

VANCOUVER SUPPORTS PALESTINE:

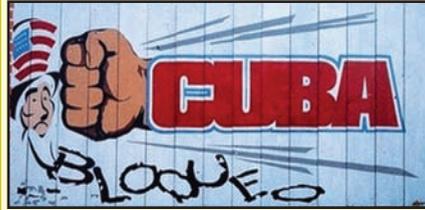
ACTIONS IN DEFENSE OF GAZA

Page 11-12

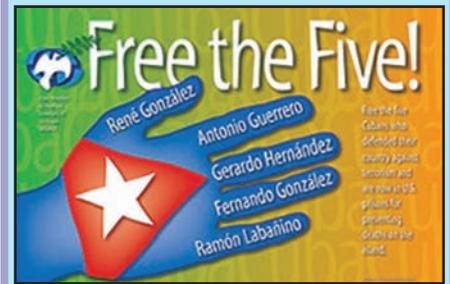
On Wednesday of airstrikes on Gaza. November 14, Israel Israeli Defence Force launched a brutal eight-day campaign (IDF) 1,350 aerial and sea attacks have...

WORLD AGAINST U.S. BLOCKADE OF CUBA

Pages 7 - 10



On November 13, 2012 for the 21st year blockade against Cuba. It was a landslide victory for in a row the United Nations General Assembly condemned the United States Cuba as usual, with resolution achieving 188 votes in favour, 3 against...



THE CASE OF THE CUBAN 5 MUST BE AN ISSUE EVERYWHERE!

Page 23

To know the case of the Cuban 5 is to know the great injustice and brutality that the U.S. government has quietly been carrying out against...

FIRE THIS TIME

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



IMPERIALISTS, HANDS OFF THE MIDDLE EAST & NORTH AFRICA!

page 2



CANADA: SYSTEMATIC & INSTITUTIONALIZED RACISM AGAINST INDIGENOUS PEOPLE

page 5



CANADA'S PROSPERITY IN DEBT

Page 3

Drowning in debt? The good news is that you're in the majority. The bad news is that it's worse than they've been telling everyone. After re-crunching the numbers, the Bank of Canada has announced that the average person in Canada's debt-to-income ratio is not the once dreaded 152%, but a whopping 163.4%.

Don't worry though, the government of Canada recently...



IMPERIALISTS HANDS OFF! REVOLUTION & COUNTER REVOLUTION IN THE MIDDLE EAST & NORTH AFRICA

By Janine Solanki

The following talk was given at a forum held by Mobilization Against War & Occupation (MAWO) on November 13th, 2012. The original talk was 3000 words, which for this article is reduced to 1850.

Iran, Libya and Syria

So looking to Syria, we saw a lot from the videos so I won't go into it too much. But basically, to give a bit of background, on the heels of the uprisings throughout the Middle East and North Africa against U.S.-backed dictatorships, the U.S. government faced setbacks in its consolidation of power in the Middle East and North Africa, and suddenly saw its puppet regimes coming down under the force and will of people who had had enough of these U.S.-backed, tyrannical regimes in their countries. But of course the United States is not going to just sit back and

let this happen. Immediately, the United States government began fomenting their own mass uprisings, but this time using the opportunity to take down the governments that were not yet puppet regimes under the control of the U.S. government. Specifically the governments of Libya, Syrian and Iran, three governments without puppets regimes of the United States, and therefore three governments and three countries in the way and blocking the imperialist drive for hegemony in that region. We saw what this meant for Libya. A so-called protest movement that by all accounts did not look like the ones we saw in Tunisia or Egypt. In Libya, a group of armed men, fighting with military and strategic support from imperialist governments, and then eventually a no-fly zone by NATO, including the U.S. and Canada, which devastated Libya with over 30,000 bombs dropped on the country, and turned a country that once had the highest living standards in all of Africa, now into a

complete chaos.

What's Up in Syria?

Now the focus is on Syria. The media is promoting that these rebels are fighting for freedom against a dictator that is mercilessly killing them. But as we saw in the videos, and as I'll explain a bit more, the facts aren't really adding up to that. For one thing what we are seeing is a civil war, but a civil war where one side, the rebels, are getting military support from other U.S.-backed governments in the region. One of the first reports of this came on June 21st, 2012, when the New York Times reported that "a number of CIA officers in southern Turkey are "helping" allies decide which Syrian opposition fighters across the border will receive arms, with the funding of US allies Turkey, Saudi Arabia and Qatar. These weapons are reported to include automatic rifles, rocket-propelled

grenades, ammunition and some antitank weapons." Since then there has been report after report that these rebels in Syria are being supplied weapons from these three countries through Turkish border, by U.S. allies Turkey, Saudi Arabia and Qatar.

Who are Foreign Mercenaries in Syria?

Also, there is the issue of foreign mercenaries in Syria. Associated Press reported just a short while ago on October 24th, 2012, that "Jabhat al-Nusra is the largest grouping of foreign jihadis in Syria, and the rebels say they number about 300 fighters in Aleppo, as well as branches in neighboring Idlib province, the city of Homs and the capital Damascus." This is just one report, and as they are even saying, of the largest group, not to mention other foreign mercenaries and other foreign forces entering into Syria and fighting against the Syrian government. We can also look to the issue of whose payroll are these so-called rebels on? At an April 1st, 2012 "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. We also saw, in one of the last videos, that now France has stepped up as the first European Union country to call this new grouping or coalition of opposition in Syria the sole legitimate voice of the Syrian opposition. Already reports are saying this will make it easier for governments like France, the United States and Britain to fund and send military forces and military support to the rebels in Syria.

continued on page 16



Protest against war on Syria, Ankara, Turkey
October 5, 2012

Anti-Government Protest, Amman, Jordan
November 16, 2012

CANADA'S PROSPERITY

"IT'S NOT THE FALL THAT KILLS YOU. IT'S THE SUDDEN STOP AT THE END."

IN DEBT

By Thomas Davies

Drowning in debt? The good news is that you're in the majority. The bad news is that it's worse than they've been telling everyone. After re-crunching the numbers, the Bank of Canada has announced that the average person in Canada's debt-to-income ratio is not the once dreaded 152%, but a whopping 163.4%. Don't worry though, the government of Canada recently announced it has created a handy toolkit to guide you back to financial success! It's a good thing that this toolkit is only available online, because it wouldn't be worth the paper it would be printed on. Now, as bankers and politicians take turns advising us to spend more wisely, they conveniently omit the fact that it is their failed economic policies which put the livelihoods of most of the 33.5 million people living in Canada in jeopardy. Even worse? They have absolutely no solution for the crisis.

Life in Debt

"I am concerned about household debt. I do think ultimately this is going to end in tears, because inevitably [interest] rates are going to rise. And when they do rise, I think it is going to be a real shock to people." - Craig Alexander, chief economist at Toronto-Dominion Bank, Canada's second-largest lender.

Your debt-to-income ratio is the percentage of your total debt (mortgages, loans, credit cards, line of credit) in relation to your annual after tax pay. Right now, you basically owe a dollar and sixty three cents for every dollar you put in your wallet. It's right out of the upside down world of Alice in Wonderland. What sense is it that you work but you basically earn in the negative? Unfortunately, in this case it's not just an absurd dream.

According to credit reporting agency Trans-Union, in the past five years alone debt loads have increased 400% more than the rate of inflation in Canada. Are we really to believe that people in Canada have become that much more irresponsible in their spending in the past 5 years?

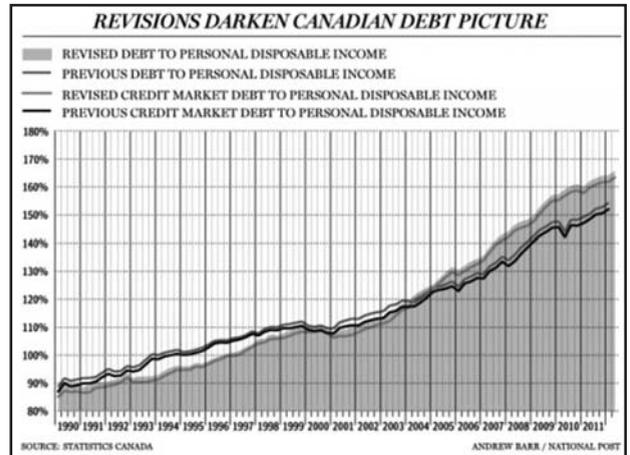
No Accident

What is to be expected? Statistics Canada reports that there are six unemployed people looking for work for every job available in Canada. You don't need statistics to tell you that the grocery store doesn't stop charging when you're unemployed or under employed, and that the landlord won't accept payment in "please and thankyou's". It's for these reasons that there are more than two credit cards for every person living in Canada today.

According to researcher Dr. Paul Kershaw, since the mid 1970's, a young couple in Canada's combined income has increased only half a percent, despite the fact that 32% more women are working and contributing to that combined income. In that same time, housing prices have increased 76%. Basically we work more and can afford less.

At the same time, rising student debt levels became a growing and disturbing phenomenon. The Financial Post reported recently on a study which found that it costs approximately \$80,000 to earn a university degree, when you include tuition fees, living expenses, and the interest on student loans. It also found that it takes on average take 14 years to pay back a student loan. The Canadian Federation of Students reports that student loan debt in Canada is almost

\$15 billion, and this includes only money owed for Canada Student Loans and ex-



cludes debt to provincial or private loans

Before the Fall

People living in debt is not new to Canada, but it really boiled over in 2008 with the World Financial Collapse. In the United States, where the debt-to-income ratio was almost exactly what it is today in Canada, the collapse was catastrophic. To try and avoid a similar chaos and stimulate the

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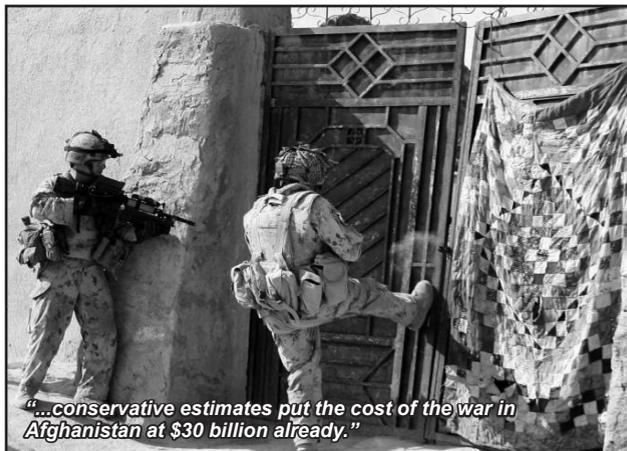
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economy in Canada, the Bank of Canada slashed interest rates to 0.5% before settling at the still unheard to rate of 1%.

The idea is simple – encourage and allow people to borrow more and more to pay for things they can no longer really afford. It keeps the economy moving in the short term, but in the long term eventually people will be spending their money repaying their debts instead of buying new things and we are back to square one. There is also always



"Just before 11:19pm Eastern Time on Saturday, November 24th, the national debt of the Canadian government surpassed \$600 billion."



