoción que hizo que Eusebio Leal sobresaliera como tribuno y diplomático tanto como administrador y constructor. Por supuesto, las obras y proyectos de la Oficina del Historiador de La Habana obtuvieron patrocinio entusiasta de la máxima dirección política del Estado cubano, incluyendo el del máximo líder Fidel Castro quien les dio todo su apoyo cuando ello fue necesario.

Con su participación personal en cada detalle promocional, el centro histórico de la capital cubana fue declarado Patrimonio de la Humanidad por la UNESCO en 1982, algo que impulsó un proceso de restauración que ha trascendido los marcos de la conservación patrimonial y se convirtió

en ejemplo de desarrollo local sostenible. El proceso restaurador apuntaba a que el centro histórico no sería solamente un acto de alto valor arquitectónico y urbanístico, sino además un sitio de gran potencial cultural, económico y social, con la convicción de que una rehabilitación exitosa debía ser autofinanciable y socialmente participativa.

El proceso de restauración del Centro Histórico de La Habana Vieja basado en un modelo de autogestión con enfoque participativo y comunitario ha sido exitoso en el contexto patrimonial cubano y ha aportado al objetivo de garantizar las conquistas sociales logradas por el pueblo cubano con la revolución socialista.

Un indudable impacto social del proceso de restauración, es que a partir de su propia labor, se ha creado una nueva conciencia sobre los valores de la ciudad, sus potencialidades y la factibilidad de su recuperación.

A partir de la restauración de antiguos hoteles, la creación de hostales y de servicios extrahoteleros de diverso orden, se ha constituido en la cara más visible de la economía del centro histórico, junto con la actividad comercial, y ha conformado un perfil que al igual que la actividad artesanal, califica al centro histórico de la ciudad.

La Habana no será gentrificada. La población que le ha dado fama mundial por su alegría, sus tradiciones, su hospitalidad, su generosidad y su solidaridad seguirá siendo dueña absoluta de la cada vez más bella y acogedora ciudad.

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CELEBRATING THE BIRTHDAY OF  
Ernesto Che Guevara  
June 14, 1928



# Why is Venezuela calling for a Constituent Assembly in 2017?

Introduction by Alison Bodine

On May 1, 2017, international worker's day, Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro opened a new phase in the Bolivarian revolution in Venezuela, a re-writing of the Constitution. In order to carry this out, President Maduro announced the convocation of a Constituent Assembly.

Over the next few months, the people of Venezuela will elect and appoint 545 representatives to the Constituent Assembly, representing many diverse sectors of society, which will draft changes to the Constitution of Venezuela. These changes will then be put forward as a referendum and subject to a direct vote by the people of Venezuela.

This announcement by President Maduro brought immediate outrage from Venezuela's violent right-wing, which has proven that they would rather provoke bloody riots on the streets of Venezuela, than engage in peaceful dialogue with the Bolivarian revolution. So far, Venezuela's counter-revolutionary right-wing has vowed to boycott the Constituent Assembly.

Mainstream media has also spread lies and distortions about the Constituent Assembly in Venezuela, claiming that this constitutional and democratic process is a sign of President Maduro's increasing "authoritarianism." These dangerous accusations are more of so many lies meant to support US and international intervention and "regime" change in Venezuela.

At this time of increasing attacks by the US government and their allies in Venezuela's violent and criminal right-wing against President Maduro and the Bolivarian revolutionary process, it is important that we work together to combat the lies and manipulations about what is happening on the ground in Venezuela today.

On May 19, 2017, Wilfredo J. Pérez Bianco the Chief of Mission & First Consul General of Venezuelan Consulate in Vancouver, gave a speech which explains the origins, context and function of National Constituent Assembly at an event organized by the Hugo Chavez Peoples Defense Front. Fire This Time has printed an excerpt of his talk.



*A speech by*  
**WILFREDO PÉREZ BIANCO**  
*Consul General of the Bolivarian  
Republic of Venezuela in Vancouver*

Excerpt of speech  
by Wilfredo Pérez Bianco\*

## **Background**

The first thinker who gives theoretical substance to the notion of constituent power is the French Emmanuel Sieyès, who in 1788 in the framework of the French pre-revolution postulates that the Nation, understood as a common will, is the depository of an original power from which the powers of the State are constituted, for that reason it's called Constituent Power.

In Venezuela we live a historical moment in which the people take on their leading role, which reminds us of the maximum Venezuelan constituent, Juan Germán Roscio (1763-1821), who was, aside the main propagandist of the American revolution, inspirer and editor of the Act of Proclamation of the Independence (19 of April of 1810), main editor of the Act of Independence in July of 1811 and of the Constitution of Venezuela of December of the same year; as well as editor of the Electoral Regulation for the election of the First Congress; of the First Constitution, and president of the Congress of Angostura of 1819 and vice-president of *Gran Colombia* (Great Colombia). We cannot fail to mention that Roscio was also the first Chancellor of the Junta of Government of Caracas in the First Republic, who together with Simón Bolívar participates in the reconstitution of the Republic of Venezuela and the creation of *Gran Colombia*, seed of the Latin American and Caribbean integration.

Simón Bolívar on February 15, 1819 installed in Venezuela the Congress of Angostura, a call to a National Congress that would promote a constitutional exit to the situation of political instability that the country lived, due to the wars of independence. It was inaugurated under the principles of the ideology of General Francisco de Miranda and represented the second Constituent Congress of the Republic

of Venezuela.

Thus Bolívar in his speech, addressing the 26 deputies elected by the provinces of Caracas, Cumana, Trujillo, Margarita, Guayana, Barinas and Barcelona, called them to discuss and debate the Basic Law of the *Gran Colombia*. The text should include a political system based on social justice, regulation of powers and self-determination of the peoples.

The Liberator proposed the creation of a Moral Power that would promote the culture of virtue and watch over the integrity of officials in charge of the Executive, Legislative and Judicial branches. He proposed a republican model based on democracy, that is, on the election of officials by popular vote. But the social aspect was one of the priorities of his proposal, emphasizing the elimination of slavery and the promotion of education, as a basis for the formation of a new citizen with high moral values.

In summary, in Venezuela, 16 Constituent processes have been carried out since 1811 until today; 12 Constitutional Reforms, two amendment processes and a constitutional reform of 1989-1992 that did not materialize.

## **Constituent process in the current Venezuelan political context.**

The Constitution of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela (1999) expresses in its article No. 5, "sovereignty resides without being transferable in the people, who exercises it directly in the manner provided for in this Constitution and in the law, and indirectly, by suffrage, through the organs that exercise the Public Power. The organs of the State originate from popular sovereignty and are subject to it. "It is, therefore, the concrete and direct use that we Venezuelans do of sovereignty and self-determination to build the State and the political system that fits

the historical aspirations of the nation at a particular moment in our history.

This is the powerful idea that the Eternal Commander Hugo Chávez appealed to in 1998, precisely to channel popular demands and radically transform the rules of the game in terms of a National Project different from that imposed by party and business elites in 1961.

The Constitution of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela of 1999 established for the first time in history the possibility of the people transforming the State through the exercise of Constituent Power, by giving a wide enough margin for the future people, as now in 2017, to decide the forms, mechanisms and procedures of transformation of the State through a Constituent Assembly.

Today, the political game is closed, the political forces that control one of the powers of the state, such as the National Assembly, decide to lock the game, kick the table and cling to violent methods to seize power. They also despise and discard the path of the dialogue - supported by many people in the region and the world, by the Vatican and by the International Organizations. The Constitution leaves no other way than that of a Constituent Assembly to review, transform and expand the rules of the political system, which will allow us to unlock the state, deepen democracy, adapt it to these times of explosion of People's Power, and guarantee peace and lay the foundations for the country's political, social and economic stability.

So there is nothing more Bolivarian and Chavista, radically democratic, than to go to the people, to their original power, to Constituent Power to care, preserve and expand the most sacred possession that we have conquered: independence and national sovereignty.

In Venezuela, what is at stake right now is peace. It is the possibility or not of having *Patria* (Homeland). Because there is an internal force that is betting dangerously to make of Venezuela a country protected by a foreign force. That is, sovereignty and self-determination are at stake. Government is not what is at stake, no.

Chávez granted this marvelous possibility, and President Nicolás Maduro now claims it as an essential means of preserving sovereignty and maintaining peace, given the grave threats of war that the right has imposed on the Venezuelan people.

The newly convened National Constituent Assembly is called to recognize, preserve and expand the social guarantees that have been developed in Revolution, the basis of which is contained in the 1999 Constitution.

In the current political context, it must recognize and reflect the new forms of



*Sign at a rally in Venezuela reads: "Constituent is peace, love, faith & hope"*

Popular Power that have emerged from the implementation of the 1999 Constitution. Social sectors that were rendered invisible by the State 30 years ago are now central subjects of the democratic process, and in good measure have been the main promoters, protectors and executors of the democratic, protagonist Social State, based on rights and justice enshrined in the Bolivarian constitutional text during these 18 years, to become the most democratic Constituent of our history.

Today President Nicolás Maduro is giving us light in a path that the rightwing has plagued with shadows. Light is the exercise of the original power of the people. Light is the possibility of channeling democratically, constitutionally and peacefully very deep contradictions that the current rules of the game have not been able to resolve, not because Chavismo wanted, but because the rightwing has decided to block the country and subject it to the most serious dangers.

This is the precise historical moment to return to the source of the original power. May the people, through the mechanism established by the Constitution itself, generate the way to overcome the current political crisis and create a new framework, with new rules that deepen democracy, and preserve peace and national independence.

#### **President Nicolás Maduro calls for Constituent National Assembly**

As part of his attributions as Head of State, in accordance with Article 347 of the Constitution, President Nicolás Maduro Moros, on May 1, 2017, convened the original Constituent Power so that the people, in a popular constituent process, convene a National Constituent Assembly.

