



## VANCOUVER JOINS INTERNATIONAL WEEK OF ACTION TO FREE THE CUBAN 5 HEROES

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this country), violation of our legal and constitutional rights, lies, distortions, infamies. But always the unity of everyone, human solidarity, the affection of the peoples, the love of humanity, have been our light and strength... Page 5

## WAR IN THE MIDDLE EAST



### QATARI REGIME: A REACTIONARY FORCE IN THE MIDDLE EAST

Syria is a nation rapidly descending into civil war. As the story we are told by the mainstream media goes, this is a result of the Syrian government's brutal crackdown on a

popular protest movement of the Syrian people. As is all too often the case, the truth is an entirely different story. The civil war which is developing in Syria today ... Page 2

# FIRE THIS TIME

*We are realists... We dream the impossible - che*



### POLITICAL PRISONER LEONARD PELTIER STATEMENT

Greetings my relatives and supporters, and we are all truly relatives in one way or another. First of all I want to thank all of you for remembering me on this day, as many of you probably suspect and some know, that when you are in prison you have a lot of time to reflect and think on how things are, and how they were and perhaps how they should be. Having said that, I was thinking about how on your birthday the person who really should be celebrated ... Page 20



**FIRE THIS TIME NEWSPAPER WINS IMPORTANT VICTORY IN STRUGGLE FOR FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION**

Special section page 7



# Qatar: U.S. Base for Wars in the Middle East

September 14, 2012. Protest march to the U.S. embassy in Doha, Qatar. Sign reads: "The people want to get rid of the American base that kills Muslims!"



By Nita Palmer

Syria is a nation rapidly descending into civil war. As the story we are told by the mainstream media goes, this is a result of the Syrian government's brutal crackdown on a popular protest movement of the Syrian people.

As is all too often the case, the truth is an entirely different story. The civil war which is developing in Syria today in fact did not really begin as a civil war, since one side (the "opposition") has been entirely paid for and organized by outside forces opposed to the Syrian government, including the United States and many of their allies in the Middle East. Proxy war is really the more accurate term to describe the violence which was initiated by a group of people who began their "protest movement" not with peaceful demonstrations in major cities (as was the case in Tunisia, Egypt and many other countries of the "Arab Spring"), but with heavy arms in a small town near the Jordanian border. Nonetheless, the Syrian government has necessarily responded to these provocations, with the result of the Syrian army fighting the armed opposition to maintain control of the country.

For a more detailed account of events in Syria to date, please see some of the

events in Syria? Because Qatar is in fact very much an actor in the Syrian conflict.

Let us review some of the facts of Qatar's involvement in Syria:

>In January 2012, Qatari king Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa al Thani called for military intervention in Syria, proposing that the Arab League send troops to the country. The proposal was rejected by the Syrian government.

>On February 8, Israeli intelligence news agency Debka reported that British and Qatari special forces had been dispatched to Syria to aid Free Syrian army rebels.

>At an April 1st "Friends of Syria" meeting in Istanbul, Qatar, together with Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, pledged \$100 million to pay the salaries of Free Syrian Army fighters.

>In July, Reuters reported that a secret base has been set up by Qatar, Turkey and Saudi Arabia in the Turkish city of Adana. According to Reuters, "Adana is home to Incirlik, a large Turkish/U.S. air force base which Washington has used in the past for reconnaissance and military logistics operations. It was not clear from the sources whether the anti-Syrian "nerve centre" was located inside Incirlik base or in

previous articles published in Fire This Time at [www.firethistime.net](http://www.firethistime.net). Now, let us return to the focus of this article: Qatar.

## Qatar's Role in Syria

Why, you may ask, did I begin an article on Qatar with an explanation of

the city of Adana.

Qatar, the tiny gas-rich Gulf state which played a leading part in supplying weapons to Libyan rebels, has a key role in directing operations at the Adana base, the sources said. Qatari military intelligence and state security officials are involved.

"Three governments are supplying weapons: Turkey, Qatar and Saudi Arabia," said a Doha-based source."

## What is Qatar's Interest in Syria?

Qatar has invested a significant amount of money and resources into supporting the anti-government forces in Syria, so clearly they have a specific interest in aiding the rebels and bringing about the downfall of the Syrian government - but why?

Like many other Persian Gulf kingdoms, Qatar's foreign policy is often aligned with US and British interests. The roots of this relationship can be seen in Qatar's history.

Qatar is a tiny country of 1.7 million (just 250,000 of whom are citizens) on the Qatari Peninsula in the Persian Gulf. The country as it exists today has its foundations in the division of the Ottoman empire after its collapse at the end of World War I. At that time, the British empire recognized Sheikh Abdullah bin Jassim al Thani as the country's king, ushering in the al Thani dynasty. In exchange for British military



protection, al Thani was not to cede any of his territory except to Britain and not to enter relationships with any other foreign governments without explicit British consent.

In 1968, Britain decided to end this treaty with Qatar, along with other similar ones signed with a number of other Persian Gulf kingdoms. As a result, Qatar declared independence in 1971, just a few months before the termination of the treaty. Unlike other countries in the Middle East and around the world, Qatar has never waged a struggle for independence, instead remaining as a firm ally of imperialist interests in the Middle East since its colonial days. Today, Qatar's alliance can be seen more clearly with the US, but the interests are essentially the same.

The effects of this history are very much reflected in Qatar's actions in Syria today. The United States has pursued an aggressive policy against the Syrian government; Qatar has followed, often stepping up to the plate to do the "dirty work" that the US and the Obama regime do not want to be seen doing. In fact, the Wall Street Journal noted recently that "The US is in many ways acting in Syria through proxies, primarily Saudi Arabia, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates."

### **Qatar Today: A Staunch US Ally**

The US established diplomatic relations with Qatar in 1972, after the country's independence. Over the last quarter century, Qatar has become an important partner for the US in the Middle East. During Operation Desert Storm in 1991 (the first US war in Iraq), Qatar played host to US forces and the Qatari military supported the US in certain key operations. Following this, Qatar and the US signed a Defense Cooperation Agreement. In 2003, the US Combat Air Operations Centre for the Middle East was moved to Qatar's Al Udeid airbase south of the capital, Doha. Today, US Central Command operates out of nearby Camp As Sayliyah, and the Al Udeid airbase operates as the logistics and command hub for US operations in Afghanistan and Iraq.

Located in the Persian Gulf, Qatar holds an important strategic position for the US in the Middle East. The fact that US Central Command - the most important

US base of operations outside the US - is located in Qatar is strong evidence of the close military and strategic ties which Qatar and the US share.

However, while the Obama regime is crying out about human rights abuses and lack of democracy in Syria and Libya, they turn a blind eye to awful human rights abuses and a total lack of democracy in Qatar.

### **Qatar A Reactionary Despotic Regime**

Being an absolute monarchy, no legislative elections have been held in Qatar since 1970, when there were partial elections to the legislative assembly. Although the Sheikh Al Thani has promised that legislative elections to a consultative body will be held in 2013, these elections have been delayed three times already, and even under this system the king would still retain absolute power in decisions on the country's affairs.

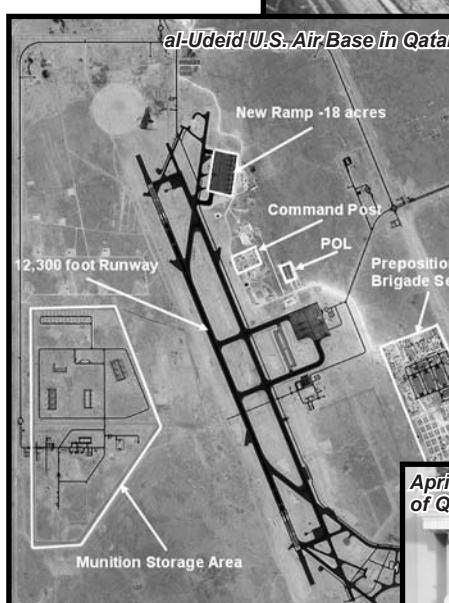
As for freedom of speech and other basic civil rights, even the US State

in practice. According to a 2003 State Department report on human rights practices in Qatar, "the Constitution provides for freedom of assembly; however, the Government severely limited this right in practice. The Government generally did not allow political demonstrations."

The Constitution provides for freedom of association; however, the Government severely limited this right in practice. The Government did not allow political parties or international professional organizations critical of the Government or of any other Arab government."

Beyond the limitations on free speech and democracy for its citizens, there is an even darker side to democracy and human rights in Qatar: the plight of foreign workers. Foreign workers, mainly from Southeast Asia, compromise 80%

of Qatar's population and 94% of its workforce. A number of organizations have reported widespread abuses of human and worker's rights by employers of migrant workers. According to Human Rights Watch,



April 14, 2011 U.S. President Barack Obama with the ruling Emir of Qatar, Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani.



Department acknowledges these rights are severely limited in Qatar, although they ignore these rights violations

"workers reported a range of problems, including unpaid wages, illegal salary deductions, crowded and unsanitary labor camps, and unsafe working conditions. All but four of the workers said they paid recruitment fees ranging between US\$726 and \$3,651, borrowing from private money lenders at interest rates that ranged from 3 to 5 percent per month to 100 percent interest on their debt per year."