"...conservative estimates put the cost of the war in Afghanistan at \$30 billion already."

the real possibility that people will be unable to ever pay the loans, and the banks will be stuck with billions in bad debt like in the United States.

For now the Bank of Canada is forced to keep interest rates at the artificially low level of 1% or risk a further financial collapse, but for how long will they be able to do this? Even a slight increase in interest rates would have catastrophic consequences for the millions of people in Canada who have taken on huge debts as a means to survive the current economic crisis.

As economist Ben Rabidoux wrote during a Globe and Mail newspaper debate on Canada's debt crisis, "There's a saying that perhaps illustrates my concerns with current debt levels in Canada and the pace of debt accumulation over the past decade: 'It's not the fall that kills you. It's the sudden stop at the end.'"

Bad Example

Just before 11:19pm Eastern Time on Saturday, November 24th, the national debt of the Canadian government surpassed \$600

billion. Running a deficit is a common and sometimes necessary governmental practice, but \$600 billion from a government which tells us we are the ones who need to be more responsible? At the current rate, Canada's national debt is rising by \$74.6 million a day.

It's a myth that the Canadian government didn't bail out big banks and big businesses while the majority of people have suffered more since 2008. According to a report by the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives (CCPA), financial support for Canadian banks from various government agencies reached \$114 billion at its peak. "At some point during the crisis, three of Canada's banks — CIBC, BMO, and Scotiabank — were completely under water, with government support exceeding the market value of the company," said CCPA senior economist David Macdonald.

A simple reminder: the money the government of Canada used to bail out the banks didn't come out of Stephen Harper's pockets – it came out of the taxes paid by same people who are today struggling with huge debt loads across Canada, or from money the government of Canada is promising people will pay through future taxes.

Another simple reminder: Canada is the

14th largest military spender in the world, and currently military spending is higher than it has been at any time since the end of the Second World War. The government has withheld information about the real costs of the wars and occupations it has waged across the world over the past decade, but conservative estimates put the cost of the war in Afghanistan at \$30 billion already.

Us Vs. Them

In the same Globe and Mail debate as Ben Rabidoux, Eric Lascelles, chief economist at RBC Global Asset Management, had these encouraging words for people worried about their rising debt, "Strictly speaking, Canadians have not actually become more indebted on a net basis: after all, one person's debt is another's savings." This is the way the government and the bankers think and they act – completely heartless to the realities of a world where the rich are getting richer and the poor are getting poorer. It's also economically stupid – bankers in the United States said the same thing before their huge crash in 2008 when people simply couldn't pay the huge debts they accumulated.

CCPA senior economist Armine Yalnizyan pointed out that new hires in Canada today make 40% less than the average worker, and "there are still 1.4 million people looking for work -- a number that is about 25 per cent higher than before the crisis started, and not steadily declining."

Can We Survive?

It's simple. If we can't earn enough to live, a financial toolkit is more of an insult than a solution. The current crisis is bigger than individual consumer decisions. It's based on government decisions to prioritize the rich over poor and working people, and to prioritize war and occupation ahead of jobs and education. They created the crisis, and now they want us to pay for it. A U.S.-style financial meltdown is completely possible.

It was not long ago when students in Quebec mobilized huge strikes which were eventually successful in overturning tuition free increases and new laws which violated civil and democratic rights. Quebec students didn't accept the so-called "bitter financial realities" forced on them by the government, and neither should we. They mobilized and called for unity with all poor and working people, and so should we. This is real way to confront the debt crisis in Canada.

Canada's Systematic Racism & the Rough Road Forward for Native People

By Aaron Mercredi

Stephen Harper, the Prime Minister of Canada is having a hard time convincing Native people in this country that things are improving. In last issue of *Fire This Time*, I wrote about how the Conservative government has not only failed in its relationship with Indigenous people in Canada two years since he held his theatre of an apology for their treatment in Canada's residential schools, but that the general conditions for Indigenous people have deteriorated even more. Over the last few months, more incidents and facts have been made public that have shown that not only is there statistically a worsening situation for Native people in Canada, but this country's institutions have proven to be undeserving of Indigenous people's trust and respect.

Racist Police

A recent incident involving the Thunder Bay Police has reminded us once again of the deep systemic racism against Indigenous people, and the inability of state institutions, like the police, to address them.

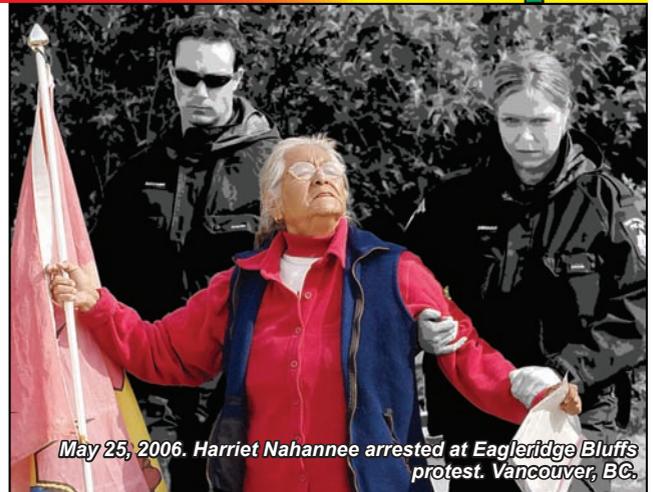
On August 29th in Thunder Bay, Ontario, a 65-year old Native man, Adam Yellowhead, was found dead, murdered in a known drinking spot. After the suspected killer was later arrested, the lead investigator for the Thunder Bay Police Service wrote a fake press release, which he had intended to circulate among the police force, but accidentally sent out to the media. The investigating officer titled the press release as "Fresh Breath Killer Captured!!!" This was followed by the word 'SCPOE', a misspelling of the word SCOPE, a brand of mouthwash. The whole document was an obvious reference to the racist stereotype of Native people drinking mouthwash in order to get drunk. After the damage had been done, the officer retracted the press release and sent out a corrected one. When questions were raised by the family, Indigenous organizations and concerned community members, the police announced that it had launched an internal investigation in the matter, but did not find that racism was involved. The Mayor of Thunder Bay joined the discourse by defending the police force. An ex-police officer himself and current member of the Police Service's Board,

Mayor Keith Hobbs told CBC News that the media was "making something out of nothing," dismissing the incident as "a joke between detectives, it should have stayed in house. It has nothing to do with race." Apparently to him, the racist actions and behaviour of members of the Thunder Bay Police are OK as long as they stay 'in house'!

Racist System

A family already devastated by the murder of a loved one was left with the humiliation that the police publicly reduced his life to a mouthwash-drinking nobody. Facing nothing but denial from the Thunder Bay Police and the city's mayor, the Eabametoong, Nibinamik, and Namaygoosisagagun First Nations from northwestern Ontario launched a human rights complaint against the Thunder Bay Police as well as the Mayor of Thunder Bay for their treatment of this extremely sensitive and damaging situation. The complaint, supported by Nishnawbe Aski Nation (NAN) and other First Nation organizations, is seeking change in the Thunder Bay Police force. The mayor now refuses to comment and the Thunder Bay Police have expressed that they are "disappointed and discouraged" by this human rights complaint. While the Thunder Bay Police Force is now dealing with this public relations issue, there are bigger questions facing the Native population of that city. How can they expect fair treatment, or even help, from the Thunder Bay police when they are dehumanized by them in public, or even 'in house'?

Alarming, this treatment is not limited to just the Thunder Bay Police Force. In fact, looking across the country, the unfair treatment and outright abuse of Native people by the various police forces is the norm. Some higher profile cases have brought this to light. In 1990, Neil Stonechild, a 17-year old Cree teenager was beaten and dumped on the outskirts of Saskatoon where he froze to death in the -28°C winter night. The truth surfaced



only after another Native man survived the ordeal and went public about these "Starlight Tours", as the police referred to them, that had been targeting Native men for a number of years. There is also the case of Frank Paul, the Miqmaq man who was dumped by members of the Vancouver Police Department, unconscious and in his wet clothes, in an East Vancouver alley where he froze to death in 1998. Dudley George, an unarmed Ojibwa activist was gunned down in a raid by the Ontario Provincial Police during a standoff at the former Ipperwash Provincial Park in 1995. But, we have to ask: how many acts like this are taking place across the country that don't get investigated or leaked?

Who is Violating Whose Rights?

This gross violation of Indigenous people's dignity and trust is nothing new. Dehumanizing Native people to the level of savages was one of the ways European colonizers, and then Canada, made acceptable their wars, displacement and genocide of Native people throughout this land's history. To reduce a race of people to a sub-human level makes it more palatable for mainstream society to accept their treatment. So goes the story of Canada, its reservations and its residential schools and Native people have suffered in every chapter. Today, Canada's colonial policy of taking the land and resources from Native people continues, and so do the racist institutions working against them.

Native women: Marginalized

The consequences of the legacy of

continued on page 6

continued from page 5

mistreatment are clearly shown in a recent report commissioned by Canada's Public Safety Department. The 62-page report, 'Marginalized', put together by the Wesley Group, has found that the swelling ranks of Indigenous women in the federal prison system are 'nothing short of a crisis.' The report outlines the bleak picture facing the many Indigenous women in the federal correctional system. According to the report, over the last ten years, the represen-



2010. Children Protest in Attawapiskat

tation of Aboriginal women in the prison system has increased by nearly 90 per cent, making them the fastest growing offender group. While Indigenous people account for just four per cent of the population in Canada, one in three women in the federal correctional system is Aboriginal. The report references the root causes of the high levels of dysfunction among Native women to the history of colonization and the damaging effects of the residential school system, and the current 'oppressive government policies and laws,' exploitation, violence and racism.

While the report declares that 'aggressive action must be taken now,' it doesn't show much faith in Stephen Harper. It states that the Conservative government's agenda of stiffer sentences and harsher measures for prisoners "will only serve to further increase the numbers (of imprisoned aboriginal women) and worsen the already staggering injustice experienced by aboriginal peoples as a whole." It further states that "...it is highly unlikely that the issues of such a marginalized population will receive the attention and resources necessary to even begin to address the multitude of issues... Furthermore, given the political climate of late there is no indication that effective change for aboriginal women in corrections will occur any time soon."

So, once again, Canada is failing Native women. Not only has it let the

disappearance and murders of more than 600 Native women in this country go without a proper investigation, but it doesn't seem bothered by the fact that its prisons are filling up with them!

Canada, A Colonial State

At the heart of the issue is Canada's colonial nature which has not changed since Canada's founding. As long as Canada continues its policy of aggression against Native people by taking their lands and resources, and denying their self-determination, we are going to continue to see Native people pushed to the fringes, under-represented in society, and over-represented in Canada's prisons and institutions. The systemic racism that Native people face in dealing with police, the legal system, and every institution in Canada is unacceptable for anyone, let alone a people who maintained a civilization for thousands of years before immigrants came to this land. It is Canada's shame and a responsibility of anyone fighting for social justice on this land to take on to change.