*“National Constituent Assembly with the people, with the working class. I call on the original constituent power of the people, it's time, it's the way, they left no alternatives, here we have the daughter of Chavez (the Constitution), here we have the pioneer, [that] our Commander Chavez wanted to perfect it in 2007 and conditions were not given; I summon the original constituent power to achieve the peace that the Republic needs, to defeat the fascist coup and to make the people, with their sovereignty, impose peace, harmony and true national dialogue”, announced President Maduro next to the working class of the country during an impressive mass activity to mark International Workers' Day.*

During the same activity he said: *“We call a citizen constituent, not a constituent of political parties and elites; a civic constituent of workers, communes, missions, of peasants, feminists, youth, students, indigenous people, but above all of brothers and sisters, deeply working, decisively working, deeply communal.”*

#### **Legal framework of the Convocation to a National Constituent Assembly.**

#### **Constitution of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela Chapter III**

**Article 347** *The people of Venezuela are the depositary of the original constituent power. In the exercise of this power, it may convene a National Constituent Assembly with the purpose of transforming the State, creating a new legal order and drafting a new Constitution.*

**Article 348** *The initiative to convene the National Constituent Assembly may be taken by the President of the Republic in the Council of Ministers; the National Assembly,*

by agreement of the two thirds of its members; the Municipal Councils in session, by the vote of two thirds of them; or fifteen percent of the registered voters enrolled in the Civil and Electoral Registry.

**Article 349** The President of the Republic cannot object to the new Constitution. The constituted powers may in no way impede the decisions of the National Constituent Assembly. Once the new Constitution has been promulgated, it will be published in the Official Gazette of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela or in the Gazette of the National Constituent Assembly.

**Presidential Decree No. 2830**

This decree made official on May 01, 2017, through its Extraordinary publication in the Official Gazette of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela No. 6,295, states:

**NICOLAS MADURO MOROS**

President of the Republic

In exercise of the power conferred on me by Article 348 of the Constitution of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, in accordance with articles 70, 236, numeral 1 and 347 ejusdem, with the blessing of Almighty God, and inspired by the grandiose historical inheritance of our aboriginal ancestors, heroes and heroines of independence, on whose crest is the Father of the Homeland, the Libertador Simón Bolívar, and with the primary purpose of ensuring the preservation of the country's peace in the current social, political and economic circumstances, in which severe internal and external threats of antidemocratic factors and marked anti-patriotic stance hang over its constitutional order, I consider it a historic duty to call a CONSTITUENT NATIONAL ASSEMBLY, based on the popular constituent process,

Legacy of Commander Hugo Chávez, and the pioneering and foundational Constitution of 1999, so that our people, as the Original Constituent Power, express its strong will and maximum guarantee of the sacred rights and social achievements won, which during my mandate I have struggled to sustain and deepen. Therefore I propose as programmatic objectives of the National Constituent Assembly:

1. Peace as a necessity, right and yearning for the nation, the constituent process is a great call for a national dialogue to contain the escalation of political violence, through mutual political recognition and a reorganization of the State, to restore the constitutional principle of cooperation between the public powers, as a guarantee of the full functioning of the democratic, social, legal and just State, overcoming the current climate of impunity.
2. The improvement of the national economic system towards Venezuela Potencia (Venezuela Power), conceiving the new model of the post-oil economy, mixed, productive, diversified, integrationist, starting with the creation of new instruments to stimulate the development of productive forces, as well as the establishment of a new transparent distribution model that fully meets the population's supply needs.
3. Give constitutional standing to the Missions and Major Socialist Missions, developing the democratic, social, legal and juridical State, towards a State of Highest Social Happiness, in order

to preserve and expand the legacy of Commander Hugo Chávez, in the field of full enjoyment and exercise of social rights for our people.

4. Extending the powers of the Justice System to eradicate impunity for crimes, especially those committed against persons (homicides, kidnapping, extortion, rape, gender-based violence and against children); as well as crimes against the Homeland and society such as corruption; smuggling; speculation; terrorism; drug trafficking; the promotion of social hatred and foreign interference.
5. Constitutionalisation of the new forms of participatory and protagonist democracy, based on the recognition of the new subjects of the People's Power, such as *Comunas* and Communal Councils, Workers' Councils, among other forms of territorial and social organization of the population.
6. The defense of the sovereignty and integrity of the nation and protection against foreign interventionism, expanding the powers of the democratic, social, legal and juridical State for the preservation of citizen security, the guarantee of the integral exercise of human rights, defense of independence, peace, immunity, and political, economic and territorial sovereignty of Venezuela. As well as promoting the consolidation of a multi-polar and multi-center world that guarantees respect for international law and security.
7. Claiming the multicultural character of the country, through the constitutional development of spiritual values that allow us to recognize ourselves as Venezuelans, in our ethnic and cultural diversity as a guarantee of peaceful coexistence in the present and towards the future, immunizing ourselves against social and racial hate nurtured in a minority groups of society.

8. The guarantee of the future, our youth, through the inclusion of a constitutional chapter to set apart the rights of youth, such as the free and conscious use of



Sign at a rally in Venezuela reads: "We are constituent & sovereign people"

1. information technologies; the right to decent work and opening of their creativity, the protection of young mothers; access to a first home; and recognition of the diversity of their taste, styles and thoughts, among others.
2. The preservation of life on the planet, constitutionally developing with greater specificity, the sovereign rights over the protection of our biodiversity and the development of an ecological culture in our society.

I invoke the Original Constituent Power, so that with its deep patriotic spirit, may bring together a National Constituent Assembly that will be a participatory and protagonist tribune of all of our society, where the voice of the most diverse social sectors is expressed. A National Constituent Assembly, which conforms to the geopolitical structure of the Federal and Decentralized State, based on the primary political unity of the territorial organization that our Constitution enshrines.

It is the duty of the National Constituent Assembly to guarantee the Social State of Law and Justice, as well as to channel the popular outcry of those who today demand that their rights, gains and achievements enjoy the constitutional rank, to which level they undoubtedly deserve to be elevated; and so perfecting the model of humanistic, political, juridical and economic development that is contained and enshrined in our Magna Carta. For all these historical reasons and with the most sacred moral and loving commitment that I keep to the Venezuelan people, I take the constitutional and exclusive initiative to convene, in Council of Ministers:

#### DECREE

**Article 1** In the exercise of the powers conferred on me by the Constitution of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, Articles 348, 347, 70, and 236 numeral 1 *ejusdem* I CALL A NATIONAL CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY, a citizen and of deep popular participation, so that our People, as depository



Sign at a rally in Venezuela reads: "I am constituent".

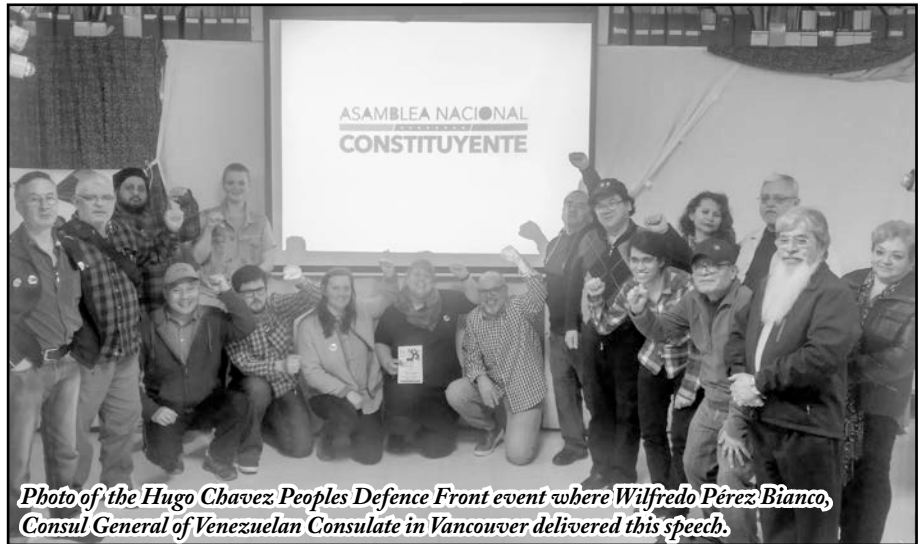


Photo of the Hugo Chavez Peoples Defence Front event where Wilfredo Pérez Bianco, Consul General of Venezuelan Consulate in Vancouver delivered this speech.

of the Original Constituent Power, with its supreme voice, can decide the future of the country, reaffirming the principles of independence, sovereignty, equality, peace, participatory and protagonist democracy, multiethnic and pluricultural democracy.

**Article 2** The members of the National Constituent Assembly shall be elected at the sectoral and territorial levels, under the guidance of the National Electoral Council, by universal, direct and secret vote; with the highest interest of preserving and deepening the constitutional values of freedom, equality, justice and immunity of the Republic and self-determination of the people.

Given in Caracas, on the first day of May, two thousand and seventeen. Years 207 ° of Independence, 158 ° of the Federation and 18 ° of the Bolivarian Revolution.

To be carried,

Comrades, I have just read the true, authentic spirit of the National Constituent Assembly. I have read verbatim the content of Presidential Decree No. 2830, with the purpose of reducing to zero the speculations, manipulations, misrepresentations, and poor interpretations of the Convocation made by President Nicolás Maduro, and which today enjoys a wide support in the most diverse sectors of Venezuelan society, as will be demonstrated surely, with the voters participation during the election of its members by universal, secret and direct vote.