Under Qatari law, there are no wage standards for migrant workers, nor are they allowed to strike or form labour unions. As well, Qatar's sponsorship system ties a worker's legal residence in the country to their employer sponsor, and according to Human Rights Watch, "migrant workers cannot change jobs without their sponsoring employer's consent, except in exceptional cases with permission from the Interior Ministry. If a worker leaves his or her sponsoring employer, even if fleeing abuse, the employer can report the worker as "absconding," leading to detention and deportation. In order to leave Qatar, migrants must obtain an exit visa from their sponsor, and some said sponsors denied them these visas. Workers widely reported that sponsors confiscated their passports, in violation of the Sponsorship Law."

Foreign workers who come to Qatar are often lured there under false pretences of the type of work they will be doing and the salaries they will receive. Once there, they cannot move, change employers or leave the country without their employer's permission, and must endure any conditions to which their employer subjects them. Qatar, which claims bragging rights to being the wealthiest country in the world with a per capita GDP (amongst its citizens) of \$102,943 USD, is for all practical intents and purposes built on the back of slave labour.

### **Qatar: A Puppet of Imperialism in the Middle East**

The hypocrisy of Qatar in promoting "human rights" and siding with the opposition in Syria is evident when one looks at the living conditions for migrant workers in Qatar and the regime's absolute silencing of political dissent. However, Qatar's actions in Syria are not new or isolated; as mentioned above, Qatar has been supporting imperialism in the Middle East for many decades.

The counter-revolutionary role of the Qatari regime in the Middle East has become increasingly evident since the

beginning of the "Arab Spring" protests. Qatar played an active role in the NATO bombing campaign which helped to overthrow the independent government in Libya, dedicating a large part of their air force to this effort. The Qatari regime also sent hundreds of troops to support the "rebels" in their overthrow of the Libyan government. The Guardian notes that Mustafa Abdel-Jalil, the leader of the rebel's National Transitional Council "described the Qataris as having planned the battles that paved the way for victory". The NATO bombing campaign, and other initiatives in support of the "rebels" in Libya were not aimed at supporting people struggling for democracy and independence. They were instead aimed at overthrowing an independent government which the US and their NATO allies saw as an roadblock to expanding Western interests in North Africa. If promoting freedom, democracy and independence for the people of the Middle East and North Africa was their goal, why have they allied themselves with some of the most repressive and anti-democratic regimes in the Middle East, such as Qatar, Bahrain and Saudi Arabia?

Qatar has in fact also been an active supporter of the repressive Bahraini regime, which has tortured or killed thousands of its citizens who have been peacefully protesting for democracy and independence from the US and Saudi Arabia since January 2011. Qatar sent troops to Bahrain as part of the Peninsula Shield Force, the military arm of the Gulf Cooperation Council, a group of Persian Gulf kingdoms. Human Rights Watch reports on the situation in Bahrain have included testimony from many activists that Peninsula Shield Forces troops were involved in abuses, killings and other atrocities against the Bahraini people.

### **The Importance of the Qatari Regime to US Interests**

The Middle East today has become the epicentre of a worldwide battle between people struggling for independence, democracy and human rights and the forces who oppose them. On one hand, there are the regimes of the US, Canada and other NATO countries, which are trying to establish their military, strategic and economic interests in the Middle East. On the other, there is the people of the Middle East, who are waging a battle for their rights in the face of severe repression.

This battle has been played out in Iraq and Afghanistan, where people have been fighting for independence from foreign occupation. It has also been waged by the people of Egypt, Tunisia, Bahrain and other countries in their struggle to free their countries from US puppet governments and foreign domination.

Within this struggle, the Qatari regime has been playing an important role in helping the US in particular to establish their interests in the Middle East. By supporting the United States politically and militarily, they are trying to ensure that independent governments such as the ones in Iran, Syria and the former government of Libya are brought down, and that the mass independence movements in other countries do not succeed.

The Qatari regime sees both its security and economic interests as aligned with the United States: neither want to see the success of independence movements which could wrest both political power and control of resources from the hands of the United States and the regimes which support them. Beneath the image of glamour and wealth which the Qatari regime tries to display for the world, it is fundamentally an anti-democratic force which is attempting to re-establish colonialism in the Middle East in the interests of the US capitalist class.

### **Two Sides: Take A Side!**

In the battle for freedom, democracy and human rights being waged in the Middle East, there are two sides: the side of ordinary people who are struggling for genuine peace, independence and democracy, and the side of the US, NATO and their allies who are fighting for control of resources and trade markets under the guise of "freedom" and "human rights" in Libya, Syria and elsewhere. We must carefully look at the facts and support countries and movements who are fighting for genuine freedom, democracy and also independence.



# Vancouver Joins International Week of Action with 2 Events to Free the Cuban 5 Heroes

By Sarah Alwell

"We have lived truly difficult moments, lockups in cells of hellish punishment for prolonged periods (something that, in spite of being against every human right, is becoming more common in this country), violation of our legal and constitutional rights, lies, distortions, infamies. But always the unity of everyone, human solidarity, the affection of the peoples, the love of humanity, have been our light and strength to overcome every obstacle and continue forward" wrote Ramon Labanino, one of the Cuban 5 heroes, from the confines

his homeland and visit his family in Cuba. After these 14 years of being unjustly kept behind U.S. prison bars, the Cuban 5 have not given up hope in the fight for their freedom and the struggle for a better world. Neither will we!

## 14 years too long! We don't stop 'cos we can't stop!

Inspired by the 5's never ceasing heart and spirit, the Free the Cuban 5 Committee – Vancouver and their supporters joined people all over the world, from New York to London to Vienna & Prague, for an international period of action in September to demand the immediate freedom of the Cuban 5 Heroes. Two events were organized in Vancouver By Free the Cuban 5 Committee, to mark this important occasion.

## Picket Action in Front of US Consulate

First, as part of the international "5th of the month for the Cuban 5" campaign, on September 5th peace loving people gathered in front of the US Consulate for the 82nd monthly picket action to free the Cuban 5. Chants of "Hey Obama, Free the Cuban 5 Now!" rang through the city streets of Downtown Vancouver, brightly colored banners and picket signs lined the sidewalk in front of the U.S. Consulate, and information about the case of the 5 was handed out to people passing by. Participants at this



month's picket vowed to continue to return to the U.S. Consulate every month until the 5 are free and reunited with their families in Cuba!

## Political and Cultural Forum

Then on September 12th, Joe 's Café on Commercial Drive was transformed to a place of struggle and resistance as peace loving people from across Vancouver gathered together for a special cultural and information night dedicated to the Cuban 5 heroes. International greetings, via telephone and video conferencing, were given from Alicia Jrapko, coordinator of the International Committee for the Freedom of the Cuban 5, Heide Trampus, coordinator of the "Breaking the Silence: People's Tribunal and Assembly to Free the Cuban 5" and Gloria La Riva, coordinator of the National Committee to Free the Cuban 5 in the US. Guest speakers included Merli Venegas, Consul



of his jail cell on September 12th 2012: the 14 year anniversary of their unjust imprisonment. Gerardo Hernandez, Ramón Labanino, Fernando Gonzalez, Antonio Guerrero and René Gonzalez, known to the world as the Cuban 5 heroes, were wrongly accused, convicted and unjustly imprisoned in the U.S. for peacefully defending their people against Miami-based terrorist groups responsible for the deaths of over 3,400 civilians in Cuba. Four of the 5 unjustifiably remain behind U.S. bars today, while Rene Gonzales who was released from prison last year for having completed his sentence, is being forced against his will to remain on parole in Florida for three years without being allowed to return to





**Merli Vanegas, Venezuelan Consul General in Vancouver speaks at Cuban 5 Cultural Night September 12, 2012**

General of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela in Vancouver, Bonnie Hammond, co-chair of the Vancouver and District Labour Council Young Workers Committee, and executive member of CAW local 114 and Tamara Hansen, coordinator of Vancouver Communities in Solidarity with Cuba (VCSC). Wonderful local musicians Joaquin Ernesto and MX Catracho had the audience singing and clapping as they shared their beautiful songs of love and resistance. The evening came to an end with the Vancouver premier of the film "Esencias", by renowned Cuban documentary film maker Roberto Chile. Esencias is a heartwarming film that

documents a tour of La Colmentia, a Cuban children's theater company, in the United States performing a play that they wrote about the case of the Cuban 5 and the struggle for their freedom.

**"The truth must not only be the truth it must be told" – Fidel Castro**

The late Leonard Wineglass, a famous social justice lawyer, and lawyer for the Cuban 5 once said that if the people of North America knew about the case of the Cuban 5 they would be outraged

by such a blatant injustice and the 5 would not remain in prison for a second longer. These two events for the Cuban 5 in Vancouver inspired participants to redouble our efforts in the education and protest campaign to free the Cuban 5 and participants left with a new confidence that if we are determined, creative and most importantly, if we continue to work together in unity, together we will Free the Cuban 5 Heroes!