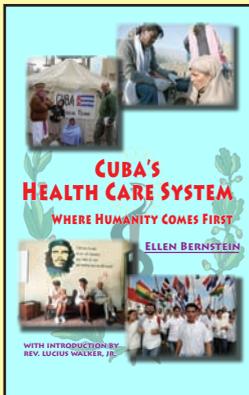
Battle of Ideas Press

CUBA'S HEALTH CARE SYSTEM WHERE HUMANITY COMES FIRST

BY ELLEN BERNSTEIN

"The unflinching 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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Political Editor:

Ali Yerevani - editorfft@mail.com

Editorial Board:

Tamara Hansen, Aaron Mercredi, Alison Bodine, Nita Palmer, Janine Solanki, Thomas Davies, Ali Yerevani
editorialboardfft@mail.com

Layout & Design:

Janine Solanki, Thomas Davies, Noah Fine & Ali Yerevani

Copy Editors:

Tamara Hansen, Nita Palmer & Aaron Mercredi

Publicity & Distribution Coordinator:

Thomas Davies

Production Managers:

Janine Solanki, Thomas Davies

Contributors to this Issue:

Manuel Yepe, Sarah Alwell, Noah Fine, Azza Rojbi, Sanam Soltanzadeh, Max Tennant & Payvand Pejvack

Contact:

Phone - (604) 322-1764 Fax - (604) 322-1763

Email - infofft@mail.com

Mail - PO Box 21607 Vancouver BC, V5L 5G3

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Distribution

For Fire This Time in your area across BC, Canada, and Internationally contact Publicity and Distribution Coordinator Thomas Davies

Phone : (778) 889-7664 Email : distrofft@mail.com

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Next Prints:

Volume 7 Issue 9, December 10, 2012
Volume 7 Issue 10, December 28, 2012

WORLD DEMANDS END TO CRUEL, INHUMANE U.S. BLOCKADE AGAINST CUBA!

YES 188 NO 3 ABSTAIN 2



By Tamara Hansen

On November 13, 2012 for the 21st year in a row the United Nations General Assembly condemned the United States blockade against Cuba. It was a landslide victory for Cuba as usual, with resolution achieving 188 votes in favour, 3 against (the United States, Israel and Palau) and only 2 abstentions (Marshall Islands and Micronesia). This resolution annually calls on the United States government to end its over 50 years of immoral blockade against Cuba.

The United States blockade prevents Cuba from importing and exporting many products, goods and medicines to and from the US. It also prevents Cuba from trading with other countries due to extraterritorial measures which state that for example if any product has a component that makes up 10% of its whole made in the US it is illegal (according to US law) that that company trade that product with Cuba. For over 50 years now, the US blockade has stopped Cuba from acquiring many necessities from medicines, to text books, to building supplies and many other items. This policy was meant to crush Cuba's economy and while the effects of the blockade on the people of Cuba have been severe, people have refused to bow down to the US government and its attacks on Cuba's dignity and sovereignty.

In his "Explanation of Vote" on the Cuba Resolution, Ambassador Mr. Ronald Godard, US Senior Area Advisor for Western Hemisphere Affairs made the US government's case for keeping the blockade: "Cuba's resolution seeks to identify an external scapegoat for the island's economic problems, when they are principally caused by the economic policies that the Cuban government has pursued for the past half century. [...] Irrespective of U.S. policy, it is unrealistic to expect the Cuban economy to thrive until the Cuban government opens state monopolies to private competition, fully empowers Cuban entrepreneurs, respects intellectual property rights, allows unfettered access to

the Internet, and adopts the sound macro-economic policies that have contributed to the economic success of many of Cuba's neighboring countries in Latin America." One need only look to Cuba's closest neighbours – Haiti, the Dominican Republic and Jamaica to see what the US government regards as "success".

However, if we look at the United Nations own "Human Development Index" Cuba is ahead. The Human Development Index rates countries of the world based on different indicators of Human Development such as: GDP per capita, poverty rate, life expectancy, carbon dioxide emissions per capita, adult literacy rate, expenditures on public health & public education, education levels, poverty, female-male ratios in parliament, and infant mortality & under-five mortality rate. Cuba sits at 51st country in the world, while its neighbour Haiti is 158th, the Dominican Republic is 98th and Jamaica is 80th. Even Brazil, one of the economically mighty BRICS countries sits at 85th place in the world. What does economic success mean if Human Development is low? It depends on which side of the fence you sit.

What "fence" are we speaking of? Cuba likes to call it "the Battle of Ideas". By this, Cuba means the battle between two opposing views for the future of humanity; one is based on economy and profit before people and the other is based on putting people and human development before economy and profit. This alternative future and example that Cuba is demonstrating is one of the reasons the US government has been trying to use its blockade to destroy the Cuban revolution. So far they have not been successful; however Cubans have paid a deep and daily price. It is time for the US to end this unjust policy against the Cuban people and their government. Below and the next four pages is the case made in

favor of the resolution to end the blockade by Cuba's Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mr. Bruno Rodríguez Parrilla.

Battle of Ideas Press

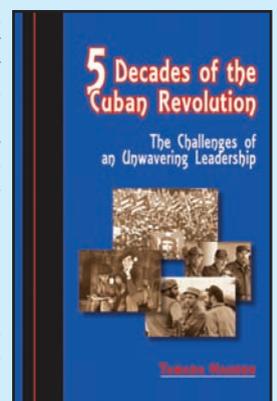
5 Decades of the Cuban Revolution *The Challenges of an Unwavering Leadership*

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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THE CASE AGAINST THE U.S. BLOCKADE OF CUBA

SPEECH BY BRUNO RODRÍGUEZ, CUBAN AMBASSADOR TO THE U.N.

Statement by H.E. Mr. Bruno Rodríguez Parrilla, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Cuba, at the United Nations General Assembly on item 41: "Necessity of ending the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States of America against Cuba".

New York, November 13, 2012

Mr. President;

On April 6, 1960, Under-Secretary of State Lester D. Mallory wrote the most concise, accurate and longest-lasting definition of the blockade against Cuba, and I quote: "to cause disenchantment and disaffection based on economic dissatisfaction and hardship [...] to weaken the economic life of Cuba [...] denying money and supplies [...] to decrease monetary and real wages, to bring about hunger, desperation and overthrow of government."

So far this has been the vision that has embodied the inhumane, failed and anachronistic policy of eleven successive US governments under which 76 per cent of Cubans have been born. Our country has never been at war with or carried out any hostile action against the United States. It has never consented to the perpetration of terrorist actions against the American people.

In 2008, presidential candidate Obama electrified Americans with his energy, his origins and his words "Yes we can". Three months later, after been elected President, he announced "a new beginning with Cuba" and said, and I quote: "We can move US-Cuba relations in a new direction and launch a new chapter of engagement that will be sustained throughout my administration", end of quote.

However, the reality of the last four years has been characterized by a persistent tightening of the economic, commercial and financial blockade, particularly its extraterritorial dimension, despite the fact that this Assembly has approved by a consistent and overwhelming majority, twenty consecutive resolutions that call for an end to this policy.

Keeping this policy in force is not in the national interest of the United States. Quite on the contrary, it harms the interests of its

citizens and companies -especially in times of economic crisis and high unemployment- which, according to every poll, are demanding a change of policy. What's the point of encroaching on the constitutional and civil rights and the freedom of travel of Americans by preventing them from visiting the Island when they can visit any other place in the planet, including those where their country is waging wars?

What's the point of renouncing to a market of 11 million people? What's the point of continuing to waste hundreds of millions of dollars from the taxes that are paid by US citizens in the useless and illegal subversion against Cuba? What's the use of harming Cuba's relations with other States -including its allies- with extraterritorial measures that violate international law? What's the point in resorting to an approach that is opposite to the one that encourages its increasing economic relations with States with a different political system?

The blockade also harms the legitimate interests of and discriminates against the Cuban emigration that has settled here in this country, which overwhelmingly favors the normalization of relations with their home country. It harms the credibility of the foreign policy of the United States and leads to its isolation. It makes the US to adopt costly double standards. After fifty years it has proven to be ineffective in the pursuance of the goals it envisaged and it has been and insurmountable obstacle in its ever more uncomfortable relation with Latin America and the Caribbean. Should the blockade cease, the US government will avoid greater discredit of its humanitarian policies, since it will stop being a consistent violator of the human rights of Cubans.

The US could refrain from including our country in spurious lists such as the one that classifies it as a sponsor of

terrorism, with the only purpose of justifying the implementation of additional measures against financial transactions, thus causing great damage to the effectiveness and credibility of the international combat against that terrible scourge.

There is no legitimate or moral reason to maintain this blockade that is anchored in the Cold War. It is just a weapon in the hands of an ever more exiguous, isolated, violent and arrogant minority that profiteers from the elections, shows contempt towards the call of the majority and does not resign itself to the unshakable determination of Cubans to decide upon their own destiny.

Mr. President;

The use of a less strident and threatening rhetoric and certain partial measures to relax the travel restrictions on the residents of Cuban origin and others for academic, scientific or cultural purposes have failed to conceal the tightening of the blockade during the last four years.

The report of the Secretary-General, which includes the contributions of a significant number of delegations and agencies present here, broadly documents the multiple and diverse damages caused not only to my country but also to many of the governments represented here.

In November, 2011, the Treasury Department fined the New York branch office of the German bank Commerzbank with 175 500 dollars for serving as consultant and guarantor



of a Cuban national in some payment to be made to a Canadian company.

In June, 2012, the Department of Justice announced the imposition of a 619 million dollar fine on the Dutch bank ING for alleged violations of the regime of sanctions against Cuba and other countries. This was the highest fine ever imposed on a foreign bank.

In referring to this unheard-of event, Mr. Adam Szubin, director of the Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) of the Treasury Department, using a menacing tone, expressed, and I quote: "Our sanctions laws reflect core U.S. national security and foreign policy interests and OFAC polices them aggressively. Today's historic settlement should serve as a clear warning to anyone who would consider profiting by evading U.S. sanctions", end of quote.

During President Obama's administration, the fines imposed have amounted to 2 billion 259 732 dollars, a total that is twice as much the amount accounted for the fines imposed under both terms of the George W. Bush administration.

The implementation of the blockade has gone beyond all conceivable limits. In December, 2011, the Hilton Hotel of Trinidad and Tobago, a property of that country that operates under a management contract with that hotel group, received categorical orders from OFAC to prevent the celebration of the Fourth Summit of Heads of State and Government of CARICOM countries and Cuba in its premises, which became a real scandal and a disrespectful act towards all Caribbean nations and the international community.

In July, 2012, two executives from the French branch office of the travel agency Carlson Wagonlit Travel (CWT) were fired for selling tourist packages destined for the Island. The company runs the risk of being fined with 38 000 dollars for every trip sold.