#### Concluding

**The Constituent Power.** The first thinker who gives theoretical substance to the notion of constituent power is the French Emmanuel Sieyes, who in 1788 in the framework of the French pre-revolution postulates that the Nation, understood as a common will, is the depository of an original power from which the powers of the State are constituted, for that reason it was called Constituent Power.

**The National Constituent Assembly.** It is the juridical space where the representatives chosen by the constituent power, are to agree on the social coexistence and the legal regulation that governs it, the Constitution.

**Is there a recognition in the Constitution of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela?** Our Bolivarian Constitution, resulting from a constituent process led by Commander Hugo Chavez, recognizes in its article 347 that there is an original power.

**Its functions.** To transform the State, create a new legal system and draft a new Constitution.

**Why is it called at this time?** To promote a great national dialogue that will stop the escalation of violence promoted by the opposition leadership; that will preserve the independence and the peace of the Republic; and will leave the constitutional base of a social model, where we can all live with mutual recognition, equality, justice, peace and dignity.

Thank you very much!

*\* Wilfredo Pérez Bianco is the Consul General of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela in Vancouver, Canada.*

*Follow the Venezuelan Consulate in Vancouver on Twitter: @ConsuladoVenVan*



# We go for Constituent



# for Peace and future

Elías Jaua Milano

Faced with the decision by a part of the Venezuelan opposition to abandon the space of democratic politics, choosing the path of violence and foreign intervention, President Nicolás Maduro took the constitutional initiative to convene a new Assembly stage of constituent process summoned by Commander Chavez, since 1999, as the option that makes an electoral route possible in all orders and that solves the problem of the unjustifiable denial of the opposition to dialogue with the legitimate and legal government of the Republic.

The objective is to achieve a new historical trigger, as happened in 1998, when we chose our Commander Chavez, that allows our people to follow the peaceful course of the deep transformations that our society needs, putting aside the threats of coup, civil war or foreign intervention.

The call of President Maduro has occupied the national political agenda, isolating those violent people more and more. In the heat of the debate the first questions have arisen, which I will try to answer in this article:



## 1. What is the Constituent Power?



The first thinker who gives theoretical substance to the notion of constituent power is the Frenchman Emmanuel Sieyès, who in 1788, in the framework of the pre-revolution France postulates that the Nation, understood as a common will, is the depository of an original power from which the powers of the State are constituted, for that reason it is called Constituent Power.

## 2. What is the National Constituent Assembly?



It is the juridical space where the representatives chosen by the constituent power are to agree on the social coexistence and the legal regulation that governs it, the Constitution.

## 3. Does the figure exist in the Constitution of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela?



Our Bolivarian Constitution, resulting from a constitutional process led by Commander Hugo Chavez, recognizes in its article 347 that there is an original power.

#### 4. What are their functions?



Transform the State, create a new legal system and draft a new Constitution.

#### 5. Why is it being called at this time?



In order to promote a great national dialogue, to stop the escalation of violence promoted by the opposition leadership, preserve the independence and peace of the Republic and leave the constitutional bases of a social model where we can live all with mutual recognition, equality, justice, peace and dignity.

#### 6. Can the President of the Republic call the National Constituent Assembly?



Article 348 of our 1999 Constitution establishes that the President of the Republic, the National Assembly, the municipal councils or the citizens can take the initiative to call it. In this case President Nicolás Maduro has taken the initiative.

#### 7. How are its members chosen?



By universal, secret and direct vote.

#### 8. Why does President Maduro propose that there be two voting areas, both territorial and sectorial?



Given that our 1999 Bolivarian Constitution recognizes the multiethnic and multicultural nature of our society and establishes the participatory and protagonist role that the social sectors must play in the exercise of democracy, sectorial election is considered pertinent, as well as the territorial election.

That is why the President has stated that the main social sectors should choose their constituents in a specific way and also in the territorial scope. We are all going to vote.

#### 9. Under what criteria are the sectors chosen?



Considering that there are institutional, historical, reliable and verifiable records that guarantee the principle of universality of the respective sector.

#### 10. How do candidates apply?



In the two areas it will be by their own initiative, with the endorsement of a number of citizen signatures, which will determine the Electoral Power.

#### 11. Is the duality of voting discriminatory?



No, because it deprives the principle that each person has as many votes as there are posts to elect in his circuit. It is what happens in the plurinominal circuits and in the indigenous circuits.

#### 12. Can the established public powers keep working once the National Constituent Assembly become operational?



They may, but in no way can they oppose the decisions of the National Constituent Assembly, as expressed in Article 349 of our 1999 Constitution.

#### 13. Does the National Assembly draft a new Constitution?



Yes, deepening and broadening the doctrinal bases of Independence, Sovereignty, Participative and Protagonist Democracy, pluriculturalism, mixed economy and social equality enshrined in our Bolivarian Constitution.

#### 14. What will be discussed in the National Constituent Assembly?

The National Constituent Assembly will set its agenda for discussion based on national priorities. However, the President, as convener, has proposed 9 programmatic lines for the constituent debate: Peace as a necessity, right and yearning of the Nation; The improvement of the national economic system towards Venezuela Power; Constitutionalizing of Missions (social Programs) and Major Socialist Missions (social programs); The expansion of the competencies of the Justice System, to eradicate impunity for crimes; Constitutionalizing of the new forms of Participative and Protagonist Democracy; The defense of Sovereignty and the Integrity of the Nation and protection against foreign interventionism; Claiming the pluricultural character of the Homeland; The guarantee of the future, our youth, through the inclusion of a constitutional chapter to consecrate the rights of youth and the preservation of life on the planet.

In the purest Bolivarian tradition of summoning popular sovereignty to clear the horizon of the country, we go to the Constituent for the peace and future of our youth. May God and the people accompany us.

# VENEZUELA SOLIDARITY ACTIVISTS DEFEAT RIGHT-WING VENEZUELAN'S ATTEMPT TO DISRUPT PEACEFUL PROTEST IN VANCOUVER, CANADA



*Supporters of the Bolivarian Revolution stood their ground against a very hostile and aggressive counter-demonstration by right-wing Venezuelans*



*Counter-revolutionary provocateurs attempt to disrupt the peaceful pro-Venezuelan government demonstration*

Over the last two months, the Venezuelan right-wing criminals have become increasingly active and violent in their attempt to bring chaos to Venezuela and pave the road to overthrow the democratically elected government of President Nicolas Maduro. As a result of their destruction and violence, over 70 people have been killed, over 1,000 injured and several pro-government organizers have been kidnapped, tortured and murdered in Venezuela. In their desperation, Venezuela's right-wing has also resorted to increased violence and aggression outside of Venezuela as they attempt to provoke international intervention in Venezuela as well as to manipulate public opinion against the revolutionary government of President Nicolas Maduro.

However, despite this terrorist campaign by the criminal counter-revolutionary right-wing, a majority of people in Venezuela have continued to mobilize peacefully in the streets to successfully defend the democratically elected government of Nicolas Maduro and the indisputable gains of the Bolivarian Revolution.

On Friday, June 2, Venezuela's violent right-wing suffered another big decisive defeat, this time in the streets of Vancouver, Canada.

When faced with a crude and aggressive counter-protest by 150 right-wing Venezuelans, supporters of the

Bolivarian revolution in Vancouver held strong at "US Hands Off Venezuela!" protest actions organized by the Fire This Time Venezuela Solidarity Campaign. Following a successful picket at the US Consulate, and march toward Vancouver Art Gallery over 70 people maintained an energetic, loud, and peaceful demonstration in defense of the sovereignty and self-determination of Venezuela and the government of President Maduro. For over five hours, the united voices of Venezuela solidarity activists from Canada, Venezuela, El Salvador, Nicaragua, Chile, Guatemala, Mexico and other countries, backgrounds, ages and all walks of life dealt a powerful blow against Venezuela's right-wing. Venezuela solidarity activists out on the streets that day in defense of the Bolivarian revolution included representatives from the Hugo Chavez People's Defense Front – Southwest Chapter, the FMLN – Vancouver, FSLN, and the CPC-ML, among other groups.

As the right-wing counter-revolutionaries threw rude, racist, ageist and homophobic insults and attempted to provoke violence, the pro-Bolivarian revolution demonstrators responded with united chanting of "Viva Viva Venezuela!" "Chavez Vive, Maduro Sigue!" and "US Hands Off Venezuela! No More Sanctions! No More Threats!" and filled the streets of downtown Vancouver with revolutionary Venezuelan music.

The vulgarity of the right-wing Venezuelans was especially exposed by their grossly disrespectful and shameful behavior during the indigenous opening and closing to the actions. As Gordon August, a hereditary chief from Sechelt, acknowledged the unceded territories of the Coast Salish people and sang to the honour of the action, the right-wing Venezuelans continued their crude yelling, insults and their offensive gestures.

On top of this disrespect and their constant provocations, the pro-US counter-revolutionaries also physically attacked supporters of the Bolivarian revolution at least seven times throughout the demonstration, including attacks against the central coordinator of the peaceful pro-Venezuelan government demonstration. In the face of this violence, Venezuela solidarity activists fought back with their voices and through a peaceful human fence block and ultimately, the right-wing counter-demonstrators, unable to impose violence, left defeated and demoralized.

Although the counter-revolutionaries had more people, as they brought people from other cities of the province of British Columbia and also Calgary, a city 1,000 KM from Vancouver in the Province of Alberta, they were lacking in spirit and determination. The desperation



*Pro-Bolivarian revolution activists arrive at the Vancouver Art Gallery*



*Gordon August, hereditary chief from Sechelt, powerfully opens the action despite disrespect & confrontation of counter-protesters*

and hatred was clear on their faces, and in sharp contrast to the determination and passion of supporters of the Bolivarian revolution. As it got dark and the right-wing counter-demonstrators began to leave, it was obvious that they were not prepared for the determined and revolutionary spirit that they faced on the streets of Vancouver.