For more information about the Cuban 5 or to get involved please visit:

[www.freethe5vancouver.ca](http://www.freethe5vancouver.ca)



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

### **Donations**

If you find Fire This Time to be an effective tool in the struggle of oppressed people for justice, more than ever, we need your support. On top of our regular costs of production, we regularly send members of our editorial board on assignment throughout North America, the Caribbean and beyond in order to make Fire This Time a better resource. These efforts have strained our finances.

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

This Newspaper could not have been possible without the generous contributions from our supporters.

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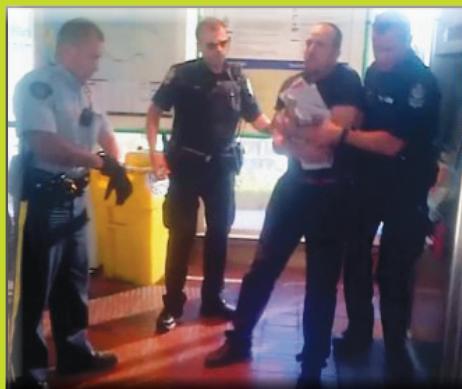
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# FIRE THIS TIME FIRE THIS TIME ACTIVISTS ASSAULTED BY TRANSIT POLICE AND RCMP: THE CAMPAIGN TO DEFEND OUR CIVIL LIBERTIES!

Without a doubt, one of the central struggles of working people is to defend their existing democratic and human rights. Fighting for democratic and human rights and expanding them further occupies the center of the working class movement for more than 150 years. It has always been said that, "A working class movement that cannot defend itself against the capitalist class offensive and cannot stand firmly for democratic rights and human rights, cannot achieve the position required to lead the whole society."

Indeed, of those important democratic rights are the freedom of expression and the freedom of assembly. Without defending and expanding these rights against ruling class assault it is very difficult to foresee the working class and its allies, oppressed people and poor people, being able to build a strong, viable and effective organization that can lead the struggle for victory. In the next 10 pages we have documented for our readers, who are basically working and poor people, how a small political

## SPECIAL SECTION



tendency can defend these rights and fight to win.

4 Fire This Time activists who were peacefully and legally distributing a legal, free, revolutionary and social justice newspaper were harassed and abused by Translink authorities and different police institutions. They were harassed because the politics which they were defending , including fighting for peace, against war, against occupation, against discrimination, and against exploitation, did not taste good to these authoritarian institutions and their agents.

The next 10 pages is documentation of the struggle of Fire This Time activists to retain their rights and win their legal and moral space to distribute a revolutionary newspaper. We are hoping this struggle, which still continues, becomes an experience for our readers particularly and the working class generally. Our attitude and mentality towards working class struggle is, "We are realists, we dream impossibles", as Che Guevara said, and, "We will win", as Fidel Castro said.



## VANCOUVER COMMITTEE TO DEFEND FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

[WWW.STOPPOLICEASSAULT.COM](http://WWW.STOPPOLICEASSAULT.COM)

**STOP  
ATTACKS  
ON FREEDOM OF  
EXPRESSION!**

# FIRE THIS TIME

*We are realists... we dream the impossible - che*



**1 First statement by Fire This Time  
Newspaper against police abuse of  
freedom of expression.**

September 4, 2012

## **FIRE THIS TIME ACTIVISTS BRUTALIZED AND ASSAULTED BY TRANSIT POLICE AND RCMP!**

**● STAND  
AGAINST  
POLICE  
BRUTALITY!**

**● STOP  
HARASSMENT  
AND ASSAULT  
OF POLITICAL  
ACTIVISTS!**

**● OPPOSE  
SUPPRESSION  
OF FREEDOM  
OF  
EXPRESSION!**

Campaign updates and videos of the assault available here:

[www.youtube.com/firethistime](http://www.youtube.com/firethistime)

[stopassaultonpoliticalactivists.wordpress.com](http://stopassaultonpoliticalactivists.wordpress.com)

On August 31, 2012, at Metrotown Skytrain Station near Vancouver, Canada, Transit police officers and the RCMP assaulted, handcuffed and removed three activists that were peacefully distributing the Fire This Time newspaper (FTT). Because FTT is a non-commercial, free social justice newspaper, the officers had no legal ground to stop the distribution. It is clear that the aim of the assault was to intimidate and harass social justice activists which is political targeting as FTT publishes many articles against war and in support of social justice struggles in Canada, from Indigenous rights to labour organizing. This was an attack on our fundamental civil and democratic rights which include freedom of expression and the right to organize and demonstrate without violence and intimidation. It is also a case of police brutality, which is a disturbing trend growing in Canada.

### **AUGUST 31: Fire This Time Activists Brutalized and Assaulted by Transit Police and RCMP**

On the day of the assault, we were distributing the FTT newspaper without incident at the Metrotown Skytrain Station. After an hour, two transit police officers arrived and immediately began telling the four of us that we needed to leave the station and stop distributing. We showed the officers and read aloud the publicly posted Transit rules available on large boards in every skytrain station. These rules state that,

"printed material for non-commercial purposes will be permitted on transit properties, other than transit vehicles or fare-paid zones," provided distribution does not impede transit traffic or operations.

The police insisted that it did not matter what the posted rules state and that there are other rules that are not posted. When we asked what those rules are or how they applied to this situation, they refused to answer. Instead, the police stated that because they were asking us to leave the station and we were refusing, this was justification for our arrest. This sort of Catch-22 argument never answered the fundamental question as to why they demanded we leave in the first place!

Drawing the attention of many passers-by, who took videos of the escalating police harassment, we continually asked the police, "Why are we being arrested?" "What have we done?" "What laws have we broken?" These questions were never answered. Soon, Shakeel had his arm wrenched behind his back by the officer putting him in handcuffs. During this assault, Mike, another FTT activist, began filming with his phone. Once the officer realized the assault was being filmed he responded by grabbing Mike's arm and putting him in handcuffs as well. The officer attempted to take away Mike's



phone, but he was able to pass it another FTT activist who was consulting with a lawyer and documenting the assault.

At the same time, another officer was harassing Thomas, the FTT activist who had been explaining the posted Transit rules. Holding tightly onto a stack of FTT newspapers, Thomas continued to ask the officer "Why are you doing this?" The officer ignored this question, threatening him with arrest and saying he would "hurt" him if he tried to move away. In response to Thomas' peaceful questioning, the officer grabbed his neck, pushed pressure points on his head and slammed him into a corner.

When back-up Transit and RCMP officers arrived, they made the total officer count more than ten, and took Mike and Shakeel out of the station in handcuffs. On the street outside of the station, both had their bags searched without consent and were put in the back of two RCMP patrol cars. Thomas was kept in the station and continued to ask the officer what laws he had broken and why he was being arrested until he was viciously rammed up against the stair railing by three officers, tackled to the ground, handcuffed, and taken out of the station. During this, Thomas was told he was being arrested for "creating a disturbance". Thomas was put in the back of an unmarked SUV.

After some time in the vehicles Thomas, Mike and Shakeel were each told separately that they would be released without any charges but banned from the Transit system for 24 hours. It was clear that the police officers had no reason for arrest, as Thomas, Shakeel and Mike had broken no Transit rules and had been targeted because of the political nature of the FTT newspaper.

Thomas, Shakeel and Mike were separately driven to a Burnaby Community Police Station and released. All three of us had to visit the Emergency Room for medical treatment following the assault.

Following the harassment and assault, we were never issued a ticket or any written documentation. We were never told on what basis we were asked to leave the Skytrain station in the first place. During this incident 150 of our newspapers were taken and we have video footage of a police officer holding some of them. Immediately upon his release from police custody, Shakeel checked his phone for the video footage he had taken during the

assault and it was not there. This video had been erased during the time that an RCMP officer had his phone.

This was not an isolated incident, but the culmination of four months of repeated harassment of FTT activists distributing the newspaper. However, in most cases Transit officials and police officers were



forced to allow us to continue distribution after we pointed out the publicly posted Transit rules and defended our right to continue distribution. The August 31 assault was an escalation of this campaign of harassment and intimidation. We have video footage available for many of these incidents.

### **Stand Up for Democratic Rights!**

Why is it that after over an hour of harassment and brutal assault we were released without charges and without being told that we were in violation of any Transit rules? Without a doubt if police had had any justification or valid legal reason they would of pursued further action or charges. This makes it clear that the police and transit authorities were politically targeting Fire This Time activists.

This assault on our democratic rights is happening in the context of the new era of war and occupation. Since September 11, 2001 the U.S. and its imperialist allies including Canada have begun a new era of increasing war and occupation; from the continued occupation of Afghanistan to the bombing and war against Libya and now threats, sanctions and covert foreign

intervention in Syria and Iran. Whenever imperialist governments like the U.S. and Canada wage brutal and devastating wars abroad it is always accompanied by a crack-down against those who defend social justice and protest war at home. As an independent social justice newspaper, Fire This Time spreads a message against this war on working and oppressed people at home and abroad. This assault and continued harassment is an attack on our democratic rights and freedom of speech and expression in order to silence independent voices for peace and social justice.