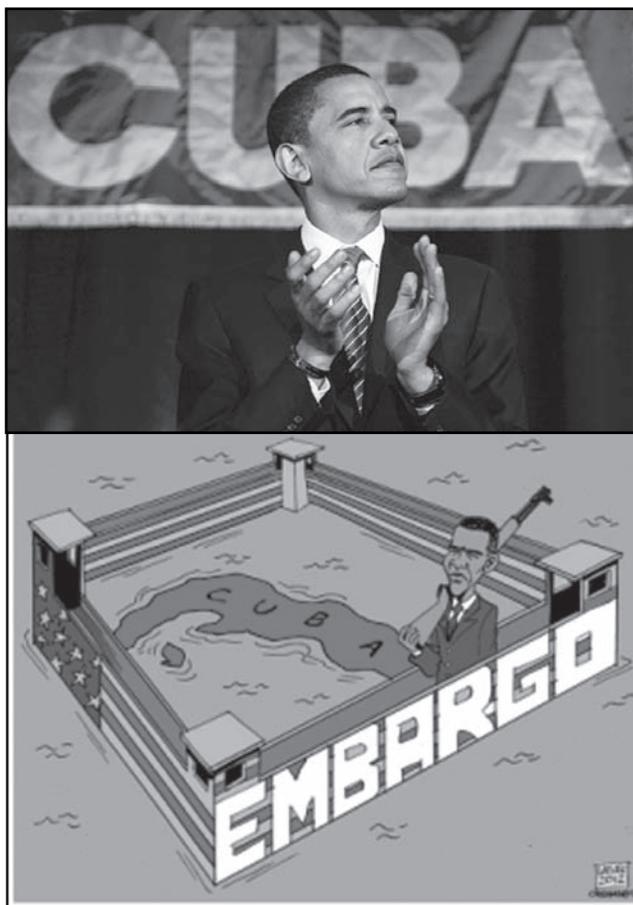
On May 10, 2012, less than one year after the first and very limited licenses were granted to allow US citizens' travels "with educational purposes and for the people-to-people exchanges", the Treasury Department prohibited the sight-seeing trips around recreational places, the financial transactions involving tourist activities and established new and stricter measures to make sure that all itinerary and programs were in tune with the policy against Cuba. At the same time, it was announced that the violation of these restrictions would be punished with 65 000

dollar fines and the suspension of licenses.

Mr. President;

The human damage caused by the blockade is huge and impossible to calculate. It causes hardships, shortages and difficulties that affect every family, every boy and girl, every man and woman, the handicapped, the senior citizens and the ill.

The Pediatric Cardio-Center "William Soler" has no access to the medicine Levosimendan that is used to treat heart problems associated to the cardiac output in small children. The hospital is unable to use this medicine; its supply has been denied because it is manufactured by the Abbott laboratories.



The cardiovascular surgery service of that same hospital assists between one hundred and one hundred and ten children below the age of one every year. More than ninety per cent of those cases require parenteral nutrition before undergoing surgery for a better prognosis. Our nation has no access to the food supplements to be administered parenterally that are manufactured here in this country, which are recognized to be among the most effective and of highest quality.

The impossibility to purchase laminar tissue for tissue expanders—that are used to perform skin transplants— and the need to purchase

them in faraway markets at a higher price complicates and prolongs the treatment of boys and girls suffering from severe burns, with the consequent increase in the time of surgery and the hospital stay of these patients.

The pacemaker and electrophysiology service of the Cardiology and Cardiovascular Surgery Institute does not have the non-fluoroscopic three-dimensional mapping equipment that is used to analyze the points of arrhythmia in the human heart because of the withdrawal of the US firm Saint Jude. That prevents the performance of catheterizations and other treatments to cure complex arrhythmias. Consequently, we are forced to send these patients to third countries so that they could receive their treatment.

In the evening of November 6, President Obama referred to the cure of the eight year old girl Erin Catherine Potter who suffers from leukemia and lives in Mentor, Ohio. On October 28, 2009, we explained in this room that the Cuban children who also suffer from lymphoblastic leukemia and reject the usual medicines can not be treated with the medicine 'Elspar', created to treat patients who develop intolerance, because its sale to Cuba by the firm Merck and Co. is prohibited. Those children also deserve compassion and relief.

On October 25, 2012, we also denounced in this same room that our ophthalmologic services can not use the Transpupillary Thermotherapy to cure the cancer of the retina (retinoblastoma) thus making it possible for children to preserve the affected eye. Since that date, fifteen children like Lianna Aguilera Feria, one year old; María Sánchez Rosales and Rochely Mendoza Rabelo, two years old; Erika Rodríguez Villavicencio, Fidel Valdés Márquez, Giovanna Álvarez Torrens and Magdiel Leyva Suárez, three years old, have suffered that loss because the US government prevents the purchase of the necessary medical

equipment from the US company Iris Medical Instruments.

Given its express purpose and direct effects, the blockade against Cuba qualifies as an act of genocide according to Article 2 (b) and (c) of the Geneva Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide of 1948. It is a mass, flagrant and systematic violation of the human rights of an entire people.

We strongly oppose the unilateral coercive measures and the economic sanctions that

continued on page 10

only cause harm to human beings. As was expressed by the leader of the Revolution in this very podium, "we want a world free from hegemonies, nuclear weapons, interventions, racism, national or religious hatred, where there is no outrage upon the sovereignty of any country, where there is respect for the independence and free determination of peoples, a world free from universal models that fully disregard the traditions and culture of all the components of humankind; free from cruel blockades that kill men, women, children, youths and senior citizens like silent atom bombs."

Mr. President;

As was stated by the Secretary General's report, the economic damages accumulated for more than fifty years until 2011 amount to one trillion six billion dollars - more than one trillion dollars- according to a rigorous and conservative calculation based on the devaluation of the dollar vis-à-vis the price of gold.

Any sensible person could figure out the living standards and development levels that we could have achieved if we had had those resources available.

The blockade is one of the main causes of the economic problems of our country and a major obstacle to its economic and social development. It violates International Law; it is contrary to the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter and a violation of the right to peace and security of a sovereign State. It is an act of aggression, a permanent threat against the stability of a country. It is also a gross violation of the rules that govern international trade, freedom of navigation and the sovereign rights of States because of its extraterritorial character.

Since the blockade is a unilateral policy, it should be lifted unilaterally.

Mr. President;

The US people, towards which Cuba has feelings of friendship and respect, have just reelected President Barack Obama. During the electoral campaign, he repeated dozens of times that he continues to be the "President for a change" and that "he will continue to move ahead."

President Obama has the opportunity to start

a new policy towards Cuba, different from the one implemented by his ten predecessors for more than half a century.

It will surely be a difficult task and maybe he would face serious obstacles, but the President still has the constitutional powers that would enable him to listen to the public opinion and generate the necessary dynamics, by means of executive decisions, even without the approval of the Congress. There is no doubt that this would be a historical legacy.

He would make a serious miscalculation and

Cuba's exclusion from the arbitrary and illegal list of terrorism-sponsoring countries; the abrogation of the Cuban Adjustment Act and the wet foot/dry foot policy; the compensation for economic and human damages; the return of the territory occupied by the Guantánamo Naval Base; the end to the radio and TV aggressions and the ceasing of the financing of internal subversion.

An essential element in this agenda is the release of the Five Cuban anti-terrorists who remain cruelly and unjustly imprisoned or retained in this country. An act of justice, or at least a humanitarian solution, will arouse the gratitude of my people and a response by our Government.

I likewise offer here and now the US government to negotiate several cooperation agreements in the areas of greatest mutual interest, such as the combat of drug trafficking, terrorism, human smuggling and for the full normalization of migratory relations, as well as for the prevention and mitigation of natural disasters and the protection of the environment and our common seas. We also propose to resume the talks that were unilaterally suspended by our counterpart about migration issues and for the resumption of postal services.

Excellencies;

Delegates;

Whatever the circumstances, our people shall defend, no matter the cost, its achievements; it will uphold its ideals;

it will recover from the natural catastrophes such as the one that lashed Santiago de Cuba and the eastern and central provinces a few days ago, and will resolutely continue to update and develop our socialism "with all and for the wellbeing of all."

On behalf of this heroic people, its children, its women and the elderly I ask all governments committed to the principles enshrined by the UN Charter and International Law, the norms of the multilateral trading system, freedom of trade and navigation and the refusal to the extraterritorial implementation of a national law, to vote once again in favor of the draft resolution contained in document A/67/L.2 entitled "Necessity of ending the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States of America against Cuba."

Thank you, very much.



will make things all the more difficult in the future if he decides to wait for a new generation of Cuban leaders or for the impossible collapse of our economy. This option will make him go down in history as the eleventh president that makes the same mistake.

I reiterate, on behalf of President Raúl Castro Ruz, the firm willingness on the part of the Cuban government to move on towards the normalization of relations with the United States through a respectful dialogue, without preconditions, on the basis of reciprocity and sovereign equality, without undermining in the least our independence and sovereignty.

Today, here and now, I am again submitting to the US government a draft agenda for a bilateral dialogue aimed at moving towards the normalization of relations which includes, as fundamental topics, the lifting of the economic, commercial and financial blockade;

VANCOUVER RESPONDS STRONGLY TO ISRAEL'S CRIMINAL WAR ON GAZA

By Azza Rojbi

On Wednesday November 14, Israel launched a brutal eight-day campaign of airstrikes on Gaza. According to the Israeli Defence Force (IDF) 1,350 aerial and sea attacks have been launched against Gaza. This criminal and vicious bombardment was responsible for killing over 168 Palestinians and wounding over 1200, many of whom were children. In addition to the loss of innocent Palestinian lives, this assault on Gaza has resulted in the destruction of buildings and infrastructure. According to Hamas spokesman Taher al-Nunu, it has caused at least \$1.2 billion in economic damage. A total of 200 homes were completely destroyed and another 8,000 damaged. The attack also destroyed 42 non-residential buildings, including government buildings, three mosques and a health care center.

This attack is part of an ongoing blockade and siege of the Gaza Strip. This constant hardship has included the 2008-2009 Israeli siege, which saw the indiscriminate massacre of 1400 Palestinians, including at least 300 children. Despite this, the heroic Palestinian people have continued their resistance to the Israeli occupation of their land, and continue today to fight and assert their right to the self-determination of Palestine.

The Prime Minister of Canada Stephen Harper had some strong words in response to the situation, of course not to condemn the brutal killing of Palestinians but in full support of the Israeli Zionist regime. Harper said on Friday November 16th "We recognize and support Israel's right to defend itself against such terrorist attacks..."

Meanwhile the Canadian government attempts to justify these war crimes, chants of "Hey Harper you will see, Palestine will be free" and "Stop the siege on Gaza now" were heard in Vancouver, as peace-loving people gathered in front of the Downtown Public Library on Saturday November 17th. This rally and petition drive, organized by Mobilization Against War and Occupation (MAWO), was one of many demonstrations that have erupted in hundreds of cities around the world demanding an end to the Israeli attacks on Gaza.