The Fire This Time Venezuela Solidarity Campaign, together with supporters of the Bolivarian revolution in Vancouver, showed that through unity in action we can win against the forces of imperialist intervention and counter-revolution!

For more than a year and a half, the Fire This Time Venezuela Solidarity Campaign has organized a campaign of monthly actions in solidarity with the Bolivarian revolution. Each month, we call on people in Vancouver to come out to the streets to demand "US Hands Off Venezuela!" with a picket action at the US Consulate, followed by information tabling and petitioning at the Vancouver Art Gallery. Friday, June 2 was the first time that right-wing Venezuelans in Vancouver have organized a counter-demonstration, announcing that they would disrupt a peaceful rally organized by the supporters of Venezuelan Bolivarian Revolution and the government of

President Nicolas Maduro. However, as long as their criminal counterparts continue to face defeat within Venezuela, we know it will not be the last time that these aggressive provocateurs attempt to silence the voices of Venezuela solidarity activists in Vancouver and beyond. The harassment and intimidation tactics have also not stopped with the end of their aggressive and crude counter-demonstration, as they continue to spread their insults and threats after the rally and through social media.

This demoralizing defeat for these goon supporters of the criminal right-wing reactionaries of the so-called opposition has indeed established that there is no place for these thugs on the streets of Vancouver and Canada. These pro-US reactionaries were astonishingly surprised by the preparation and determination of the pro-Venezuelan government demonstrators, and we are ready for more surprises if these thugs dare to continue to use violence and disrupt peaceful rallies.

Defending the gains of the Bolivarian Revolution has never been more important in Venezuela and around the world! Here in Vancouver we will not be intimidated, and we will continue to defend Venezuela against US intervention and counter-revolutionary attacks. The next peaceful demonstration and rally has been scheduled for July 7, 2017 in front of the US Consulate and Vancouver Art Gallery.

**NO TO RIGHT-WING VIOLENCE!**

**PRESIDENT TRUMP REPEAL THE EXECUTIVE ORDER AGAINST VENEZUELA NOW!**

**U.S. AND CANADA RESPECT THE SOVEREIGNTY & SELF-DETERMINATION OF THE VENEZUELAN PEOPLE!**

**LONG LIVE THE VENEZUELAN BOLIVARIAN REVOLUTION!**

**VENCEREMOS! WE WILL WIN!**

# RIGHT-WING VENEZUELAN THREATEN TO DISRUPT ANOTHER PEACEFUL DEMONSTRATION IN VANCOUVER, CANADA

On Friday, July 7 the Fire This Time Venezuela Solidarity Campaign is organizing the next monthly actions in Vancouver demanding "US Hands Off Venezuela!" and in defense of the Bolivarian revolution and the democratically elected government of President Nicolas Maduro. Already, the violent and aggressive right-wing Venezuelans are planning once again to try to interrupt and disrupt this peaceful protest.

Really, it must be asked, if these counter-revolutionary thugs really believe in "democracy" how is it that they can justify organizing a protest that is attempting to insult, disrupt and intimidate another action that is simply expressing a different point of view from their own? If they feel so strongly about reaching out to people in Vancouver about the "truth in Venezuela" why don't they just organize their own actions instead of organizing an event meant solely to silence voices of dissent and bring violence to the streets of Vancouver? Why aren't these pro-U.S. and U.S. paid reactionaries simply satisfied with having demonstrations on their own time, at their own place, to express their own political point of view?

Like their counter-parts within Venezuela, who set Orlando Jose Figuera on fire and killed him for just simply being a Chavista (please see photo at the top of this post), these right-wing goons are nothing but aggressive agent provocateurs attacking the democratic rights of people in Vancouver who are protesting against the Venezuelan criminal right-wing opposition backed by the U.S. and rejecting U.S. intervention in the

*continued on page 37*

By Janine Solanki

It is a wonder that such a small island, Cuba, can invoke so many distinct images from people world-wide. Sparkling beaches, classic cars, cigars and Havana Club rum. The distinctive timba music and dizzying salsa dancing. Cuban doctors on internationalist missions. And of course, Fidel Castro, Che Guevara and the Cuban revolution have planted their images on the minds of people around the world.

While there are many ways to visit the fascinating island of Cuba, I would claim that the Ernesto Che Guevara Volunteer Work Brigade is the best opportunity to experience Cuba to the fullest. Although you can learn all about Cuba's amazing healthcare and education from books, or you can be dragged into the mainstream media view that paints Cuba in a mainly negative light, on the Che Guevara Brigade it is your eyes, ears and heart that will be able to make your own judgement on what Cuba is all about. In two weeks of exchanges with students, teachers, doctors, farmers, workers and artists you can see first-hand how Cuba has managed to not only survive under over 55 years of a cruel and immoral US blockade, but to thrive and advance in so many aspects of life, politics and society.

The 2017 Ernesto Che Guevara Volunteer Work Brigade, April 28 to May 12, marked 25 years of this brigade from Canada. I had the honour of being a part of this year's brigade, joining 33 "brigadistas" from across Canada, from Vancouver Island to Labrador and many places in between, as well as an American brigadista. The brigade is for people of all ages, and this year the range was from 15 to 87 years old! The brigade is an annual project of the Canadian Network of Cuba, alongside the Cuban organization, Cuban Institute of Friendship with the Peoples (ICAP). This year's brigade took place in the eastern provinces of Holguin, Santiago de Cuba and Guantanamo. Most brigadistas (myself included) had not been to Guantanamo before, and as Guantanamo is so associated with the US military base and prison we were very curious to go to Guantanamo! We soon learned that Guantanamo is much more than just the US military base. Guantananeros were eager to demonstrate the beauty of Guantanamo's surroundings, the traditional Changui music and dancing, and the warmth of the people of Guantanamo, as

well as their steadfast opposition to the US military base.

### Cuban Youth are Leading the Way:

On the very first day of the brigade we had the chance to meet with Cuban students, and from this meeting to many other visits and exchanges throughout the brigade there was ample opportunity to see that the future of the

Federation of High School Students (FEEM) as well as the Union of Young Communists (UJC). In these candid meetings it was inspiring to see these students as organizers and young leaders, who didn't hesitate to speak their minds and give their opinions. For example, while visiting the 'Alcibiades Blanco Mejias' High School in the rural community of San Benito de Mayari, one young student

gave a very astute reply to a comment from a brigadista about Canadian students giving apples to their teachers to get good grades. The young student said, "In Cuba if we want good grades we study and work hard with the opportunities that Fidel and the revolution has given us". I'd have to agree with her!

### Revolution is...

It is in these enjoyable moments of music, art and culture that you see that the Cuban revolution is not only ensuring

that necessities are met in terms of food, healthcare, education and housing. The Cuban revolution is also nurturing the necessities of the hearts and minds, of expressing life through art. We saw a demonstration on the art of paper-making a publishing house for hand-made books, and visited the cultural center of the union of Cuban

# ERNESTO CHE GUEVARA VOLUNTEER WORK BRIGADE



## 9th time in Cuba - why I keep going back! revolutionary politics, volunteering and fun!

Cuban revolution is in good hands. We were not only impressed with the Cuban education system, but also with the intelligence, assertiveness and critical thinking of students of every level. It is clear that not only does Cuba provide education free of charge, up to the PhD level, but also that this is highly advanced quality education! The brigade had exchanges with the Federation of University Students (FEU), the



Title photo: Meeting soldiers guarding border with US-held Guantanamo Bay



Above: Schoolchildren at Guantanamo school for children with visual and hearing impairments, singing tribute to Fidel

Right: Children's Theater Company "La Colmenita" in Guantanamo

artists and writers. We saw young students with visual and hearing impairments using sign language to perform a song in homage of Fidel, and learned how at an art-focused elementary school students can pursue their futures as musicians and dancers. A "concert for peace" in Guantanamo amazed us with classical piano to electric guitar, traditional folk to hip hop dancing. We were enchanted by several talented children's theater groups, including a performance on our last night of the brigade which sent us back to Canada with full hearts. A highlight of the trip was a party held by a CDR - Committee in Defense of the Revolution - where since the Cuban revolution communities have been organized at the grassroots level to defend themselves from counter-revolutionary attacks, as well as to organize things like vaccination campaigns and volunteer work. CDR's also know how to hold a block party! The community showcased their talented singers and dancers, even a children's karate demonstration, before the brigadistas were all up and dancing with our Cuban hosts!

### How Does Cuba Work?

In Cuba you get the sense that life is in a constant state of improvisation and organization - not as contradictory as it might seem. Due to the inhuman US blockade on Cuba, consumer goods are not always available, from car parts to medical supplies. So everywhere you look you see something improvised, reused or invented. With a strong will power and conviction in the revolution, everything is possible and a solution can be found! This is made all the more possible with Cuba's high level of organization. Problems are addressed in a collective way, from the coffee factory where we learned that management reports to the factory owners (who are the workers), to the Federation of Cuban Women who respond to not only women's issues, but to family and community issues. We also learned how strong the role of women is in Cuban society, and not just within the Federation of Cuban Women. A meeting with bloggers, reporters and journalists in Guantanamo happened to be almost entirely a group of women. A presentation on Cuba's electoral system was given by eight representatives of the National and Provincial Assembly of People's Power. All eight of them were women! Not only did we learn that Cuba has the 3rd highest representation of women in government worldwide, and without a quota system, but we could see it in action in front of our eyes! In Guantanamo we had what I would say was a highlight of the trip - a meeting with the young men and women doing military service guarding the border of the illegally US-held Guantanamo Bay. The young soldiers here at this very sensitive post, on the front-lines with US imperialism, are recommended by their local organizations like the UJC or FEU, and we could see why by their

informative and thought-provoking responses to our many questions. Here again we could see the strength of Cuban women - although Cuban women do not have mandatory military service, the majority of the soldiers were women who had volunteered to do this military service!