Incidents like these remind us that if we do not defend

our rights we lose them. We will vigorously defend not only the right of our organization to organize and publish its ideas, but the right of all poor and working people to do the same even if they contradict the current government's policies and practices. We absolutely refuse to be intimidated by violence and harassment, and call on all peace and social justice loving people to join with us in defending our fundamental democratic rights. United we can defend and extend the rights past generations fought so hard to establish! United we can win!

### **We must join together to demand:**

**STAND AGAINST POLICE BRUTALITY!**

**STOP HARASSMENT AND ASSAULT OF POLITICAL ACTIVISTS!**

**OPPOSE SUPPRESSION OF FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION!**

[www.youtube.com/firethistime](http://www.youtube.com/firethistime)  
[stopassaultonpoliticalactivists.wordpress.com](http://stopassaultonpoliticalactivists.wordpress.com)





# "Stand Against Police Brutality!"

**2 This is the public forum to discuss the attack and the necessity of forming an adhoc committee to defend freedom of expression.**

**"Stand Against Police Brutality!" Report from Fire This Time Public Forum & Organizing Meeting**

**September 7, 2012**

One week after a brutal police assault on Vancouver activists distributing the Fire This Time newspaper, a large and diverse group of people packed a public forum and organizing meeting. They came together to discuss the attack by the RCMP and Transit Police, and to plan the next steps in the defense of civil liberties and democratic rights in the Fire This Time case.

There was no more room in the meeting room, as the 70 people who came together ranged from members of different political parties and organizations, trade

union members and executives, Cuba solidarity and anti-war organizers, as well as concerned community members shocked by the police assault and detainment of three activists who were peacefully distributing the Fire This Time newspaper at the Metrotown Skytrain Station on the evening of Friday, August 31. Most had already read Fire This Time's public statement, or seen the new blog (<http://stopassaultonpoliticalactivists.wordpress.com/>) and videos posted online ([www.youtube.com/firethistime](http://www.youtube.com/firethistime)) detailing the assault.

The meeting was chaired by Mobilization Against War and Occupation (MAWO) co-chair Alison Bodine. She introduced the three Fire This Time activists and assault victims, Thomas, Shakeel, and Mike, as being there not only to discuss the chronology of the assault and the growing defense campaign, but also of the deeper issues and context of the assault.

Mike outlined how the three activists

had been distributing the newspaper for an hour without incident before being approached by two Transit police officers who demanded they leave immediately. After the three activists had shown the police the public regulations allowing them to distribute and refused to be intimidated, the police responded by handcuffing, assaulting, and detaining them before releasing them without charges later that evening. "Eventually over ten Transit Police and RCMP officers were involved in our assault," continued Mike, "but we refuse to be intimidated. We are serious about defending not only the rights of Fire This Time and all social justice organizations, but the democratic and civil liberties of all poor and working people."

"Our rights are under attack both at home and abroad," continued Shakeel, "the Harper regime's ongoing offensive of war, occupation, and threats against countries like Afghanistan, Libya and Syria, has been accompanied by a crackdown on



independent voices for social justice here at home." He elaborated, "The Fire This Time newspaper spreads a message against this war on oppressed people. This assault and harassment is an attack on our democratic rights and freedom of speech."

The presentations were completed by Fire This Time Editorial Board member and assault victim Thomas, who emphasized that Fire This Time would be pursuing all options, be they legal or political, as part of a broad and energetic defense campaign. He quoted the famous civil rights activist James Baldwin in his defense of then imprisoned civil rights activist Angela Davis, "If we know, then we must fight for your life as though it were our own—which it is—and render impassable with our bodies the corridor to the gas chamber. For, if they take you in the morning, they will be coming for us that night."

He emphasized the need for unity between different organizations and individuals, who do not need to agree on every single issue, but understand that defending the hard won rights of poor and working people is in all of our interests. "We are not willing to live in world where police are able to attack political activists despite the fact that we are peaceful and complying with all laws and regulations. We are not willing to wait until things get even worse to organize an effective defense of everyone's rights. We will fight and we will win."

The discussion which followed was long and lively, with many people sharing their

own experiences with police brutality and making connections between different struggles. The suggestion to create an ad-hoc committee for this case and the attack on democratic and civil liberties was soon taken up by those in attendance, as people agreed that the only way to successfully defend these rights is to be organized and united.

As was said in the public announcement of the public forum, "We would like to emphasize that more than ever we need



unity against growing police brutality and assaults on democratic and civil liberties of not only political activists particularly, but also all social justice advocates from antiwar to antipoverty, and from fighting for immediate reforms to building a new world without exploitation. Police brutality, restrictions and attacks on civil liberties are increasing. In fact this unlawful police behavior does not just

originate from the local cop centers. What we need to understand more importantly is that police forces are applying and enforcing what the Harper regime is mapping for the future of democratic and human rights in Canada in a time of national and international capitalist crisis. Hence, our strong and united response to their attack on us and against our rights is of vital importance." The public meeting was successful not only in bringing people together, but also in focusing the defense campaign through the creation of a new ad-hoc committee to defend Fire This Time and stop assault on all political activists.

Please join us for unity and to fight back! The first meeting of the new ad-hoc committee will be this Tuesday, September 11. The meeting starts at 7:30pm in Joes Café (Large North Hall), 1150 Commercial Drive. The meeting will decide on a name for the committee as well as plan our upcoming actions in defense of civil liberties and democratic rights. See you there!

For more information:  
<http://stopassaultonpoliticalactivists.wordpress.com/>

Read Fire This Time full statement at:  
<http://stopassaultonpoliticalactivists.wordpress.com/statements/>

For videos of the assault including new short videos taken by independent bystanders:  
<http://www.youtube.com/firethistime>

Fire This Time Movement for Social Justice  
<http://www.firethistime.net/>

**3** BCCLA (BC Civil Liberties Association) gets involved and supports the activists. BCCLA released the below press release.

## **BCCLA asks Translink to investigate free expression issue, again**

Posted on September 25, 2012



The BCCLA has written to ask Translink and the Transit Police to investigate allegations that the transit system has again infringed on basic free expression rights. A group of political activists distributing a free publication that discusses international political issues allege that they were arrested and 150 of their newspapers seized in the common area of Metrotown Skytrain Station. They were released without charge, but did not get their newspapers back. Translink's posted rules, and the BCCLA's understanding of free expression rights protected under the Charter, permit the distribution of non-commercial information at Skytrain stations in common areas.

"We're disappointed to be writing, again, to Translink on an apparent free expression issue," said Lindsay Lyster, President of the BCCLA. "Translink and the Transit Police must investigate these allegations and, if necessary, retrain their staff to remind them that their jobs as public officials are not just to tolerate free expression, but also to facilitate it."

Last year, the BCCLA wrote to Translink and the Transit Police expressing concern when a transit police officer removed a woman from the public transit system for wearing a button he found offensive. The BCCLA intervened in litigation against Translink's policy of requiring all "political" content to be removed from advertising before it would be approved. The Supreme Court of Canada ordered Translink to permit political advertising. During the Olympics, the BCCLA and the Transit Police worked together to correct a flyer distributed by the Transit Police in error that suggested that merchants should call police if individuals appeared to be protesters.

"Given Translink's challenging history around free expression, we would expect they would work extra hard to ensure free expression was protected and facilitated," said Lindsay Lyster, President of the BCCLA. "That we find ourselves in a situation again where a group of people distributing a free political newspaper are alleging that their basic and protected free expression rights were violated, and their property seized, is very troubling."

**4** Continuing their support, the BCCLA sends the following letter to Translink and the Transit Police

## **BCCLA President's Letter to Translink and the Transit Police**



I write to you in my role as President of the BC Civil Liberties Association, Canada's oldest and most active civil liberties group, on behalf of that organization. Our mandate includes the promotion and protection of rights and freedoms across Canada, with particular focus on British Columbia. We write to you to advise you of an extremely concerning event that we respectfully request you investigate immediately.

We are advised by a group of individuals who publish a free political newspaper called "Fire This Time" that on August 31, 2012, at the Metrotown Skytrain station, members of their organization were handing out free copies of their publication to transit users. The organization advises us that they had done similar distributions of this publication in the past, that the station's common

areas (excepting the "fare paid zones") are regularly used for the distribution of free newspapers including 24 Hours and Metro, and that rules posted on the wall of the common areas of the station advise that distribution of non-commercial free literature is permitted.

On August 31, the group alleges that transit officials and transit police arresting these individuals for distributing their newspaper. They have produced video that appears consistent with this allegation. We understand that no appearance notices or tickets were issued to those arrested, and that all were released shortly after the arrests. Witness accounts we have reviewed indicate that arrests may have been made on the basis of a shifting justification that began with an improper assertion that Translink staff and police can restrict the distribution of non-commercial political materials at transit stations, and concluded with an

### **BCCLA - British Columbia Civil Liberties Association**

Translink Board of Directors  
c/o Nancy Olewiler, Chair

Translink Mayors' Council  
C/O Richard Walton, Chair

Transit Police  
307 Columbia Street  
New Westminster, BC  
VIA FAX: 604-515-8301

Translink  
1600 - 4720 Kingsway  
Burnaby, BC  
VIA FAX: 604-453-4626

**September 20, 2012**

**Dear Sirs/Mesdames:**

**Re: Free expression in Skytrain stations and on transit property**

allegation of breach of the peace. Those arrested allege that either Translink staff and/or the transit police illegally seized 150 copies of their newspapers and did not return them.