With banners reflecting these demands, picket signs and informational tables



Vancouver Rally for Gaza November 18, 2012



Vancouver Rally for Gaza November 18, 2012

this protest drew the attention of people walking by on a busy Saturday afternoon, many of whom stopped by the tables to get more information and voice their support to the Palestinian people. Representatives from various media were also present at the rally, including Radio India, The Sing Tao Daily, Global News and News 1130.

On Tuesday, November 20th peace loving people in Vancouver and MAWO organisers continued voicing their support for Palestinian resistance against this brutal Zionist attack by getting together at Joe's cafe in Vancouver for a free public forum titled "Self-Determination for Palestine! Stop Israel's War on Gaza!". Participants expressed their unwavering support for the Palestinian struggle for self-determination and discussed the need for an ongoing and consistent solidarity campaign for Palestine and against the Zionist Israeli war on Gaza.

As Israel's attacks escalated, the resistance and solidarity of people in Vancouver

amplified. Calls for Emergency Rallies were put out through Facebook and social media. The first Emergency Rally was on Thursday November 15th, a spirited and enthusiastic crowd took the streets of downtown Vancouver in front of the Art Gallery demanding justice for Palestine and an end to the attacks on Gaza.

On Sunday November 18th, loud voices and chants have risen again in the streets of Downtown Vancouver. People from all religious backgrounds, ethnicities, and walks of life gathered to show their solidarity with Gaza and the Palestinian struggle and demand an immediate stop to Israel's war on the brave people of Gaza.

Vancouverites joined together again on Wednesday, November 21st in front of the Temple Shalom to oppose the Canadian Government's support for Israeli war crimes and protest the visit to Vancouver of the Israeli Deputy Ambassador to Canada, Eliaz Luf, and Jason Kenney, Minister of Citizenship and Immigration who has been one of the Harper Government's loudest supporter of Israel.

Eliaz Luf was also invited to speak at Hillel House at the University of British Columbia (UBC) on Thursday November 22nd, where he was again met with protesters and banners condemning Israel attacks on Gaza and demanding freedom for Palestine. Following the protest students and activists joined together for panel and discussion titled "Gaza under attack, end the occupation." The rally and the forum in UBC was organized by Solidarity for Palestinian Human Rights UBC (SPHR).

This latest war against Gaza is one of the many massacres that Palestinian people have faced in over 64 years of Zionist Israeli occupation of their land. From before 1948 and continuing today, the heroic Palestinian people have resisted the occupation of their land. Now more than ever, it is critical that we unite together to organise an ongoing and consistent solidarity campaign for Palestine and continue to amplify our voices to demand an end to the Zionist Israeli Siege on Gaza, and call for self-determination for Palestine.

**Self-Determination for Palestine!
Stop Israel's Siege on Gaza!**

We Will Win!

IT IS NOT A WAR IT IS A MURDER

By Noam Chomsky

Washington, DC - November 17, 2012

"The incursion and bombardment of Gaza is not about destroying Hamas. It is not about stopping rocket fire into Israel, it is not about achieving peace.

The Israeli decision to rain death and destruction on Gaza, to use lethal weapons of the modern battlefield on a largely defenseless civilian population, is the final phase in a decades-long campaign to ethnically-cleanse Palestinians.

Israel uses sophisticated attack jets and naval vessels to bomb densely-crowded refugee camps, schools, apartment blocks, mosques, and slums to attack a population that has no air force, no air defense, no navy, no heavy weapons, no artillery units, no mechanized armor, no command in control, no army... and calls it a war. It is not a war, it is murder.

"When Israelis in the occupied territories now claim that they have to defend themselves, they are defending themselves in the sense that any military occupier has to defend itself against the population they are crushing. You can't defend yourself when you're militarily occupying someone else's land. That's not defense."

VENEZUELA'S CHAVEZ CONDEMNS 'SAVAGE' ASSAULT ON THE GAZA STRIP

By Ewan Robertson Mérida

November 16th, 2012

Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez has condemned Israel's recent assault on the Gaza Strip as "savage", and called for an end to "aggression" against the Palestinian people.

"Another aggression against the Gaza strip has begun. Savage, savage: the State of Israel bombing the Gaza Strip again," said Chavez to ministers yesterday in reference to Israel's "Pillar of Cloud" airstrike campaign against the Palestinian territory.

Israel began its offensive on Wednesday by killing the military chief of the Palestinian organisation Hamas. Agencies report that 28 Palestinians and

3 Israelis have died in the conflict so far, with a further 250 Palestinians wounded.

The Venezuelan president argued that the Israeli operation is occurring "because the [Palestinian] president Mahmoud Abbas has insisted that he's going to request, once again, the entrance of Palestine as a full member state of the United Nations".

Mahmoud Abbas submitted a renewed request for Palestine's full UN membership in September. Chavez referred to the proposal as a "realistic vision...however the response [from Israel] is this".

"Because of that, we ask for a world of peace...[where] aggression against Syria, Palestine, and the peoples of the world stops," he continued.

At the beginning of this week, Venezuelan Vice President Nicolas Maduro confirmed that Venezuela would vote in favour of Palestine's full membership in the UN General Assembly.

"We accompany the Palestinian people in all their struggles. In this scenario of the UN our voice and our vote will be there," Maduro said.

The vice president also emphasised Venezuela's support of "the long march of the Palestinian people towards full recognition of having a state, as an independent nation, the right to peace, and their ancestral territories".

The Chavez administration has been a strong supporter of the Palestinian cause in its conflict with Israel. In 2009 Venezuela broke relations with Israel in response to its Cast Lead assault on the Gaza Strip, accusing Israel of "state terrorism" which had "cost the lives of the vulnerable and innocent: children, women, and the elderly".

In 2011, Venezuela supported Palestine's attempt to be recognised as an independent state by the UN, with pro-Palestine demonstrations held around the country. Chavez also wrote a personal letter to the UN General Secretary advocating Palestinian statehood and criticising the "barbarism" of Israeli policy toward the Palestinian people.

Source: Venezuelanalysis.com



UPDATE ON BRADLEY MANNING SOLDIER OF HUMANITY

By Bradley Manning Support Network
www.bradleymanning.org

November 9, 2012

Army PFC Bradley Manning, awaiting trial for allegedly sharing thousands of classified documents with the transparency website WikiLeaks, offered to accept responsibility for a narrow set of offenses within the currently charged offenses this week during a pre-trial hearing at Fort Meade, Maryland.

"PFC Manning is not pleading guilty to the specifications as charged by the Government," noted PFC Manning's attorney David Coombs on his blog. Nor is he "submitting a plea as part of an agreement or deal with the Government."

"Like most supporters, I've backed Bradley Manning on the belief that he was the heroic whistle-blower in question," explained Jeff Paterson of the Bradley Manning Support Network. "Now that Bradley appears to have acknowledged this in court, its reason to redouble efforts to support him, leading up to his February court martial."

If Bradley's plea offer is accepted, the parties would likely be able to bypass weeks of forensics testimony that would be required to prove Bradley accessed and/or transmitted the classified documents at issue. The court martial proceedings might then focus on what Mr. Coombs has long contended: That the release of these documents brought little to no harm to U.S. national security, and that PFC Manning's motives, if he did release them, were to expose crime, fraud, corporate malfeasance, and abuse.

The military has worked to preclude the defense from discussing harm, or lack thereof, in the merits portion of Bradley's trial, seeking to prevent him from being seen as a military whistle-blower. However, Bradley has now opted to be tried by military judge Denise Lind alone. "Much of the ongoing litigation over the last year can now be looked at in a new light—as an effort to educate Judge Lind in regards to Bradley Manning's whistle-blower motives," offered Jeff Paterson.

"The Government may still elect to prove up the charged offenses," explained Coombs.

The parties return to Ft. Meade on November 27 for a six-day hearing focusing largely on the defense's motion to dismiss charges based on PFC Manning's unlawful pretrial confinement conditions at the Quantico Marine Brig.

Mobilization Against War & Occupation (MAWO) continues to organize as part of the the international campaign to "Free Bradley Manning!" Check www.mawovancouver.org for updates and upcoming events in Vancouver and British Columbia

Dialogue in Colombia Welcomed

By Manuel Yepe*

An old saying tells us that “it is always darker before dawn.”

This is what’s happened in Colombia where, to the surprise of many and the confusion of others, it was revealed that an agreement has been reached to hold exploratory peace talks aimed at a peace dialogue between the revolutionary anti-imperialist guerrillas and the government of the nation that has enjoyed the most privileged relationship with the superpower in the North.

Most certainly, Colombia’s internal war –basically of a class origin- became more and more complicated each day along the half century of its existence, bringing along with it the corrupting and criminal behavior of drug trafficking and the terrorist actions of paramilitary bands.

Because of drug trafficking, Colombia has received many millions of US dollars through Plan Colombia, thus becoming the third highest recipient of foreign aid in the world, just after Israel and Egypt (not including the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan).

It is known that the CIA has links with the Colombian army and with security forces that cooperate with paramilitary groups well involved in drug trafficking.

Last year, with the proposition of putting an end to drug trafficking, Washington and Bogota signed an agreement to establish seven military bases in Colombian territory. They constitute a threat to stability and sovereignty in the region. These military bases have as their center the Palenquero air base, in the heart of Colombia.

Due to the alarming complicity of political, police, military and higher business sectors in this South American

nation with organized crime and the very US agencies that should verify the proper use of aid given to combat drug trafficking, Colombia has been considered a narco-state with many of its government structures having been penetrated by powerful organized crime groups.

Sponsored by public officials, great landowners, businesspeople and corrupt military officers, a number of paramilitary groups were formed and terrorized farmers to guarantee impunity for drug dealing operations with the justification of holding a campaign against the Colombian revolutionary guerrilla.

In recent days, from Casa de Nariño, President Juan Manuel Santos offered details about the exploratory talks to promote a peace dialogue between his government and FARC, and announced the Acuerdo General para la Terminación del Conflicto en Colombia [General Agreement to End the Conflict in Colombia]

“This agreement is not yet peace, neither is it a final agreement. It is a road map that defines with precision the terms for a discussion to reach a final agreement,” said the President.

For his part, FARC’s supreme leader, Rodrigo Londoño Echeverri,

known as Timochenko, declared that he “came to sit at the negotiation table with no grudges or arrogance”

A FARC representative said nothing will be easy in the process, but “there is nothing that could not be discussed or have a solution at the negotiation table to reach an agreement.”

The Diálogos de Paz [Peace Talks] will start on October 8, in Oslo, Norway, and will later continue in Havana, Cuba. The rebels declared that the FARC “has never been a military machine and from its origins “has been a guerrilla force with broad popular support.”

Expressions of satisfaction for this promising Acuerdo General para la Terminación del Conflicto immediately came from every corner in the world, with the marked – but expected –



Iván Márquez, leader of FARC speaking at Dialogue for Peace meeting in Havana, Cuba.

exceptions of Colombian ex-President Álvaro Uribe and Ileana Ros-Lehtinen, Chair of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the US House of Representatives, who is the usual voice of the Miami Cuban extreme-right in the USA Congress.