The brigade had the chance to learn more about the illegal US occupation of Guantanamo Bay, at the Fifth International Seminar for Peace and the Abolition of Foreign Military Bases. A separate report is available for you to read in the following pages.

### Working and Learning:

While I am near the end of recounting my favorite experiences from this year's volunteer work brigade you may be wondering, hold on, what about the volunteering? Yes, the brigade did participate in voluntary work which is an exciting experience of talking with and learning from the Cubans we worked alongside. One morning of voluntary work was cleaning up garbage after participating in May Day, International Worker's Day, on May 1st in Holguin where we marched alongside 200,000 proud and exuberant Cuban workers. The experience of May Day in Cuba deserves its own report, which you can find near this report you are reading. However in terms of voluntary work that day, we learned that Cubans are not fond of littering, and we were surprised to not have much clean-up work to do after this massive march! In both Holguin and Guantanamo we took part in volunteer work in organiponicos, which are urban organic gardens. These gardens have a

Students at "Alcibiades Blanco Mejias" High School



fascinating history. While at first these urban gardens were created to deal with fuel shortages and the necessity to grow food locally, and organic due the US blockade limiting access to chemical fertilizers and pesticides, Cuba has now become a global leader in urban and organic agriculture! While pulling out weeds we learned about which plants ward off insects, where the food produced in the gardens are consumed, and how Cuban farming cooperatives work. Volunteer work was more than just contributing to Cuba's work force. We were also participating in Cuba's revolutionary concept of volunteerism, which Cubans actively take part in both in Cuba and internationally!

You may be able to tell from my many stories in this report that I truly loved my experience on the brigade. In fact, this was my sixth time in Cuba with the Che Guevara Volunteer Brigade, and my 9th time in Cuba including other solidarity trips! But in closing, the beauty of the brigade is also in the moments in-between the rather full program, excellently put together by our friends in ICAP. There were the many questions answered and thoughtful discussions with our ICAP representatives and Cuban hosts, the fun and awkward lessons in salsa dancing from patient Cubans, the friendships made with your fellow brigadistas and yes, don't worry, a trip to the sandy beaches where you can experience Cuba's natural beauty!



Fidel's tomb "La Gran Piedra" (The Big Rock) in Santiago's Santa Iphigenia Cemetery

After seeing all that Cuba stands for and is building within their society, we all go home understanding that Cuba is under attack and we have a responsibility to defend the Cuba that we have grown to love and respect. We now have our first-hand knowledge to combat the lies we hear about Cuba in the mainstream media. When we are protesting the US blockade on Cuba and demanding the US return Guantanamo to Cuba it is with a deeper understanding of how these struggles effect Cuba on a day to day basis.

My last few minutes on this trip to Cuba were the best send off I

could have. As a taxi driver took me to the airport, he explained to me the importance of the Cuban Revolution and especially the example of Fidel which lives on in all Cubans. Throughout the brigade we saw signs and paintings proclaiming “yo soy Fidel”, in English “I am Fidel”. The taxi driver told me how all of Cuba is Fidel, from the mountains to the palm trees to the Cuban people, instilled with his steadfast and visionary revolutionary spirit. At the end of this inspiring taxi ride the driver walked me to the check-in counter, gave me a kiss on the cheek and wished me a good trip home and with a wink, “luchar!” to continue the struggle!



Top: Billboard with Vilma Espin reads “The Cuban Women United for the Homeland”

Below: Billboard reads “In Guantanamo we can do it!”

## VANCOUVER COMMUNITIES IN SOLIDARITY WITH CUBA (VCSC) CELEBRATES THE GAINS OF THE CUBAN REVOLUTION!

*By Alison Bodine*

For over 58 years, Cuba and the example of the Cuban Revolution has been a beacon of hope for people everywhere fighting for a better world. Despite a cruel and illegal US blockade against Cuba, which is still in place today, Cuba has continued to provide it’s people with their most basic human rights, housing, healthcare, education and access to healthy food and clean water.

In order to celebrate these incredible achievements, and to educate people about all of Cuba’s accomplishments, Vancouver Communities in Solidarity with Cuba (VCSC) organizes cultural and political events across the Vancouver region.

On May 13, 2017 VCSC brought people together for a night of trivia about Cuba that included questions on Cuban history, culture, environment and sports. The trivia game was played in teams, which left the room abuzz with whispered debates and a friendly debate or two!

The engaging evening also featured stories from Janine Solanki, a recently returned participant in the 2017 Che Guevara Volunteer Work Brigade. Janine had barely gotten off the plane direct from Eastern Cuba, when she arrived at the event, and she was alive with many fond and moving stories about her time on the Brigade this year.

The event ended with Vancouver’s premiere

screening of the short Cuban documentary “The Power of the Weak” about Jorge “Jorgito” Jerez. Jorgito is a Cuban revolutionary and activist and a speaker on issues around living with Cerebral Palsy. His inspirational story of love and struggle, and especially about his role in fighting for the freedom of our five Cuban heroes, brought tears to the eyes of just about everyone in the room.

### Proyecto Cultural Sur event

Then, on Friday May 26, Vancouver Communities in Solidarity with Cuba and Proyecto Cultural Sur – Vancouver joined forces to co-organize this year’s edition of the Vancouver International “Words in the World” Festival. The International “Words in the World” Festival is a world-wide annual event coinciding with the Havana International Poetry Festival.

This year, “Words in the World” in Vancouver paid tribute to Salvador Allend, the President of Chile that was killed in a right-wing US-backed coup d’etat in Chile in 1973. The event, which was held outside on a beautiful spring time evening, featured poets from across Latin America, Canada and North Africa, and poems in three languages: Spanish, English and Arabic. There was also delicious food to be shared, and each participant was given a certificate for their contributions from Proyecto Cultural Sur – Vancouver.

## MONTREAL JOINS OTTAWA AND VANCOUVER IN ORGANIZING MONTHLY PICKET ACTIONS AGAINST THE US BLOCKADE ON CUBA!

For more than 56 years, the US government has been attempting to strangle the people of Cuba and the Cuban Revolution into submission. They have carried this out through a cruel and illegal economic and financial blockade, the continued US occupation of Guantanamo, and countless regime change programs. The US government, however, has not been successful and the Cuban Revolution continues to progress only 90 miles from the shores of Florida.

When US President Obama and Cuban President Raul Castro re-established diplomatic relations December 17, 2014 many people around the world hoped that this would finally signal the beginning of the end to US attacks on Cuba. However, more than two years later, the blockade, the occupation of Guantamo and the regime change programs still persist. Today, if we are to take US President Trump on his word, even the small steps taken towards the normalization of US/Cuba relations are at risk of being reversed.

Canada is the US’ closest neighbor, therefore consistent and united action by friends of Cuba across the country has an important role to play in the international movement to end the US blockade against Cuba. Since their formation in September of 2015, Friends of Cuba Against the US Blockade – Vancouver (FCAB- Vancouver) has been organizing monthly picket actions in front of the US Consulate, on the 17th of each month. Ottawa Cuba Connections has also joined with Vancouver by organizing a picket at the US Embassy, also on the 17th of each month.

Beginning with the May 17 picket action Montreal has also joined in the monthly actions! This means that on the 17th of each month, people in Vancouver, Ottawa and Montreal will be protesting with one united voice: “Lift the US Blockade on Cuba NOW!” Friends of Cuba Against the US Blockade – Vancouver welcomes La Table de concertation de solidarité Québec-Cuba to this coordinated effort.

The May 17 picket action in Vancouver against the US blockade on Cuba was a determined and energetic action. Participants heard from organizers with Friends of Cuba Against the US Blockade, as well as Janine Solanki, who had recently returned from Cuba as a participant in the 2017 Ernesto Che Guevara Volunteer Work Brigade, among other speakers.

From this month on, three cities across Canada are committed to organizing coordinated picket actions against the US blockade on Cuba. Join Friends of Cuba Against the US Blockade – Vancouver on Saturday, June 17 to add your voice and yell out high up into the offices of the US Consulate:

End the Blockade on Cuba NOW!  
Return Guantanamo to Cuba NOW!  
US Government Stop the Campaign of ‘Regime Change’ in Cuba!  
Stop Interfering in Cuba’s Sovereignty and Self-Determination NOW!

Find out more about the actions of FCAB - Vancouver at [www.vancubavblockade.org](http://www.vancubavblockade.org)

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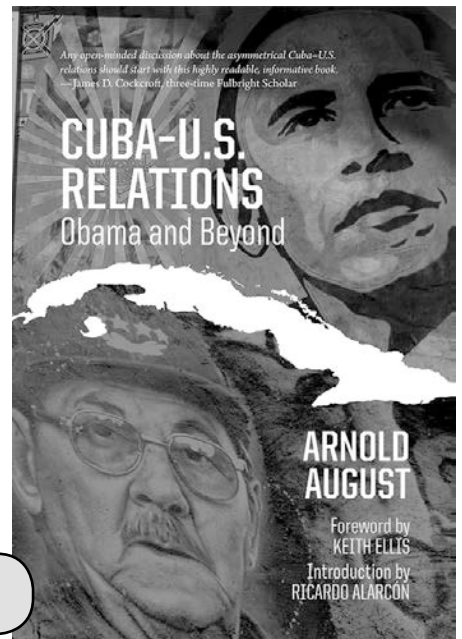
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Conference in Cuba Demands:

# RETURN GUANTANAMO TO CUBA!

## All of Guantanamo is Cuba's!

By Janine Solanki

From May 4th to 6th, 2017, over 200 activists from 32 countries came together for the Fifth International Seminar for Peace and the Abolition of Foreign Military Bases. The conference took place in Guantanamo City, Cuba, and was organized by MOVPAZ, the Cuban Movement for Peace. This year the Che Guevara Volunteer Work Brigade from Canada joined the conference, alongside people from around the world including the US, Japan, Spain, Switzerland, Palestine, Angola and many Latin American countries.