The Greater Vancouver Transit Conduct Safety Regulation provides Translink with the authority to post rules, and we note that this Regulation also provides transit employees with the authority to enforce transit rules. Section 6 of the South Coast British Columbia Transportation Authority Act provides Translink with similar authority to that of a municipal authority, but the context of this authority is centered on land use and the management of transit infrastructure. This section, by any reading, does not provide Translink with authority to regulate lawful and Charter-protected free expression of political ideas through a free newspaper.

Translink can make rules to manage its infrastructure and provide transit services; however, its ability to do so has already been restricted by the Court in the *Greater Vancouver Transportation Authority v. Canadian Federation of Students*. In that case, as we have advised Translink in the past, the Court was unambiguous with respect to the free expression values which limit Translink's ability to interfere with paid advertising in the transit system:

*I accept that the policies were adopted for the purpose of providing "a safe, welcoming public transit system" and that this is a sufficiently important objective to warrant placing a limit on freedom of expression. However, like the trial judge, I art1 not convinced that the limits on political content imposed by articles 2,7 and 9 are rationally connected to the objective. I have some difficulty seeing how an advertisement on the side of a bus that constitutes political speech might create a safety risk or an unwelcoming environment for transit users. It is not the political nature of an advertisement that creates a dangerous or hostile environment. Rather, it is only if*

*the advertisement is offensive in that, for example, its content is discriminatory or if advocates violence or terrorism - regardless of whether it is commercial or political in nature - that the objective of providing a safe and safe and welcoming transit system will be undermined.*

These values articulated by our highest Court would only be heightened in the context of personal expression in the form of a non-commercial, free political newspaper distributed in common areas of the station.

In any event,

Translink

We also ask that your investigation include locating the seized newspapers, and explore whether or not additional training is required for all Translink staff and Transit Police on their obligations to protect and facilitate free expression.

It is not clear to our office whether this incident was the responsibility of Translink staff, or the Transit Police, or some shared responsibility, so we have included the Transit Police in this correspondence. The Transit Police are established to serve the public interest, and it is very well established in law and under the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms that political expression and artistic expression are particularly protected from regulation by police.

You will recall that in January 2010, the Transit Police agreed to revise wording of a public bulletin that told members of the public to be cautious and report to police if citizens were preparing to stage or were engaged in political demonstrations or "shouting slogans" in a demonstration. In doing so, the Transit Police recognized the need to facilitate -not just refrain from repressing - free expression. The idea that the Transit Police would, at the request of a Translink employee or on their own initiative, arrest citizens distributing political materials and seize those materials is extremely concerning. We have trouble reconciling the Transit Police's previous commitment to facilitating free expression with the allegations surfacing from this incident. We look forward to your full report about this incident and the return of the publications to their proper owners.

"Rules and Regulations" appear to specifically permit, under Rule 9(a), the distribution of printed material for non-commercial purposes, so long as such distribution does not interfere with the use of the transit station.

Given that, in light of the posted rules, the case law, and the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, this group was entirely within their rights to distribute this publication, we request that you investigate this incident immediately to determine the basis for their detention and arrest.

Yours truly,

Lindsay M Lyster  
President

## **5 Fire This Time goes back to Skytrain Stations and exercises the right to distribute.**

**September 21, 2012**

### **Fire This Time is Back!**

#### **Fire This Time is Back in Vancouver Sky Train Stations – A Victory for Freedom of Expression!**

Three weeks after the brutal assault and harassment of Fire This Time activists by Vancouver transit police and RCMP, "Get your copy of Fire This Time – Vancouver's social justice newspaper," and "Free, independent social justice news!" could once again be heard in Sky Train stations. On Friday, September 21, 2012 Fire This Time activists and defenders of the freedom of expression in Vancouver joined together and distributed 1000 copies of the Fire This Time newspaper in defense of civil and democratic rights. Despite initial harassment by Transit officials, the activists remained inside of the stations and successfully

skytrain-stations-after-arrests-handing-out-newspapers

Distribution started early on Friday morning, at the Broadway and Commercial Sky Train station. Activists stood inside and outside of the station distributing Fire This Time newspaper to people from all different walks of life of whom many recognized the newspaper and were also very supportive. Although transit officials told the distributors they were not allowed to be there, activists stood their ground, and defended their rights and stayed inside of the station the entire morning.

For the

# **FIRE THIS TIME IS BACK IN VANCOUVER SKYTRAIN STATIONS!**

afternoon,

Fire This Time activists returned to the sight of the original assault, Metrotown Sky Train station. As soon as distribution began inside of the station activists were approached by a transit official who insisted that there distribution was impeding traffic and they would have to move. It was clear this was a targeting and harassment by the transit official as the person distributing was well out of the way of people passing by documented in videos and pictures taken by Fire This Time supporters. Distribution continued inside of the

station during a busy two hours.

This successful distribution has shown the importance of a strong defense campaign. Following three weeks of a campaign

to defend civil and democratic rights against the assault by transit officials, police and RCMP, it was possible for activists to return victoriously distributing Fire This Time. The strong public defense campaign, media coverage and broad support from people has forced transit and police to back off and restrain themselves.

We encourage all people in Vancouver to get involved in the newly formed Vancouver Committee to Defend Freedom of Expression, and to join us in distributing Fire This Time. If we unite to defend our civil and democratic rights, we can also extend those rights!



exercised the right to distribute a progressive, free and non-commercial newspaper.

The return to Sky Train stations was covered in an article in the Georgia Straight, written Friday morning after a Georgia Straight reporter passed through the station.

<http://www.straight.com/article-785511/vancouver/fire-time-activists-return>



# SELECTED MEDIA COVERAGE

**6** This case has received media attention from a variety of news sources. Below is a highlight of media coverage of the case.

## The Georgia Straight (Vancouver, Canada)

### Fire This Time activists return to SkyTrain stations after arrests for handing out newspapers

By Carlito Pablo

September 21, 2012

Uncowed and defiant, Fire This Time Movement for Social Justice activists have returned to SkyTrain stations to distribute their free newspaper.

At around 8:30 a.m. today (September 21), the Straight saw at least four members of the social-justice group handing out the Fire This Time paper at Commercial-Broadway Station in Vancouver.

It's the first time that Fire This Time has come back to a SkyTrain location since transit police and RCMP officers arrested three of their members while

distributing the newspaper at Metrotown Station on August 31.

TransLink rules provide that noncommercial papers can be distributed in transit properties other than vehicles and fare-paid zones. Because the three activists were following regulations, they were released without charges.

David Eby, executive director of the B.C. Civil Liberties Association, has described the August 31 incident as a "classic civil-liberties, free-speech issue".

Alison Bodine was one of the Fire This Time activists at Commercial-Broadway Station this morning.

Although TransLink spokesperson Drew

Snider previously told the Straight that he doesn't anticipate any further issues with Fire This Time newspaper distribution, Bodine said in a brief interview that they had been approached this morning by transit police.

According to Bodine, an officer informed them that a call would be made to a transit police supervisor.

Bodine also said that a Fire This Time team will be at Metrotown Station this afternoon.

<http://www.straight.com/article-785511/vancouver/fire-time-activists-return-skytrain-stations-after-arrests-handing-out-newspapers>

## Vancouver Sun (Vancouver, Canada)

### Civil liberties advocates again question TransLink police actions after arrests of activists Political activists arrested at SkyTrain station and their newspapers confiscated in latest action

By Yvonne Zacharias, September 25, 2012

TransLink's posted rules allow the distribution of non-commercial information at SkyTrain stations in common areas.

The B.C. Civil Liberties Association has accused TransLink of violating basic free expression rights by arresting a group of political activists outside the Metrotown SkyTrain station and confiscating 150 copies of their publication, which discussed "international political issues."

The activists, part of a group called Fire This Time, were released without charge but they did not get their newspapers back.

TransLink's posted rules and the association's understanding of the free expression rights protected under the Charter of Rights and Freedoms permit the distribution of non-commercial information at SkyTrain stations in common areas.

TransLink police acted because the publication being distributed in this case was deemed to be commercial, said Jason Martin, TransLink's communications manager.

"It had a price on it and there was advertising inside so the belief was in good faith it was

a commercial publication," he said.

This is the latest in a string of conflicts between civil liberties advocates and TransLink police.

Last year, the association expressed concern when a transit police officer removed a woman from the public transit system for wearing a button he found offensive.

In a 2009 case involving the Canadian Federation of Students, the BCCLA intervened in litigation against TransLink's policy of requiring all "political" content to be removed from advertising before it would be approved. Following this intervention, the Supreme Court of Canada ordered TransLink to permit political advertising.