President Santos expressed thanks to the governments of Cuba and Norway for their support in the preparations for these negotiations, and announced that these two countries will continue acting as hosts and guarantors in the second phase.

He also acknowledged the open offer from the Venezuelan government to grant its support for the development of the previous work and thanked the Chilean government for having accepted to support the following phase when Venezuela and Chile will act as accompanying countries.

Certainly this is a clear example of the strength irradiating from the budding Bolivarian unity for Latin American countries which is beginning to promise the realization of the dreams of their peoples.

September, 2012

*A CubaNews translation. Edited by Walter Lippmann

CubaNews <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/CubaNews/>

**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.*



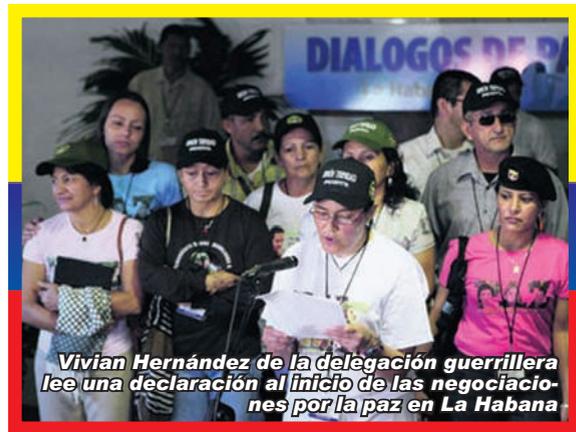
José Santrich member of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Cuba (FAR) arrives at meeting.

Bienvenido sea el diálogo en Colombia

Por Manuel Yepe*

Dice un viejo adagio que nunca la noche es más oscura que cuando está próximo el amanecer.

Algo así ha sucedido en Colombia donde, para sorpresa de muchos y confusión de otros, se dio a conocer que entre la guerrilla revolucionaria antimperialista y el gobierno de la nación que ha disfrutado de la relación más privilegiada del continente con la superpotencia nortea, se ha llegado a un acuerdo para celebrar conversaciones exploratorias en busca de un diálogo de paz.



Ciertamente, la guerra interna de Colombia, fundamentalmente de origen clasista, se fue complicando cada día más a lo largo del medio siglo que ya lleva de existencia, con el desarrollo corruptor y criminal del narcotráfico, así como por las acciones terroristas de las bandas paramilitares.

Gracias al narcotráfico, Colombia ha recibido muchos miles de millones de dólares estadounidenses a través del llamado Plan Colombia, convirtiéndose en el tercer país receptor de ayuda extranjera en el mundo, después de Israel y Egipto (sin contar las guerras de Irak y Afganistán).

Se conoce que la CIA mantiene relaciones con el ejército colombiano

y con fuerzas de seguridad de Colombia que cooperan con grupos paramilitares que a su vez están muy vinculados con el narcotráfico. Washington y Bogotá firmaron el pasado año un acuerdo militar para instalar, con el supuesto fin de operar contra el narcotráfico, siete bases militares estadounidenses en territorio colombiano que constituyen una amenaza para la estabilidad y la soberanía de la región. Estas bases militares estadounidenses tienen como eje a la base aérea de Palanquero, en el centro de Colombia.

Por alarmante complicidad con el crimen organizado de altos círculos políticos, policíacos, militares y empresariales de la nación sudamericana, así como de las mismísimas agencias de Estados Unidos supuestamente a cargo de verificar el debido uso de la ayuda destinada a combatir el narcotráfico, Colombia ha sido considerada un narco estado penetrado en muchas de sus estructuras de gobierno por poderosos grupos de la delincuencia organizada.

Con patrocinio de funcionarios públicos, grandes terratenientes, hombres de negocios y oficiales militares corruptos se estructuraron formaciones paramilitares que aterrorizaban a los campesinos para garantizar impunidad para los negocios de los narcotraficantes, en supuesta campaña contra la guerrilla revolucionaria colombiana.

El Presidente Juan Manuel Santos ofreció en días recientes detalles desde la Casa de Nariño acerca de las conversaciones exploratorias para propiciar un diálogo de paz entre su gobierno y las FARC, y anunció el Acuerdo General para la Terminación del Conflicto en Colombia.

“Este acuerdo no es ya la paz, ni se trata de un acuerdo final. Es una hoja de ruta que define con precisión los términos de discusión para llegar a ese acuerdo final”, dijo el Presidente.

Por su parte, el Jefe máximo de las FARC, Rodrigo Londoño Echeverri, conocido como Timochenko, aseveró que “llegaba a la mesa de diálogos sin rencores ni arrogancia”.

Un vocero de las FARC consideró que



nada va a ser fácil en el proceso pero "no hay nada que no se pueda discutir y a lo que no se le pueda hallar una solución en la mesa y llegar a un acuerdo".

Los Diálogos de Paz comenzarán el próximo 8 de octubre en Oslo, Noruega, y posteriormente se trasladarán a La Habana, Cuba.

Los rebeldes aclararon que las FARC "nunca ha sido un aparato militar" y desde su origen "ha sido una guerrilla con amplio respaldo popular. Desde todos los rincones del mundo llegaron inmediatamente muestras de satisfacción por el promisorio Acuerdo General para la Terminación del Conflicto, con las marcadas –aunque esperadas– excepciones del expresidente colombiano Álvaro Uribe y de Ileana Ros-Lehtinen, jefa de la comisión de Relaciones Exteriores de la Cámara de Representantes, habitual vocero de la ultraderecha cubana de Miami en el Congreso estadounidense.

El Presidente Santos agradeció a los gobiernos de Cuba y Noruega por el apoyo brindado al desarrollo de los preparativos de esta negociación e informó que estos dos países seguirán actuando como anfitriones y garantes en la segunda fase.

También agradeció la permanente disposición del gobierno de Venezuela a brindar su ayuda al buen desarrollo de los trabajos previos, y al gobierno de Chile por haber aceptado dar su apoyo en la siguiente fase, en la que Venezuela y Chile serán acompañantes.

Ciertamente, se trata de una muestra fehaciente de la fortaleza que deriva para los países de América Latina de la incipiente unidad bolivariana que comienza a vislumbrarse como coronación de los anhelos de sus pueblos.

**Manuel E. Yepe Menendez es periodista y se desempeña como Profesor adjunto en el Instituto Superior de las Relaciones Internacionales de La Habana.*

Peace Loving People in Vancouver Respond to Growing Imperialist Wars & Occupations

By Alison Bodine

Vancouver's antiwar coalition, Mobilization Against War and Occupation (MAWO) formed on October 29th, 2003. It had been two years since the invasion of Afghanistan and seven months since the U.S.-led coalition forces invaded Iraq. Peace-loving people in Vancouver had gathered to form a coalition that would organize consistent actions and events to respond to a growing new era of war and occupation that had already begun to bring incalculable death and destruction to poor and oppressed people all over the globe.

Nine years later even a quick glance at the headlines will show just how far colonial governments like the U.S. and Canada have gone to expand their bloody game with threats, covert foreign intervention and sanctions against the people of Iran and Syria. With bi-monthly forums, organizing meetings, a monthly antiwar rally and petition campaign and regular cultural events, MAWO has continued to educate, organize and mobilize against imperialist wars and occupations and for self-determination of all oppressed nations.

Hands Off Syria! Don't Attack Iran!

By the middle of October, news headlines were filled with reports about the devastation caused by the imposed civil war in Syria. The war was escalating with a Western-allied Turkey sending artillery fire strikes into Syria. A new round of European Union sanctions against Iran was announced in a further attempt to destabilize Iran in the midst of a vicious campaign of covert foreign military intervention and demonization of the Iranian government in major media.

MAWO organized a public form and discussion in order to respond to these attacks. Following 45 minutes of news clips, forum speaker Ali Yerevani, Political Editor of Fire This Time Newspaper and participant in the 1979 Iranian revolution spoke about the overall strategy of imperialist governments against Syria and Iran and the impact that a war against Syria and Iran would have on the Middle East and North Africa.

9 Years of Antiwar Organizing:

Looking Back and Moving Forward

On October 29, MAWO gathered at Joe's Cafe on Commercial Drive for a cultural evening to reflect on the nine years of antiwar organizing and MAWO's commitment to continue fighting against war and occupation and for a better world.

MAWO co-chairs Janine Solanki and Alison Bodine emceed the night, and began by welcoming a crowd of costumed antiwar organizers with a short history of MAWO organizing and an energizing speech about the necessity to continue the struggle against imperialist wars and occupation. The evening was filled with some of Vancouver's best talent including Mexican folk singer Yahara Muñoz, the always fresh MC Joose Justis, talented hip-hopper Sunnite Marx, singer/songwriter Zane Barrat, and MAWO organizers, the exceptional poet Shakeel Lochan and soulful performer Payvand Pejvack.

What's Next in the Middle East and North Africa?

Joe's Cafe was once again a hub of discussion and debate on Tuesday November 13th, when MAWO held a public forum highlighting the struggle of oppressed people fighting against U.S. backed regimes in North Africa and the Middle East. MAWO Co-chair Janine Solanki outlined recent mass protests in Qatar, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Yemen and Bahrain, contrasting their struggle



with that of the so-called rebels in Syria. She also explored what the U.S. government has to gain from sanctions, covert operations and possible military intervention in Syria.

MAWO Organized Events Against Israeli's War on Gaza

On Wednesday November 14, Israel

launched their latest campaign of airstrikes on Gaza. By the time a ceasefire took effect on Wednesday November 21st, 158 Palestinians and 6 Israeli's had been killed. Mobilization Against War and Occupation responded to these attacks by organizing two actions.

The first was a MAWO monthly antiwar rally and petition campaign on Saturday November 17th. The demands of the rally were changed to respond to the urgent situation in Gaza - Stop Israel's War on Gaza! No War and Sanctions on Syria and



Iran! Peace-loving people gathered at the busy Vancouver Public Library holding picket signs and banners, and asking people to sign petitions demanding no to war and sanctions on Syria and no to war and sanctions on Iran.

The following Tuesday was a a public forum and discussion called "Self-Determination for Palestine! Stop Israel's War on Gaza!" The forum began with 1 hour of news clips covering not only the recent massacre of the people of Gaza but the over 64 year occupation of Palestine by Israel and the heroic struggle of the Palestinian people resisting the occupation of their land.

Speakers at the forum included Azza Rojbi, a young Tunisian social justice activist, student organizer and MAWO Executive Committee member, who spoke on "Palestinian Struggle for Self-Determination and Gaza's Resistance to the Israeli Blockade and Occupation in the Context of Mass Revolutionary Movements in the Middle East and North Africa"; Noah Fine, a young anti-Zionist Jewish activist who spoke on "Why Jewish People in the Middle East and Around the World Need to Oppose Zionism and Defend Self-Determination for Palestinian People?"; and Ali Yerevani - political editor of the Fire This Time newspaper and the Battle of Idea's Press. Who spoke on "What is Behind Israel's Latest War on Gaza? Why We Need an Ongoing and Consistent Solidarity Campaign for Palestine."