While in Guantanamo City one is reminded that just a short distance away the United States has occupied 120 square kilometers of Cuban territory for over 100 years, since 1903. The Guantanamo Bay Naval Base includes the Guantanamo Bay "detention camp", the military prison infamous for horrific torture and extra-judicial

detention. Cuba continues to demand the return of Guantanamo Bay from the US, which threatens their sovereignty, counts for a huge loss of revenue for being unable to access the bay, and places the biggest hostile force which Cuba faces, US imperialism, on Cuban soil.

A highlight of the conference was a screening of the new documentary film "All Guantanamo is Ours" with a presentation by Javier Salado Villacin, producer of the documentary and editor of Resumen Latinoamericano. Besides learning more about Guantanamo Bay, participants heard presentations about US military bases in or near other countries such as Japan, Palestine, Puerto Rico and Venezuela. The city of Guantanamo also hosted the conference participants at a beautiful "Concert for Peace" and demonstrated that Guantanamo is much more than a US military base, and that Guantanamo is kind-hearted and welcoming people, defiant fighters for justice, as well as talented singers, musicians and dancers.

While the United States has around 800



foreign military bases around the world, Guantanamo Bay is the largest and oldest US foreign military base. The final day of the conference included a trip to a nearby town, Caimanera, which sits directly on the border with the US occupied part of Guantanamo Bay. The visitors heard stories about how directly the US occupation effects the lives of people living there, and saw at a distance the US watchtower, complete with US flag, facing off a Cuban watchtower just across the border.

The conference closed with a final declaration, which called for activists to 'continue to demand that the United States return to Cuba and its people the illegally occupied territory of the Guantánamo Naval Base, and the lifting of the economic, commercial and financial blockade.'

US Return Guantanamo Now!

Follow Janine Solanki on Twitter:  
@janinesolanki



*Rally on May 1, 2017 in Havana, Cuba. Nearly 1 million Cubans and international guests took to the streets.*



## WORKERS OF THE WORLD UNITE!

**An eye-witness account from International Worker's Day 2017 in Holguin, Cuba**

*By Janine Solanki*

May 1st, May Day, International Workers Day - This is a day of both celebration and struggle for working people around the world. In Cuba though, May Day, or Primero de Mayo, is an experience like none other. In Cuba, where the highest honour one has is that of being a worker, May 1st is a day of celebration and revolutionary pride, encompassing the entire population of Cuba.

Coming from Vancouver, Canada to Holguin, Cuba, feels like being given a precious gift, that of feeling what International Workers Day should feel like, and seeing what it should look like. Holguin, a city of about 320,000, brings out an enormous 200,000 Cubans for the May Day march. But it isn't really just the number of people that make the difference between May Day in Canada and in Cuba, it is the spirit. In Canada, and many other countries around the world, International

Workers Day means a march of defiance, of protest, of fighting to turn the tide in the favour of working people. In Cuba, this is a day in which the Cuban government, unions, workplaces, military and people of every part of society are joined together in celebrating the strength of the working class.

My first May Day experience in Cuba was several years ago, also in the city of Holguin. That day was an overwhelmingly joyous memory of realizing that I had never before been together with so many people, a never-ending sea moving together with the force of revolutionary conviction. Last year, in 2016 I saw even more people marching together than I could think was possible, in Havana, Cuba. There I saw an out-pouring of more than a million Cuban workers pass through the Plaza of the Revolution, creatively depicting their organizations or workplaces with their signs, banners and flags. We were also very excited to see Cuban president Raul Castro on the plaza stage, and all five of the recently released Cuban

5 heroes who were political prisoners in US jails for as long as 16 years.

This year on May 1st I joined Holguin's International Worker's Day with the 25th Ernesto Che Guevara Volunteer Work brigade. Keeping in mind the hot Cuban sun, May Day in Cuba starts very early, and it was still dark when I woke up for the march. It was a lucky chance that the brigade stays in a Cuban hotel whose room windows face the Revolution Square of Holguin, and even though the morning was still dark, when I opened the windows I was greeted by well-known Cuban revolutionary songs blasting out over the sound systems, already welcoming me to May Day in Cuba.

As my fellow brigadistas and I walked down the street, small Cuban flags waving on little sticks in our hands, our early morning sleepiness was quickly replaced with a bubbling excitement. We joined the streams of Cubans taking their places for the march, dressed in whatever red, white and blue they

could find from their wardrobes to represent the Cuban flag on their bodies. The Che Guevara Brigade found our place behind a big banner from the Cuban Institute of Friendship with the Peoples, (ICAP), which in large letters said “Block of Solidarity”. Behind our group of international guests and flags from a multitude of different countries we saw a group of Cubans dressed in traditional Chinese clothing, with a sign reading “Chinese Colony of Holguin – Long Live May 1st!” Ahead of us were a group of Cubans, many in wheelchairs or with crutches, with the sign “Association of Cubans with Mobility Limitations”. Just in our immediate area, the diversity of Cubans was well represented!

As the sun started to rise and light up the crowds around us the march began, and soon we were part of this moving force chanting “Viva la solidaridad!” (Long Live Solidarity!) “Abajo el Blockade!” (Down with the Blockade!)

The whole atmosphere was filled with an infectious enthusiasm, and not only was I smiling to the people I knew, but to everyone passing by, as if to say, “we are all here together, all 200,000 of us!” Before long we are coming up to the stage of the Plaza of the Revolution, waving our Cuban flags and chanting as loud as we could while the sound system announces our arrival, the block of solidarity!

Although at this point we had finished marching, it was really just the beginning. I quickly found myself the best vantage point from which to watch the rest of the



*Cuban families participate in rally on May 1, 2017 in Holguin, Cuba.*



*Rally on May 1, 2017 in Holguin, Cuba.*



I tried as much as my camera would allow to take photos of all I saw, eager to share all these sights back home. An elderly woman, her shirt heavy with military medals stood strong for a photo, and I caught plenty of photos of children furiously waving their flags on the shoulders of their parents, some enjoying their first May Day. The final group to close the march were Cuban soldiers, but these weren't the stiff, rigid marching soldiers you may expect. Somewhat keeping their lines in order, they were running, dancing, smiling and waving in their olive green military fatigues, also holding their homemade signs and framed photos of Fidel.

In joining the May Day march, we represented solidarity with Cuba, but from the experience of this march you realize that solidarity works both ways. We were marching in solidarity with Cuba, but also feeling the solidarity of Cubans towards us, who are still struggling in “the belly of the beast” where capitalism and imperialism dominate society. Our fight is much stronger with the inspiration that the Cuban May Day experience instilled in us!

¡Viva Primero de Mayo!  
 Long Live May Day!  
 ¡Viva la Revolución!  
 ¡Viva Cuba!

march come through the plaza, eyes wide open as I tried to take it all in! The march was well organized into groups of workers, like electrical workers holding a banner with their trade logo proclaiming “United in the Construction of Socialism”, and other banners identifying everyone from bank tellers to retail workers, farmers to restaurant staff, and young students holding signs from their schools and universities. Within this organization of the march was also the most beautiful personal creativity. Framed photos that looked like they were taken down from living room walls that morning were held high, showing the faces of Cuban revolutionary leaders like Fidel and Raul, Che Guevara and Vilma Espin, as well as Venezuelan leaders Chavez and Maduro. Homemade signs read things like “viva la revolution”, “we are proud of our history” and “yo soy Fidel” (I am Fidel), a saying that Cubans picked up since the Cuban revolutionary leader, Fidel Castro, passed away late last year. The theme of this year’s May Day was also on signs everywhere, “nuestra fortaleza es la unidad” (our strength is in unity), and I thought to myself, that is an important slogan not only in Cuba but home in Canada too. We have a lot to learn from Cuba!

*Follow Janine Solanki on Twitter:  
 @janinesolanki*



favoring the development of productive chains, in a secure, healthy, environment in all of our workplaces.

On this occasion, we evoke important events which have dignified our history and traditions of struggle, such as the 56th anniversary of the victory at Playa Girón and the proclamation of the socialist

## International Workers' Day 2017 speech by Ulises Guilarte de Nacimiento

Secretary General  
of the Cuban  
Workers Federation  
(CTC)

Compañero  
Army General  
Raúl Castro Ruz,  
first secretary of  
the Party Central  
Committee and  
President of the  
Councils of State  
and Ministers;

Distinguished  
guests;

Working men and women:

As we do every year throughout the country, today we celebrate International Workers Day, with the living memory of our beloved, unforgettable, and undefeated Comandante en Jefe, Fidel Castro Ruz.

It was in this very plaza, on May Day in 2000, packed with men and women who have carried forward and defended the work he began, where Fidel expressed to us his concept of Revolution. Upon signing it after his physical disappearance, Cubans made it a scared oath of loyalty to his legacy and an unwavering commitment to continuing the construction of a sovereign, independent, socialist, democratic, prosperous, and sustainable nation.

Our compact, colorful marches through plazas and avenues, under the maxim of "Unity is our strength," constitute a genuine, resounding popular demonstration of support for the Revolution, the Communist Party of Cuba, and its historic leadership.