During the 2010 Olympics, the BCCLA and transit police worked together to correct a flyer distributed by transit police suggesting that merchants call police if individuals appeared to be protesters.

"We're disappointed to be writing again to TransLink on an apparent free expression issue," Lindsay Lyster, BCCLA president, said in a news release. She called on TransLink and TransLink police to investigate these allegations, to retrain staff if necessary and to "remind them that

their jobs as public officials are not just to tolerate free expression, but also to facilitate it."

The incident happened Aug. 31. According to its website, Fire This Time is an independent newspaper reflecting the struggles of oppressed people to build a new world.

"It's really difficult to know what is behind it," she said of TransLink police actions. "We at this point only have what the folks who have come to us from Fire This Time tell us. What they tell us is of concern."

Reiterating TransLink policy, Martin said there is no problem if activists are distributing material that is free and doesn't contain advertising as long as they aren't getting in the way of ticket vending machines or the flow of traffic and they aren't posing safety concerns. He couldn't say whether the activists in this case were posing a hazard or impeding traffic. The problem, he said, was the commercial nature of the publication.

<http://www.vancouversun.com/life/Civil+liberties+advocates+again+question+TransLink+police/7298863/story.html>

## **Fire This Time activists assaulted by Transit Police and RCMP**

Written by Redaction AHORA

On August 31, 2012, at Metrotown Skytrain Station near Vancouver, Canada, Transit police officers and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) assaulted, handcuffed and removed three activists that were peacefully distributing the Fire This Time newspaper (FTT).

Because FTT is a non-commercial, free social justice newspaper, the officers had no legal ground to stop the distribution. It is clear that the aim of the assault was to intimidate and harass social justice activists, which is political targeting as FTT publishes many articles against war and in support of social justice struggles in Canada, from Indigenous rights to labour organizing.

The activists were distributing the FTT newspaper without incident at the Metrotown Skytrain Station. After an hour, two transit police officers arrived and immediately began telling the four of them that they needed to leave the station and stop distributing. They showed the officers and read aloud the publicly posted Transit rules available on large boards in every skytrain station. These rules state that, "printed material for non-commercial purposes will be permitted on transit properties, other than transit vehicles or fare-paid zones," provided distribution does not impede transit traffic or operations.

Openly showing no respect for the posted rules and referring to other rules that were not posted, the police justified the arrest with the mere excuse that they had ordered the activists to leave and had been shown no obedience.

Once and again, they used violence to subdue the activists, handcuffing them and even grabbing one of them (Thomas Davies) by the neck. Once and again, the arrested asked: "Why are we being arrested?" "What have we done?" "What laws have we broken?" These questions were never answered. Back-up mounted police arrived, and over three officers were "necessary" to apprehend three peaceful activists who used NO violence at all.

Some video footage was made of the incident with the cell phone of one of the victims, but after the item was grabbed by the police and they were released without charges, the video had been erased from the phone.

The reason why there were no charges was that they had broken no Transit rules and had been targeted because of the political nature of the FTT newspaper.

<http://www.ahora.cu/en/sections/world/more-of-world/5020-fire-this-time-activists-assaulted-by-transit-police-and-rcmp>

## **Liberation News (U.S.)**

### **Canadian activists attacked, arrested while handing out literature Attempt to intimidate social justice organizers**



By Andy Freeman

September 14, 2012

On Aug. 31, at Metrotown Skytrain Station near Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada, transit police officers and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police assaulted, handcuffed and removed three activists who were peacefully handing out the Fire This Time newspaper. This is despite the fact that posted rules clearly state that "printed material for non-commercial purposes will be permitted on transit properties, other than transit vehicles or fare-paid zones," provided distribution does not impede transit traffic or operations.

Thomas Davies, Shakeel Lochan and Mike Larson, who are activists with the Canadian-based social-justice organization Fire This Time, were giving away the FTT newspaper without incident at the Metrotown Skytrain Station. After about an hour, two transit police officers arrived and began telling them that they needed to stop distributing and leave the station. The activists quoted the posted rules and refused to leave. The police insisted that it did not matter what the posted rules were since there were other rules that were not posted. Instead of stating what these other rules were, the police handcuffed the activists, tackling one, Davies, to the ground and applying pressure point controls. Ten police officers were involved in removing the three activists from the station. The three were driven in separate police vehicles to the Burnaby Community Police Station and released without any charges being filed. In addition to confiscating 150 newspapers, the video footage of the incident on Lochan's phone was deleted. All three activists went to the emergency room for medical treatment after the assault. In spite of police efforts to suppress the video record, links to videos of the attack can be found at <http://stopassaultonpoliticalactivists.wordpress.com/>.

The Aug. 31 attack was not an isolated incident. In the preceding four months, activists have been repeatedly harassed but were allowed to continue distributing their newspapers when they pointed out that the transit rules allowed them to distribute the papers at no cost.

It appears the transit authorities are trying to intimidate FTT activists in order to stop them from organizing and distributing social justice-oriented literature at the transit stations. All progressive people should support FTT's right to distribute their newspapers in their struggle for social justice. Down with police harassment! Down with police brutality! Support the right to distribute literature in all public locations!

<http://www.pslweb.org/liberationnews/news/canadian-activists-attacked.html>



By Cheryl LaBash on October 12, 2012

Activists set up the Vancouver Committee to Defend Freedom of Expression to fight back after Transit Police and Royal Canadian Mounted Police assaulted and detained three people distributing the free newspaper, "Fire This Time," at a public transit SkyTrain station last Aug. 31.

Just three weeks later, 20 freedom of speech defenders successfully distributed 1,000 free newspapers at the same station. They called out, "Get your copy of 'Fire This Time' — Vancouver's social justice newspaper" and "Free, independent social justice news!"

"Fire This Time" contains articles opposing war and supporting struggles in Canada from Indigenous rights to labor organizing. Police had harassed distributors for four months leading up to the Aug. 31 assault and detention. Cops issued no citations, but kept the confiscated newspapers. A video of the arrest was erased from a detainee's phone while in police hands.

In an Aug. 28 note, "Fire This Time" Editorial Board member Thomas Davies — one of the three assaulted — thanked Workers World Party for its support and WW newspaper's coverage.

Davies wrote: "We are writing to thank you for the coverage of the recent police assault on the Fire This Time newspaper in your online article, 'Canada rightists persecute activists.' (Sept. 17)

"We appreciate very much this active solidarity, which comes from the very correct understanding that, 'An injury to one is an injury to all.' This is a good example for the leftist and progressive movement.

"We are continuing to build the campaign to defend the rights of all poor and working people through the founding of the Vancouver Committee to Defend Freedom of Expression. You can view the website which includes all of our statements, videos, photos, and other resources at: [www.stoppoliceassault.com](http://www.stoppoliceassault.com)."

<http://www.workers.org/2012/10/12/vancouver-activists-exercise-rights-defy-police-intimidation/>

### Battle of Ideas Press

#### CUBA'S HEALTH CARE SYSTEM WHERE HUMANITY COMES FIRST

BY ELLEN BERNSTEIN

*The unfailing dedication of Cuban health care professionals has led to dramatic improvements in quality of life, for millions of people who previously had no other hope of receiving decent medical care. IFCO/Pastors for Peace is pleased to honor the diligent health care professionals of the Cuban health care system. We especially pay tribute to Cuba's national leadership, whose vision of universal health care as a right of every citizen sets an example for the world."*

Ellen Bernstein has served as Associate Director of the Interreligious Foundation for Community Organization (IFCO) since 2003.

She has been a key staff member of IFCO's project Pastors for Peace, and has been deeply and integrally involved in IFCO's historic work with Cuba.



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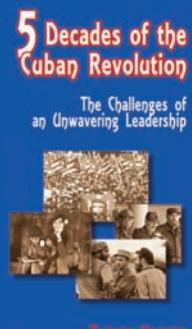
### Battle of Ideas Press

#### 5 Decades of the Cuban Revolution The Challenges of an Unwavering Leadership

By Tamara Hansen

*"The battles Cuba has fought have not been easy. Some were physical battles, such as the battle against bandits in the Escambray Mountains or the Bay of Pigs invasion. However, most were not battles of physical might, but battles of ideas. But with every twist and turn, every up and down Fidel has been one of the first leaders to say, 'this way forward' or 'we made a wrong turn, we must change course.'*

Tamara Hansen is the coordinator of Vancouver Communities in Solidarity with Cuba (VCSC). She is also an editorial board member of The Fire This Time newspaper. She has travelled to Cuba ten times and has written extensively on Cuban politics since 2003.



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By Janine Solanki

Wars, occupations, invasions, interventions, no-fly zones, coup backing, puppet governments... imperialism is devastating the world right now in all the ways that they destroy countries and kill people for the sake of ruling class profit. Against all of this, the antiwar movement must unite to bring an end to this injustice and to fight for a better world. Through action and education, Mobilization Against War & Occupation (MAWO) in Vancouver, Canada is encouraging people to become part of the antiwar movement, and to join the fight for a better world.