What About Saudi Arabia?

Then we can also look to Saudi Arabia. In Saudi Arabia a wave of protests was sparked in January 2011, when a 65-year-old man set himself on fire. In January and February, four protesters were killed when security forces opened fire on demonstrations. The Committee for the Defense of Human Rights in the Arabian Peninsula also reported that Saudi security forces arrested medical personnel for treating injured protesters. This repression was met with more protests, and has continued. On January 16th, 2012, over 70,000 people attended a funeral for Issam Mohamed Abu Abdallah, who was killed by security forces in al-Awamiyah on January 12th.

Imperialists Hypocrisy Over Bahrain

We can also look to Bahrain, which we saw a lot of in the videos today. A country that is hosting the U.S. Fifth Fleet, and has seen huge demonstrations since mid-February 2011 up to today. This has been met by brutal crackdowns, not only by the Bahraini regime, but also with the help of troops from Saudi Arabia and Qatar. Just recently on Friday September 8th, 2012, Ali Hussain Neamah, who was 17 years old, was killed when Bahraini riot police fired shotgun pellets during clashes with protesters. He is the second young protester to die in six weeks. On that exact same day in Geneva, Bahrain's candidate Said Mohammed Al-Faihani was elected as representative of the Asian Group to the UN Human Rights Council (UNHRC) Advisory Committee. Another stain on this word of "human rights" that the United States throws around and that the UN with their own human rights council shows the complete hypocrisy it has when using this word. We also saw in the videos, the most recent steps in the tyranny of the Bahraini regime, when 31 people had their citizenship revoked. 31 people who were opposed to the government were basically told if you oppose this government, if you oppose and protest, your right as a citizen will be taken away.

When Imperialists Define Human Rights

Beyond all of these human rights violations, and beyond the protesters who are demanding an end to these U.S.-backed regimes, who are demanding democracy, the final hypocrisy of the United States comes with the sanctions that they are laying against the countries whose

governments they want to overthrow. Against both Syria and Iran, these two countries have faced mounting sanctions against not just the government, but against the people of these countries. We saw in one of the last videos, the new, tighter sanctions against Iran. As the United States government claims "human rights" once again, we can look back and see what did sanctions do to Iraq?



Cairo Egypt, November 24, 2012



Diraz, Bahrain, November 9, 2012

Eleven years of sanctions killed 1.5 million people, many of whom were children. So we can see the hypocrisy is very clear. We can see there is a double standard here. One can ask, when we talk to people or we hear in the news that "well maybe the U.S. can help, there are human rights violations going on in Syria, we have to do something," well then why don't we see the U.S. government or their imperialist allies, including Canada, crying for human rights in all of these countries that I just mentioned? Countries that have U.S. bases stationed there, countries that are following the agenda of U.S. policies. Countries that are even doing the dirty work of the United States against Syria, by funding and providing weapons to the rebels in Syria. As long as these countries and these U.S. backed regimes follow the dictates of the United States, then they are friends and we are not going to talk about their human rights records. These cries of human rights that we see from the United States and from the mainstream media against Syria mean a lot less and have to make us a lot more suspicious when we compare them to what we hear, or what we don't hear about Bahrain, Yemen, Qatar, Jordan and all of these countries I spoke about.

Resist and Fight Back, and We Will Win

The fact is that the United States government is waging a war through different means. It is intervening through covert operations, through fomenting a civil war in Syria, through bringing down a government not through direct bombing but through every other channel it has at its disposal, as I've just outlined. This is still our job, as antiwar activists and as peace-loving people to come out with antiwar demands, to come out and organize against these new attacks against Syria, and against intervention, through whatever means, which even if aren't direct military intervention are doing a huge damage to that

country. It's our job to demand "Hands Off Syria" as people who don't want to see another country destroyed, or another country in the hands of the United States or under a puppet regime of the United States. It's also our task to make it known that throughout the Middle East, that these uprisings, these protest movements which I spoke of are still going on, are continuing, are strengthening, but are also being put down by governments backed heavily

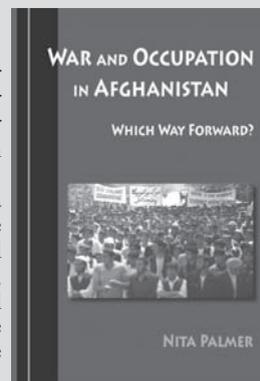
by the United States government. I'll say once again that we can't be distracted, but that also we can't only sit in this room. We need to discuss, we need to understand, we need to debate, but we also need to go out, as we will with our upcoming rally and petition campaign on November 17th, where we have a chance to go out and ask people to sign our petitions against sanctions on Syria and to engage them in why we are here, and how they can get involved also protest and fight back.

Battle of Ideas Press

WAR & OCCUPATION IN AFGHANISTAN WHICH WAY FORWARD?

BY NITA PALMER

"The problem of Afghanistan boils down to just two words: foreign occupation. The Canada/US/NATO occupation forces claim that corruption, poverty, drug production, the presence of the Taliban and other social or political crises are the fundamental problems of Afghanistan which they must fix. The irony of this claim is that the same occupation forces have proven themselves completely incapable of fixing these problems or of bettering the lives of Afghan people"



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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Better Than Ever: Vancouver's 8th Annual International HIP HOP 4 PEACE Festival!



By Alison Bodine

"When I say Peace! You say Hip Hop!" "Peace!" "Hip Hop!" "Peace!" "Hip Hop!" echoed off the buildings of downtown Vancouver as people threw peace signs up in the air and moved their bodies to the freshest beats on the West Coast. It was September 15, 2012 and Vancouver's International Hip Hop 4 Peace Festival: Peace! An Element of Hip Hop had arrived. For the next 2 days there was no denying the energy that swelled from the antiwar activists, and local and international MC's, DJ's, breakers, and graffiti artists who came together to spread peace through the medium of hip hop. In the face of an era of increasing war and occupation by imperialist governments like the U.S. and Canada, hip hop is a part of the global language of growing resistance by oppressed people.

This year's Hip Hop 4 Peace Festival was bigger and better than ever, with over 2500 people taking a stand for peace and participating in shows, workshops and a forum.

The necessity of this one-of-a-kind festival could be heard as the first beats of Hip Hop 4 Peace left the speakers. Every day the beats of oppressed people for peace and resistance are being answered by the beats of imperialist war drums. When the festival began it had already been over 11 years of occupation in Afghanistan. In just the last year the world has witnessed incredible bloodshed and the incalculable destruction of infrastructure by imperialist guns, drones, bombs and missiles fired on the people of Libya, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Iraq, and Palestine. Now the U.S. government and their colonial allies have imposed a devastating

civil war on the people of Syria, who face sanctions and covert imperialist military operations in their country. As well, these same colonial governments have their eyes set on the independent government of Iran, imposing crippling sanctions under a barrage of threats of foreign military intervention.

"Mobilize against war, they say they want to globalize, but what for? We're saying that it's education, not occupation, mobilize against war" - Vancouver based MC Joose Justis

To mobilize against increasing imperialist war - that is why Vancouver's peace coalition Mobilization Against War and Occupation (MAWO) organizes the festival each year. Hip Hop 4 Peace is a festival that brings people in Vancouver together in action for peace and social justice that transcends borders through the language of hip hop. The festival is absolutely built, organized, sponsored and supported by communities of youth, families, and working people from across the world who have had enough with just accepting the world the way it is and are working to change it.

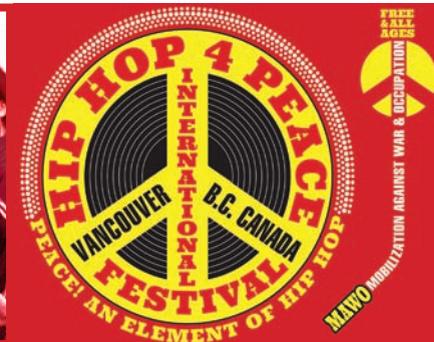
Diversity, dedication and passion for peace and hip hop characterized the first day of the festival. Over 25 talented artists came to the stage for an all-day outdoor show on Saturday, September 15 that began with a traditional indigenous welcome and opening by Coast-Salish Elder Kelly White. Ali Dahesh, artist, festival organizer and producer of this year's festival promo video followed, focusing his many talents down to tight microphone flows with a clear message of resistance to wars and injustice. Kasseb joined

Ali on stage and the English and Farsi rhymes rocked seamlessly back and forth. For their first time at the festival, Chief Rock from Six Nations, and Lisa Monchalín, of Algonquin, Métis and Huron heritage, amazed with their unbeatable vocals and modern mix of traditional indigenous music. Illtone and King's Landing came up next, moving the crowd with focused beats and insightful lyrics.

Ndidi Cascade ignited the stage, a powerful voice for women in hip hop; Discreet da Chosen 1, hailing from the Squamish Nation, didn't disappoint with his motivational and positive rhymes; hip hop powerhouse Fully Faded, formed by emcees Abyss and Sauce and DJ C-Lo, brought quality and distinction through a mix of old school and a progressive frame of mind; and A-Slam introduced the crowd to the influence of the East with his own special mix of hype beats and Indian rhythms.

The level of anticipation and excitement in the air grew with the crowd and the show continued. Joose Justis once again took his rightful place on the Hip Hop 4 Peace stage and people grooved to his soulful beats and socially conscious lyrics. Chants of OBSESIÓN, OBSESIÓN filled the air and it was no question what act was up next - OBSESIÓN - direct from Cuba. Revolution poured out of the microphone as MC's Magia and El Tipo Este began a power-packed set. Their chemistry spread and it was clear that hip hop and the Cuban revolution had joined together on the Vancouver stage and the universal language of hip hop was speaking.

The first day of the 8th International Hip Hop 4 Peace Festival ended with three acts that had never before been brought to the stage. Babaluku Free Nation hailed from Uganda, and brought with them the rhymes and resistance of their roots and heritage. New to Vancouver versatile vocalist Tonye



Aganaba nearly knocked down Vancouver's downtown core with her dynamic vocal and solid stage presence. Ekko, lower-mainland based artist and community organizer, was the last scheduled artist, letting her heart speak for her and leaving the crowd wanting more.

Throughout the day, not all of the action was on the stage. Participants in Hip Hop 4 Peace and also came over to the MAWO antiwar information tables with literature, buttons, books and festival merchandise. Debates and discussion filled the air around the tables as people got more information about imperialist wars and occupations waged around the world, signed a petition against Canada's participation in attacks and sanctions on the people of Syria, joined the campaign to free accused Wikileaks whistleblower and soldier for humanity Bradley Manning, or signed up on the MAWO e-mail list to get involved in organizing upcoming antiwar events and actions in Vancouver.

The Malcolm X self-determination tent returned to the festival this year, and people lined up to walk inside and read more about the struggle of oppressed people for their right to self-determination against wars, occupations and foreign intervention. The tent is named after black liberation fighter and revolutionary Malcolm X, and contains boards with more information about his ideas and life, as well as an information board dedicated to the Cuban Revolution and the struggle of the Cuban people against the U.S. blockade.