This May Day celebration has become an opportunity to honor the value of work, to take advantage the untapped productivity and efficiency in our industrial workforce, which would allow for the generation of greater wealth, the reduction of prices, and gradual increases in income, in addition to

nature  
of the  
Revolution;  
and the 55th  
of the Young  
Communist League's  
founding - firm,  
honorable followers  
of those who  
almost 60 years  
ago changed the  
course of the  
homeland's

history.

We also  
commemorate the 50th anniversary of  
the death of our Heroic Guerilla,

Ernesto Che Guevara, promoter of the  
struggle for industrialization of the country,  
voluntary work, and the Innovators and  
Rationalizers Movement, who died  
upholding the purest internationalist ideals.

Compatriots:

In the current worldwide geopolitical  
context, it is impossible to forget that we  
live under an unjust, exclusive international  
order, in which growing globalization of an  
economy - facing the impact of capitalist  
crises and neoliberal policies - has created  
more challenges and dangers for Latin  
America and the Caribbean, reaffirming for  
us that the objective of building the Greater  
Homeland of which our predecessors  
dreamed requires, now more than ever, the  
will and firm conviction to defend regional  
progress in terms of cooperation, joint  
political action, and integration, with the  
mobilization of left political forces.

On this day, we make our own the words  
of Army General Raúl Castro Ruz during  
the 5th CELAC Summit, when he referred  
to relations between Cuba and the United  
States, saying, we can "cooperate and  
coexist in a civilized fashion, respecting

differences and promoting all that benefits  
both countries and peoples, but it cannot  
be expected that, in order to do so, Cuba  
should make concessions which are key to its  
sovereignty and independence.

We reiterate once again our legitimate  
demand for the elimination of the economic,  
commercial, financial blockade imposed by  
the United States government, which has  
caused our country so much damage and  
depravation, and is the principal obstacle  
to the economy's development. We likewise  
demand the return of territory illegally  
occupied by the United States Naval Base  
in Guantánamo, against the will of the  
Government and people of Cuba.

The Federation of Cuban Workers and our  
trade unions express our unconditional  
support and solidarity with the Bolivarian  
Revolution; we reject the political maneuvers  
and diplomatic harassment to which it  
has been subjected by the discredited  
Organization of American States (OAS)  
and other reactionary sectors of the region.  
We support the civil-military union, led  
by the government of President Nicolás  
Maduro, struggling to defend its sovereignty,  
independence, and the most genuine interests  
of the nation.

At the same time, we reiterate our solidarity  
and support to workers around the world  
confronting the discriminatory policies  
of capitalism and being repressed for  
demanding the most elemental social and  
labor rights.

We are proud to celebrate the world  
proletariat's holiday with the presence among  
us this morning of comrades and friends  
from a variety of trade union organizations,  
solidarity groups, and social movements. In  
the name of all Cuban workers, we thank you  
for your consistent support of our homeland.

Cuban men and women:

There are more reasons everyday for our  
workers to struggle and win. Cuba will not  
renounce its ideals of independence and  
social justice. We have won this sovereign  
right with great sacrifices and at the cost of  
greater dangers.

Forward comrades, more united than ever,  
believing deeply in the certainty of our  
victory!

Long live the workers of Cuba and the world!  
Long live Fidel and Raúl!  
Long live the Cuban Revolution!  
Hasta la Victoria Siempre!

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sovereign country of Venezuela. This insistence for violence and disruption reminds us how these paid mercenaries of the capitalist class of Venezuela and imperialism have no interest or regard for freedom of expression and assembly, democratic rights, human rights or civil rights. When they are asked to stop their provocations and violence, while their cell phones and video cameras are just 10 inches from your nose and their hands are pushing your chest, they claim “this is Canada and I can walk everywhere I want”! This is what these uncivilized and primitive people understand of civility and the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

Throughout the 19 years of Bolivarian Revolutionary process, these thugs and their counter-parts in Venezuela have not only managed a short but bloody coup against Comandante Chavez’ elected government and attempted coups against the democratically elected government of President Maduro, this right-wing opposition has killed, tortured, assassinated and lynched hundreds of people as well as betrayed the poor and oppressed people of Venezuela by sabotaging the production and distribution of food and basic goods.

On July 7, Venezuela solidarity activists in Vancouver will not be silenced, we will return to the streets to peacefully stand up against U.S.-led intervention in Venezuela and right-wing opposition, and in support of the Bolivarian revolution and the democratically elected government of President Maduro. Violence, intimidation and harassment will not stop us!

Last time, you “walked around” in streets of Vancouver, next time you will “walk around” in the jails of Vancouver. Let’s see how wise you are.

# VANCOUVER CAMPAIGN TO DEFEND BOLIVARIAN REVOLUTION CONTINUES!

*By Alison Bodine*

On May 1, 2017 Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro stood in front of hundreds of thousands of Venezuelans celebrating International Workers Day in Caracas, Venezuela. As they rallied through the streets, Venezuelan workers, students, youth, elders and revolutionaries were marching peacefully in defense of the gains of the Bolivarian revolution and for the sovereignty and self-determination of Venezuela.

This march is just one example of how, in the face of escalated right-wing violence and terrorism and imperialist attacks on Venezuela, the majority of people in Venezuela continue to mobilize in the streets, and organize in their communities, in support of the government of President Maduro and the Bolivarian revolutionary process.

As people in Venezuela mobilize against increasing US-led intervention in their country, supporters of Venezuela and the Bolivarian revolution around the world must also echo their call.

Every month since December of 2015, the Fire This Time Venezuela Solidarity Campaign has organized two protest actions in the streets of Vancouver, Canada demanding “US Hands Off Venezuela!” As part of these continuing and consistent actions, supporters of the Bolivarian revolution in Vancouver came together on May 5, 2017.

The two actions demanding that the United States respect the sovereignty and self-determination of the people of Venezuela began with a protest at the US Consulate in downtown Vancouver. From the plaza below the Consulate, solidarity activists took the opportunity to condemn especially the US attempts to intervene in the internal affairs of Venezuela through a regional diplomatic

body called the OAS. On April 26, 2017 Venezuela announced that they were leaving the OAS, rather than continuing to submit itself to baseless attacks and violations of its sovereignty coming especially from US-puppet, Secretary General of the OAS, Luis Almagro. However, the attacks on Venezuela through the OAS have continued.

Following the energetic picket at the US Consulate, the protest continued with an information table at the Vancouver Art Gallery. Here, participants in the action asked people passing by to sign a petition demanding that the US government stop intervening in the internal affairs of Venezuela, stop their support and funding of the criminal and violent opposition, and end all sanctions, and also that President Trump the executive order that has declared Venezuela a “threat to US national security.”

The Fire This Time Venezuela Solidarity Campaign actions on May 5, 2017 were a great success, reaching hundreds of people on the busy streets. They were also held without any organized counter-protest by right-wing Venezuelans in Vancouver, in sharp contrast to what would occur at the next protest actions on June 2 (which you can read more about on page 28).

As the right-wing mercenaries in Venezuela continue to fail in their campaign to overthrow the democratically elected government of Nicolas Maduro through violence and terrorism, they will only become more and more desperate. The same goes for their counter-parts here in Vancouver and Canada, right-wing thugs that will continue to attempt to disrupt and intimidate peaceful protests in solidarity with President Maduro and the Bolivarian revolution here in Vancouver.

This is why defending the gains of the Bolivarian Revolution has never been more important in Venezuela and around the world. Join the Fire This Time Venezuela Solidarity Campaign at our next actions at the US Consulate and the Vancouver Art Gallery on July 7, 2017.

**PRESIDENT TRUMP REPEAL THE EXECUTIVE ORDER AGAINST VENEZUELA NOW!**

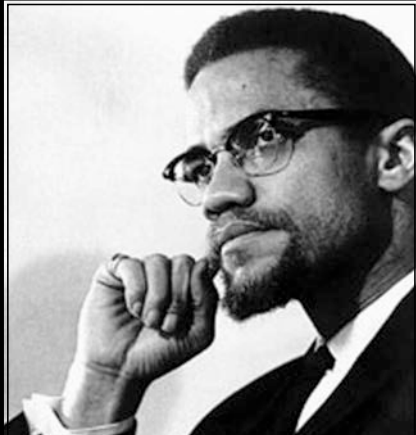
**U.S. AND CANADA RESPECT THE SOVEREIGNTY & SELF-DETERMINATION OF THE VENEZUELAN PEOPLE!**

**LONG LIVE THE VENEZUELAN BOLIVARIAN REVOLUTION!**



*Jose Orlando Figuera was lit on fire by right-wing Venezuelans*

# “By Any Means Necessary...”



## MALCOLM X SPEAKS

Prospects of Freedom

January 7, 1965

1) So all these little advances were made by oppressed people in other parts of the world during 1964. These were tangible gains, and the reason that they were able to make these gains was they realized that power was the magic word—power against power. Power in defense of freedom is greater than power in behalf of tyranny and oppression, because power, real power, comes from conviction which produces action, uncompromising action. It also produces insurrection against oppression. This is the only way you end oppression—with power.

Power never takes a back step—only in the face of more power. Power doesn't back up in the face of a smile, or in the face of a threat, or in the face of some kind of nonviolent loving action. It's not the nature of power to back up in the face of anything but some more power. And this is what the people have realized in Southeast Asia, in the Congo, in Cuba, in other parts of the world. Power recognizes only power, and all of them who realize this have made gains.

Now here in America it's different. When you compare our strides in 1964 with strides that have been made forward by people elsewhere all over the world, only then can you appreciate the great doublecross experienced by black people here in America in 1964. The power structure started out the new year the same way they started it out in Washington the other day.

Only now they call it—what's that?—“The Great Society?” .... But by the end of 1964, we had to agree that instead of the Year of Promise, instead of those promises materializing, they substituted devices to create the illusion of progress; 1964 was the Year of Illusion and Delusion. We received nothing but a promise.