#### Street Work

Every month Mobilization Against War & Occupation takes to the streets, with monthly antiwar rally and petition campaigns. On August 18th, people walking by the Vancouver Art Gallery in downtown Vancouver heard appeals of "sign the petition against war and sanctions on Syria!" and "Don't attack Iran! Sign the petition!" Not only is this a chance to take action and publicly protest



against war and occupation, but an opportunity to open the doors for peace-loving people to see what MAWO is organizing, to get information and to get involved! With a setup of banners reading demands like "US/UK/UN/Canada/France/NATO OUT Of the Middle East and North Africa NOW" around informational tables, these events are a hub of antiwar action in the middle of downtown.

#### August 21st Public Forum

From discussions and debates at MAWO's info tables at rally and petition drives on the street, MAWO organizers encourage people to continue the conversation, at MAWO's bi-monthly free public forums. Every second Tuesday, people come into Joe's café in Vancouver, grab a coffee and sit down for an evening of multimedia, speakers

and discussion. These public forums are a chance to discuss the current issues of war and occupation that are confronting poor, working and oppressed people worldwide, and by extension issues for antiwar activists to discuss and act on. On August 21st the topic was "Yemen: Mass Movement, US Drones and Struggle for Change - What is at Stake?" and focused on the movement of Yemeni people against imperialist domination – a struggle largely ignored in mainstream media. After news clips and multimedia from alternative sources which gave a picture of the current

V7N6/FTTV7N6-yemen-yankee-go-home.html The discussion which followed opened for a better understanding of not only what the situation in Yemen is, but also why the mainstream media is not covering Yemen's struggle against colonial domination, while constantly covering the imperialist imposed civil war in Syria with the slant of promoting western backed rebels and mercenaries against the Syrian government.

#### September 4th Public Forum

This discussion continued with the September 4th forum on "Syrian Crisis in the Context of the Middle East: What Imperialists are Pursuing with the Overthrow of the Assad Government". Following the multimedia segment which debunked many of the media fabrications about what the situation in Syria really is,



the speaker for this forum, Ali Yerevani, political editor of the Fire This Time Newspaper and participant of 1979 Iranian revolution, was invited up. Ali Yerevani spoke on why imperialist powers are so interested in overthrowing the government of Syria, on the grander scale of dominating Syria and their next target, Iran, on the path to establishing hegemony in the Middle East. Participants took part in

a discussion following the speaker, in which the point was made that this forum was a launching ground for taking this discussion and debate beyond the forum and to friends, family, and anyone who is misled by the lies and fabrications surrounding Syria.

#### September 25th Forum

As the world situation is bringing new issues to the table, MAWO is quick to bring these issues into a opportunity to discuss and understand them. On September 25th, MAWO held a forum titled "The Imperialist World-Wide Racist Campaign Against Muslims And the Anti-Colonial Awakening of the Masses - How 11 Years After 9/11 the US Lost the 'War on Terrorism'". This forum, through multimedia and the speaker, Ali

Yerevani, expanded on the protests going on throughout Muslim countries in response to a online video mocking and disrespectful to the Muslim faith. While politicians like US President Obama claim the massive reaction of protests are solely about this video, the forum went into the reality, that this video was a final straw upon the weight of decades of humiliation and oppression by the US and imperialist forces, prompting the wide sweeping anti-imperialist mass protests. The discussion centered on both the protests themselves, as well as the wars, occupations, military interventions, foreign backed regimes and sanctions that US powers have imposed upon people in the Middle East for decades.

#### October 5-7 International Days of Action

To be part of an antiwar movement starts in your city, but continues and connects with the broader international struggle against war and occupation. Through internationally coordinated action and cooperation between antiwar groups and activists, we can be a part of building a truly effective and united movement against war. On the 11th anniversary of the occupation of Afghanistan the United National Antiwar Coalition (UNAC) in the U.S. called for International Days of Action against wars at home and abroad from October 5-7. Mobilization Against War and Occupation endorsed this call and on October 6th organized a antiwar rally and petition campaign as part of this initiative. Joining other cities around the world, MAWO hit the streets with petitions, banners, information, and as always a chance for discussion and debate. With a rally in front of the Vancouver Art Gallery, protesters heard a international voice through a phone greeting from Sara Flounders, co-director of the US based International Action Center and Coordinating Committee member for UNAC. MAWO co-chair Janine Solanki spoke on the war drive that has Syria next in its path, escalating to ever more dangerous steps of foreign military intervention. MAWO co-chair Alison Bodine followed to speak on the constant target of US forces – Iran – and the sanctions and threats by the US and their allies, especially Canada who recently closed their embassy in Iran and kicked Iran's diplomatic representatives out of Canada. On the same line as the last forum discussed above, Aaron Mercredi, a MAWO organizer and member of the Indigenous Rights and Action Project, spoke of the racist campaign against Muslims and the recent protests demanding an end to US domination throughout the Middle East. Thomas Davies, editorial board member of the Fire This Time Newspaper, also spoke about the recent assault by Translink police and RCMP against activists distributing the Fire This Time Newspaper, which has prompted the

formation of the Vancouver Committee to Defend Freedom of Expression. To read more about this, see page 7-17 in this newspaper.



#### Join Us

In this snapshot of MAWO's antiwar activities, there are many opportunities to join in, take part in discussions and debates, be a part of organizing against war and occupation, and essentially, join the antiwar movement! To get involved and find out about MAWO's next event visit [www.mawovancouver.org](http://www.mawovancouver.org)

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#### WAR AND OCCUPATION IN AFGHANISTAN

WHICH WAY FORWARD?



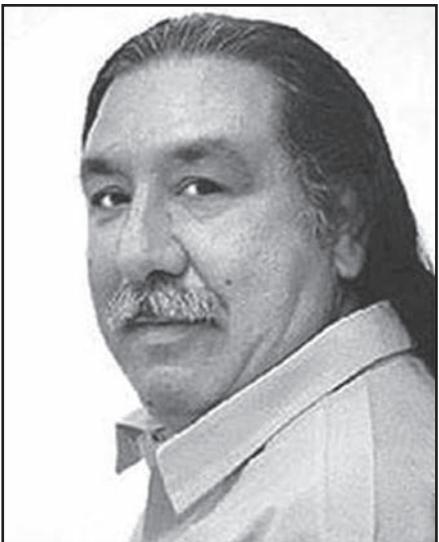
NITA PALMER

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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## POLITICAL PRISONER LEONARD PELTIER'S STATEMENT ON HIS 68TH BIRTHDAY

*Leonard Peltier is an indigenous rights activist held as a political prisoner in U.S. jails for over 36 years. Framed-up for the deaths of two undercover FBI Agents on the Pine Ridge Reservation in 1975, the immense injustice in his case has led to an international campaign demanding his immediate freedom. He is currently incarcerated in the Coleman Federal Correctional Complex in Florida.*

Greetings my relatives and supporters, and we are all truly relatives in one way or another.

First of all I want to thank all of you for remembering me on this day, as many of you probably suspect and some know, that when you are in prison you have a lot of time to reflect and think on how things are, and how they were and perhaps how they should be.

Having said that, I was thinking about how on your birthday the person who really should be celebrated is your mother, for she carried you for 9 months and went through the pain of giving you life. So truly a person's birthday should be another Mother's Day. So if a woman has four children, she should have four Mothers days. All too often people talk about the exploits of men and what they said and what they did, and all too often give no thought to the women who gave them life, the women who supported them, the women who cared for the children while they did what they did, who kept the home fires burning and families fed. There is a certain adrenaline flow that takes place when you are involved in movement activities and trying to make a difference, a satisfaction in doing the right thing and sometimes being successful in righting what's wrong. However, the really true heroes in this are the women who do day after day what needs to be done, and give their children the values they need to stand up for what is right in this world.

Again, I want to thank you, you can't imagine how much it means to a prisoner to be remembered. When a person goes to prison their immediate family, relatives and friends are attentive on some level, but as time goes on, it's almost as if you had died and you are only remembered on certain occasions. There are a multitude of people in prison that they have forgotten about that were movement people, people who stood up for the earth, the animals, nature, water rights, human rights, civil rights, all of those things, and have been forgotten.

They are only remembered by a few.

I am really truly thankful and I have to be thankful to all of the movement people throughout the world who have

recognized the injustice that has been perpetuated against Indigenous people. And I am fortunate that there are those who have found me to be evidence of that injustice because of all of the legal recognition from the courts of the improper proceedings that took place.

My case as many of you well know probably has more recognition of improprieties than most, and I recognize that I am an ordinary man who has been cast into an extraordinary situation, and have served as legal evidence of their wrongdoing.

Forgive me if I am getting too wordy and singing to the choir, but I have probably had too much time to think. I do want to encourage all of you to keep standing up for what is right to keep trying to right what is wrong, and I want you to know there are those who appreciate what you do, and oftentimes you may find yourself the only one standing up.

And more often than not, whether you realized it or not, it was your Mother that directly or indirectly gave you that strength, that woman you should celebrate on your birthday. I encourage all of you to have fun, enjoy your freedom, enjoy your life and have some cake and ice cream, or pemmican, or hotdogs or dog stew for me.

And remember when you stand up, wherever you are, I'll be standing with you even though it's some distant place.

In closing again I want you to enjoy and know that I am thinking of you and appreciative and may the Great Spirit Bless you with all you need and enough to share with others.

I'll close for now, got some thinking to do, Ayee.

In the Spirit of Crazy Horse



# WAR GIVES WAY TO PLUNDER

By Manuel Yepe\*

Resembling the starting shot for any of the recently concluded Olympic competitions, in Washington, the Department of Defense (DOD) announced what can be seen as the starting signal for plunder in the war of the United States against Afghanistan. The DOD informed that U.S. "foreign aid" agencies are now ready to guarantee comprehensive tasks to locate and identify potential deposits of copper, gold, iron and other high value minerals in Afghanistan.

On July 30, the US Armed Forces Press Service released via the Internet that DOD officials and the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) had met at the US Embassy in Afghanistan to reveal what was identified as "a treasure map" of the mineral resources in the Asian nation. At the meeting, the representative of the DOD's Task Force for Business and Stability Operations (TFBSO) shared the rostrum with USGS Director Marcia McNutt, who described the new technology that made possible the study of more than 70% of the country's surface and the identification of potential high-value deposits of copper, gold, iron and other minerals.

Since 2009, TFBSO has been financing USGS works including the operation --with the help of NASA--of an airborne hyperspectral image reproducing instrument that maps on the surface the mother lodes of natural resources under the rough and mountainous geography of Afghanistan. It was explained that "TFBSO is a DOD organization charged with helping to spur and grow the private-sector economy in Afghanistan and clearly, the mineral and oil and gas extractive areas are critical to that effort."

A work by journalist Brandon Turbeville, published on the alternative digital publication Activist Post, explains that such geological mapping of the "hidden" treasure



**Top Photo (Left to Right):** U.S. Assistant Secretary for South and Central Asia, Robert O. Blake, Jr.; Afghan Mining Minister Wahidullah Shahran; Afghan Ambassador to the U.S., Eklil Hakimi; U.S. Special Representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan, Marc Grossman

**Bottom Photo:** U.S. trained Afghan Special Forces in Kabul, Afghanistan

- one of the main reasons for the invasion, occupation and death of so many thousands of people - "opens up the bidding process for private companies who are no doubt salivating as they wait in the wings for their opportunity to gobble up the natural wealth of the impoverished and war-torn nation."

However, according to Turbeville, the term "hidden" is only a matter of perspective because "while the mineral, oil, and gas reserves might have been hidden from the vast majority of the world's population, they were anything but that to the major governments that rule over them."

Evidence of this is in the DOD press release which admits that the US obtained data about the work of a Soviet mission that was "helping" the Afghan government with geological investigations that took place over 10 years in the 1960's.

With the argument that the information obtained from the Soviets is too outdated, the US justified its interest and expressed urgency to obtain new geological information.

Turbeville offers abundant information about the state-of-the-art technology the USGS and other US agencies are using to map the Afghan treasure trove.

He explains that hyperspectral data uses the reflectance of light and is based on the fact that different minerals reflect light in different

wavelength bands. Every mineral has its own signature or fingerprint.

He says that modern hyperspectral instruments "can be used in a place where there's no vegetative cover, and Afghanistan happens to have almost no vegetation and this technology can be applied advantageously to reveal at the surface the mother lode of resources."

As for what has been found, the USGS stated that, "We have identified world-class copper, gold, iron ore and rare earth deposits

that no one knew were there." (Turbeville says the reader would be well-advised to ignore the "that no one knew were there" part of the statement). Positing that the corporations that gather for the feast will have to invest billions of dollars before a single pound of mineral is extracted, Washington --always the arrogant occupier-- imposes conditions on the Afghan government that will burden the country's economy with huge expenditures on roads, power lines and other infrastructural works. At the same time it demands legal, labor and revenue systems to meet the expectations of Western investors.

A CubaNews translation. Edited by Walter Lippmann.

\*Manuel E. Yepe, is a lawyer, economist and journalist. He is a professor at the Higher Institute of International Relations in Havana. He was Cuba's ambassador to Romania, general director of the Prensa Latina agency; vice president of the Cuban Institute of Radio and Television; founder and national director of the Technological Information System (TIPS) of the United Nations Program for Development in Cuba, and secretary of the Cuban Movement for the Peace and Sovereignty of the Peoples.

# OCTOBER 7, PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS IN VENEZUELA

By Merli Vanegas

*Fire This Time asked the Venezuelan Consul General in Vancouver, Merli Vanegas, to discuss the electoral process in Venezuela. The following is her explanation.*

Under the approval of the 1999 Constitution the Venezuela Electoral Power was born, which is to say it is an autonomous organ of the National Government. Previously there was only the Legislative Power, the Executive Power and the Judiciary Power. It is precisely this constitutional status which allowed the transformation of the electoral system in Venezuela.

The new constitution included radical changes. It has participatory democracy as the form of government, the public opinion referendum, approving referendum and recall referendum, so that now in Venezuela electoral participation has taken a real leadership role, with the electoral body in charge of ensuring the constitutional mandate.

To meet the demands of this new participatory democratic model of continuous consultations to the citizens,



## 7 DE OCTUBRE, ELECCIONES PRESIDENCIALES EN VENEZUELA

Por Merli Vanegas

*Fire This Time pidió el Cónsul General de Venezuela en Vancouver, Merli Vanegas, para discutir el proceso electoral en Venezuela. Lo siguiente es su explicación.*

En virtud de la aprobación de la Constitución de 1999 nace en Venezuela el Poder Electoral, es decir es un órgano autónomo del Poder Público Nacional. Anteriormente existía el Poder Legislativo, el Poder Ejecutivo y el Poder Judicial. Es precisamente este rango constitucional lo que ha permitido la transformación del Sistema Electoral en Venezuela.

La nueva Constitución incluyó cambios radicales. Entre estos tenemos la Democracia Participativa como forma de gobierno, los referendos revocatorios, consultivos, aprobatorios, de tal manera que ahora en Venezuela la participación electoral ha cobrado un verdadero rol protagónico y participativo, siendo el Poder Electoral el órgano encargado de garantizar este mandato constitucional.

Para responder a las exigencias de este nuevo modelo democrático participativo y de consulta permanente a los ciudadanos y ciudadanas, fue necesaria la transformación del Sistema Electoral, pasando de un



it was necessary to transform the electoral system, moving from a manual system, discriminatory and often fraudulent, to a new secure system which guarantees the transparency of the electoral processes through the automation of the vote. Incorporating cutting-edge technology we have made the Venezuelan electoral system one of the most secure, reliable, transparent and inclusive in the entire world.

In 1998 we only had 4,899 voting stations across the country and the location of these areas was far from population centers. Caracas, the capital of the Republic is in a valley and is surrounded by mountains and hills where most of the population lives. The distribution of all polling was in the flat areas along the avenues, so the large population living in the hills and in the periphery of the city was excluded from exercising their right to vote.

For 2012 we have 14,493 voting centers and since 1998 there have been around nine million new Venezuelan voter registrations. With these results, we can say with pride that in Venezuela the electoral inclusion and the right to vote is guaranteed.

sistema manual, discriminatorio y muchas veces fraudulento, a un nuevo sistema garante de la seguridad y transparencia de los procesos electorales, a través de la automatización del voto. Con la incorporación de la tecnología de vanguardia hemos logrado que el Sistema Electoral Venezolano sea uno de los más seguros, confiables, transparentes e incluyentes del mundo.

Para 1998 solo contábamos con 4,899 centros de votación en todo el país, la ubicación de los mismos era en zonas lejanas de los centros poblados y en Caracas la capital de la República que es un valle y está rodeada de montañas y cerros donde estaba la mayoría de la población, la distribución de todos los centros electorales era en las zonas planas a los largo de las avenidas, es decir, que esa gran población que vivía en los cerros y en la periferia de la ciudad quedaba excluida de ejercer su derecho al voto.

Para el 2012 se tienen 14.493 centros de votación y desde 1998 se han incorporado cerca de nueve millones de venezolanas y venezolanos al registro electoral. Con estos resultados, podemos expresar con orgullo que en Venezuela si hay inclusión electoral y el derecho al voto esta garantizado.

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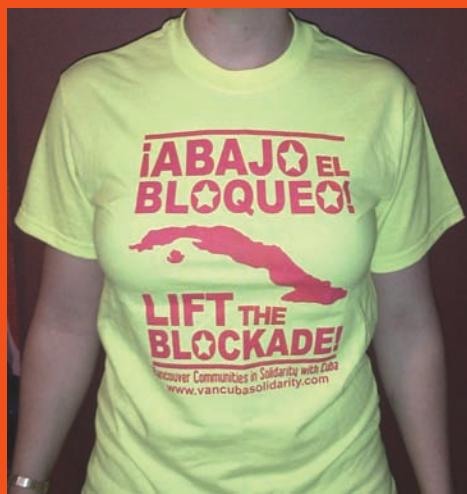


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