*continued from page 4*

economic interests of the US and their allies.

It seems ‘building democracy’ is in fact nothing more than a euphemism for ‘regime change’. The ‘war on terror’ is nothing more than a justification for this new era of war and occupation in which imperialist countries are attempting to take back control of independent nations which have dared to claim control over their own resources, their own foreign policy, and their own future. As the capitalism faces a falling average rate of profit and ever more frequent and severe economic crises, imperialist countries are racing to take control of global markets and resources ahead of rising strong competitors such as Russia and China. In this mad race, it is the people of the world who are paying the ultimate price. In this new era of war and occupation, imperialist countries have razed cities ancient and modern, killed and maimed millions, and made tens of millions more homeless. These wars bring many consequences, but democracy surely isn't one of them.

### True Democracy: Self-Determination for Oppressed Nations

Every oppressed nation must be granted the right to self-determination – to choose its own government and its own foreign policy without influence or meddling from foreign powers. This is a fundamental part of democracy – yet this is exactly what the US and other imperialist countries have been trying to do away with in the countries they have invaded.

True democracy cannot be brought to a country at gunpoint, or through a war which deprives people of their most basic rights of food, shelter, and security. True democracy cannot exist when the only candidates in an election are those vetted by a foreign power. True democracy cannot exist under war and occupation, when the ultimate power for any decision lies with the occupying forces.

Democracy must come from within the country itself – not be imposed from the outside. Yes, this democracy is sometimes imperfect. The governments that arise from this system are not always supported by all. But this is the nature of democracy, and it is up to the people to change their government if it is not working for them. It is neither the right nor the responsibility of imperialist countries to intervene.

*Follow Nita on Twitter: @NGP1z0*

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

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# ¡Venceremos!



# We Will Win!

## **Bolivia Builds New Medical Centers to Battle Cancer**

May 31, 2017

South American nation to allocate \$1 billion dollars for health facilities.

Bolivia is investing more than US\$150 million in the fight against cancer.

Three nuclear medical centers are being built by the government for research into finding cures for diseases.

In an announcement on Tuesday, Bolivia's President Evo Morales said the facilities will be located in the cities of El Alto, La Paz and Santa Cruz.

In addition to advancing global efforts to find cures for cancer, Morales said patients will no longer have to travel to Chile, Brazil, the United States or Europe for treatment.

The President also promised to allocate more than one billion dollars to build and equip health facilities throughout the country.

Bolivia's 'My Health' system already provides free care to nearly 8 million people.

Morales launched the program in June 2013. Treatment is provided free of charge to residents in some of the poorest communities.

The main beneficiaries are patients on low incomes who the doctor or get prescriptions. The country is progressing towards adopting a universal health care system.

Source: *teleSUR English*

## **Cuba and Kenya sign medical cooperation agreement**

May 24, 2017

Cuban health authorities announced May 24, the signing of a memorandum of understanding between the island and Kenya, which seeks to establish medical cooperation in the African nation by the end of this year.

According to a press release, the two nations signed the document at the World Health Organization's headquarters in Geneva, as part of Cuban Public Health Minister Dr. Roberto Morales' work agenda during the WHO's 70th World Assembly taking place through May 31.

The Cuban official also held meetings with his counterparts from India and Mauritania, as well as with the Director of the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) Carissa Etienne, during which they discussed issues such as health collaboration, human resource training and Cuban medical services.

Also taking place May 24 was the 10th Meeting of Health Ministers from the Non-Aligned Movement, led by the bloc's President pro-tempore Venezuela.

Speaking during the event, Dr. Roberto Morales highlighted the importance of global health cooperation toward achieving the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals, to which all members states should be committed, he noted.

The Cuban official also emphasized how the island's human resource training has contributed to strengthening health systems in various countries, noting that 34,216 sector professionals from 135 nations have graduated from Cuba since 1959.

He also reiterated the island's support for Venezuela as President pro tempore of the Non-aligned Movement, as well as its solidarity with the nation's government and people; suffering both domestic and foreign aggression.

Source: *Prensa Latina*

## **Ecuadorian Government Invested \$13.9 Billion in Higher Education**

May 28, 2017

According to Ecuador's Secretary of Higher Education, Science, Technology and Innovation (SENESCYT), René Ramírez, the government spent \$207 million on higher education last year.

The allocation of funds were broken down as follows: \$153 million to scholarships, \$13 million to technical education, \$6 million to the Prometheus Project, \$5.6 million to the excellence project, \$18.4 million to admission and accreditation system, \$6 million for innovation projects and \$3 million to a contingency plan.

Over the past decade, the government has spent a total of \$13.9 billion on higher learning – two percent of the country's GDP – making Ecuador the country that has invested the most in this area.

Ramírez stated that as a result of the investment, enrollment increased from 28 to 41 percent between 2006 and 2016. He also added that the number of students who continued their studies rose to 87 percent from 48 percent over a four-year period; 9 out of 10 students who started their studies in 2015 continued in 2016. There was an increase of 71 percent in SENESCYT registration, from 75,879 to 129,537. "We have made progress and must continue to move forward," said Ramírez.

Regarding scholarships, the government had put aside \$586 million from 2007 to 2017. So far, there are 4,818 returned scholarship recipients, of whom 98 percent are currently employed – 27 percent in the health sector, 30 percent in education, 23 percent in private sector and 7 percent in the central government.

The number of teachers with fourth-level qualifications rose from 29 percent in 2008 to 80 percent in 2016 with 60 percent of teachers working full time in universities and polytechnic schools throughout the country. Salaries jumped from \$1,281 to range from a minimum of \$ 2,967 to \$6,222, which has positively impacted the quality of educational institutions.

Ramírez said that the country had recovered its culture of excellence and quality within the university system, "to have gone from about 30 percent of teachers from level 4 to more than 80%, to be a country that multiplies by 6 Its scientific production, being the country that grows the most in publications in indexed journals and accounts for quality," he said.

The number of students who have entered higher education because of new policies that benefit people with disabilities or those who belong to socially excluded groups increased significantly, from 528 in 2014 to 24,241 in 2016. The number of students of indigenous descent also rose from 7,774 in 2012 to 44,212 in 2016.

In addition, 11 universities were extended and 22 new careers created. "It is the challenge of the university system to have high standards in the methods of passing on knowledge, to generate knowledge through scientific research relevant to social transformation and to enhance individual and territorial capacities," the secretary said.

Source: *teleSUR English*

**CUBA IN PERSPECTIVE**

# Fidel & Che: An Everlasting Friendship

Celebrating the Birthday of Revolutionary Hero  
**Ernesto Guevara**

**\*\* A FREE COMMUNITY EVENT \*\***

**Music-Poetry-Speakers**

**Saturday June 10**

**7pm Mount Pleasant Neighbourhood House  
800 E. Broadway (Vancouver, Canada)**

Vancouver Event Organized by:

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Vancouver Event Sponsored by:

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**Guest Speakers Direct from Cuba:**



**Sandra Ramirez Rodriguez**  
Director of the North America  
Desk of the Cuban Institute of  
Friendship with the Peoples  
(ICAP)

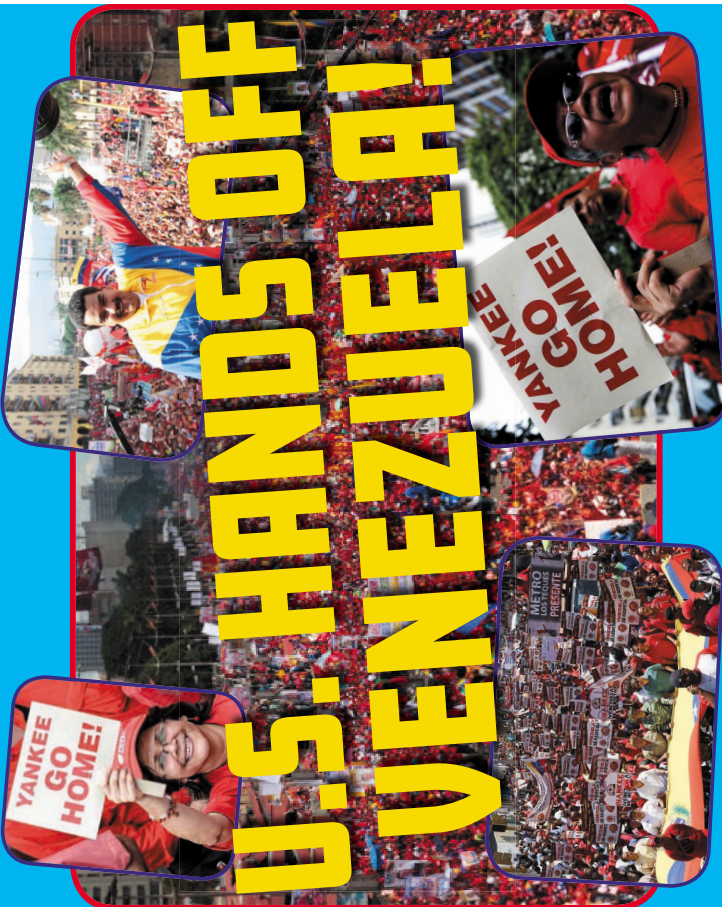


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**IN VENEZUELA THE STRUGGLE CONTINUES!**



# U.S. HANDS OFF VENEZUELA!

**FRIDAY JULY 7, 2017**

- 1. PROTEST ACTION 4 PM**  
**U.S. HANDS OFF VENEZUELA!**  
US CONSULATE IN VANCOUVER  
1070 WEST PENDER STREET
- 2. INFO TABLING & PETITION 5:30 PM**  
**MADURO IS OUR PRESIDENT!**  
VANCOUVER ART GALLERY  
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