On September 16, the "School of Hip Hop", held at the Collingwood Neighbourhood House in East Vancouver, began with a forum "Peace: An Element of Hip Hop." Alison Bodine, co-chair of Mobilization Against War and Occupation (MAWO) opened the forum with a reflection on the first day of the festival and the role of hip hop in building a movement for peace. Alison then invited up forum speakers. First was Chief Rock, who presented hip hop from Indigenous perspective. He was followed by OBSESIÓN, pioneers of hip hop in Cuba, who covered the development of hip hop

in Cuba, the effects of the U.S. blockade on hip hop in Cuba and the creation of the Cuban Agency of Rap. Next Thomas Davies, a coordinator of the newly formed Vancouver Committee to Defend Freedom of Expression presented on the case of the police assault on Fire This Time newspaper and the importance of defending freedom of expression.

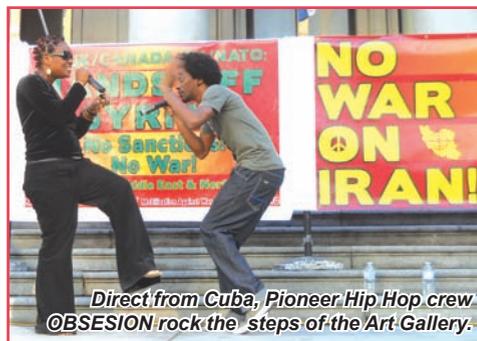
Then it was time to learn about how to use the tools of expression that hip hop has to offer. Joose Justis and Estea Elements gave a master MC workshop that covered all the basics on how to write rhymes and got people out of their seats. Next, b-boy Savage Rock of the Now Or Never crew levelled with eager students during an intimate and interactive workshop on the culture of breakdancing. Many generations of people were lined up on the dance floor, learning from one of Vancouver's best.

Vancouver's 8th International Hip Hop 4 Peace Festival: Peace – An Element of Hip Hop! had come to an end. After bringing out over 2500 people, showcasing some of the best hip hop talent from Vancouver to Cuba, and after all of the petition signatures, antiwar literature, debates and discussions, this year's the festival may of wrapped up but what is most clear is that Hip Hop 4 Peace will not be over until the beats for peace triumph over the war drums.

The world around us is characterized by the struggle between imperialist governments and oppressed people. Building a movement for peace is going to take unity, dedication, involvement and action by poor, working and oppressed people all over the globe. More than just two turntables and a microphone, more than the 4 elements of MC'ing, DJ'ing, breaking and graffiti art, Hip Hop 4 Peace has stepped up to centre stage and once again

shouted out loud for peace – are you ready to do the same?

www.hiphopforpeace.blogspot



Direct from Cuba, Pioneer Hip Hop crew @BSESION rock the steps of the Art Gallery.



Activists collect petition signatures to demand an end to war & occupation.



Juno nominated, Bangra Hip Hop fusion group "A-SLAM".



Bboy 'Savage Rock' leading the breakdance workshop, sharing the moves & culture.



The crowd put their peace signs up in front of the Vancouver Art Gallery!



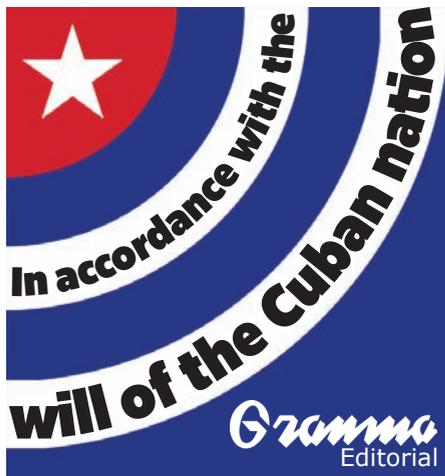
Local M.C. & festival organizer 'Joose Justis'!



Local & international artists share their ideas about the role of hip hop today in the struggle for a better world.



Estea El rocking the mic during the M.C. workshop.



**Editorial from Granma International
Havana, Cuba. October 17, 2012**

In the case of Cuba, the issue of travel and migration has historically been the object of forceful media campaigns designed and directed by the United States government and other forces in that country who have opposed the Revolution since its very beginning. The issue has been purposefully manipulated in an attempt to create confusion in public opinion internationally and among our people. There have been more than a few victims of this effort, including mortal ones, and dramatic situations have been generated as a result of the politicization of this sensitive question by enemies of Cuba.

It is therefore obligatory that any analysis of Cuban travel and migration issues address the hostile policy toward our country which the U.S. government has maintained for more than 50 years. The imposition of an illegal and genocidal economic blockade, attempts to construct an internal opposition through subversive activity and the employment of salaried agents have been the essential components of this policy. Media campaigns and the theft of brain power are part of this policy, as well as terrorist attacks, sabotage and aggression of all kinds.

Cuba's travel and migration policy, throughout the entire period the Revolution has been in power, has been based on the recognition of the right of citizens to travel, to emigrate or live abroad, and the desire to maintain good relations between the country and the émigré community. At the same time, the country has asserted its legitimate right to defend itself from U.S. aggression. Regulations governing



travel from the country were adopted in the context of circumstances created by the hostile position on this issue assumed by various U.S. administrations, encouraged by their allies in Miami.

As President Raúl Castro said during the closing of the 8th Ordinary Session of the

**“HOMELAND IS HUMANITY”
-JOSE MARTÍ**

National Assembly of People's Power, December 23, 2011, "We cannot forget that we are the only country on the planet whose citizens are permitted to settle and work in U.S. territory without any visa whatsoever... as a result of the Cuban Readjustment Act... and the 'wet foot, dry foot' policy which promotes trafficking in persons and has led to the deaths of many innocent people."

Since the very beginning of the Revolution, our country has been victimized by the indiscriminate plunder of our professionals. More than half of the 6,000 doctors in the country at that time emigrated, principally to the United States. Additionally, later on, a program of visas for professionals was implemented by the U.S. government, with similar objectives.

This is the reason that, as long as policies which promote the 'brain drain' meant to deprive us of the human resources we need for the country's economic, social and scientific development, Cuba is obligated to maintain regulations to defend itself on this front.

The double standard, and inhumane nature of the U.S. policy, which encourages illegal emigration on the one hand and, on the other, creates obstacles for those who

and the 'rafters' crisis of 1994.

Despite all of this, Cuba has consistently maintained its willingness to cooperate in the search

for reasonable solutions to this complex problem and has continually worked for the normalization of relations with émigrés and a well-ordered, safe emigration process, as well as attempting to facilitate travel abroad by Cuban citizens for private reasons.

The new migratory regulations announced, adopted on the basis of a sovereign decision by the Cuban state, do not constitute an isolated act, but are rather an important component of the irreversible process underway to normalize relations with the country's émigré community.

The great majority of Cubans resident in 150 other countries maintain stable ties with their homeland and families; they oppose the blockade and do not support the implementation of an aggressive policy toward their native country.

President Raúl Castro Ruz said in his farewell to Pope Benedict 16th, this past March 28, "We recognize the patriotic contributions of the Cuban émigré community, from the decisive support to our independence struggle provided by cigar workers in Tampa and Key West and all of those who sustained the hopes and dreams of José Martí, to those who today oppose attacks on Cuba and the manipulation of the migration issue for political ends. We have made a prolonged effort to achieve the full normalization of relations between Cuba and its émigrés, who love their homeland and families. We will persist in this effort, given the common will of our nation."

**Editorial Granma Internacional, Cuba
La Habana, 16 de Octubre de 2012**

En el caso de Cuba, el tema migratorio ha sido históricamente objeto de fuertes campañas mediáticas diseñadas y dirigidas por el gobierno de los Estados Unidos y de otras fuerzas que en ese país se han opuesto a la Revolución desde sus propios inicios. Su manipulación ha tenido como propósito sembrar la confusión en la opinión pública internacional y en nuestro pueblo. No han sido pocas las víctimas, incluso mortales, de las dramáticas situaciones generadas a partir de la politización por parte de los enemigos de Cuba de esta sensible cuestión.

Es por ello que cualquier análisis que se haga de la problemática migratoria cubana pasa inexorablemente por la política de hostilidad que el gobierno de los EE.UU. ha desarrollado contra el país por más de 50 años. La aplicación de un ilegal y genocida bloqueo económico y el intento de construir una oposición interna mediante acciones subversivas y el empleo de agentes a sueldo han sido sus componentes esenciales. Dicha política ha incluido desde campañas mediáticas y "robo de cerebros", hasta atentados terroristas, sabotajes y agresiones de todo tipo.

La política migratoria de Cuba, a lo largo de todos estos años de Revolución, se ha basado en el reconocimiento del derecho de los ciudadanos a viajar, a emigrar o residir en el extranjero y en la voluntad de favorecer las relaciones entre la Nación y su emigración. Al mismo tiempo se ha fundamentado en el legítimo derecho a defendernos frente a la agresividad de Washington. Las disposiciones para regular los flujos migratorios del país, fueron adoptadas en medio de circunstancias impuestas por las agresiones que en esta esfera se han implementado por las diferentes administraciones norteamericanas, con el estímulo de sus aliados en Miami.

Como expresara el Presidente Raúl Castro en la clausura del 8vo. Período Ordinario de Sesiones de la Asamblea Nacional del Poder Popular el pasado 23 de diciembre de 2011 "... no podemos olvidar que somos el único país del planeta a cuyos ciudadanos se les permite asentarse y trabajar en

el territorio de los Estados Unidos sin visa alguna... en virtud de la criminal Ley de Ajuste Cubano... y la política 'pies secos, pies mojados', que favorece el tráfico de personas y ha provocado numerosas muertes de inocentes".

Desde el propio comienzo de la Revolución, nuestro país fue víctima del despojo indiscriminado de sus profesionales. Más de la mitad de los 6 mil médicos con que contábamos en aquel momento, emigraron fundamentalmente hacia los Estados Unidos. Un gran número de los mejores ingenieros y técnicos también fue alentado

"Patria es Humanidad" *-Jose Marti*

a emigrar, con el propósito de impedir el desarrollo económico y social de la nación. A estas acciones, se sumaría posteriormente, entre otros, el programa de visas para profesionales de la salud cubanos, implementado por Washington en el 2006 con similares objetivos.

Es por ello que, mientras persistan las políticas que favorecen el "robo de cerebros", dirigidas a despojarnos de los recursos humanos imprescindibles para el desarrollo económico, social y científico del país, Cuba estará obligada a mantener medidas para defenderse en este frente.

El doble rasero y el carácter inhumano de esta política, que estimula por una parte las salidas ilegales del país, y por otra obstaculiza la posibilidad de emigrar de manera legal, ordenada y segura, ha tenido la clara intención de convertir a los cubanos que desean establecerse en otros países, en supuestos opositores políticos y en un factor de desestabilización interna.

Como consecuencia de esta irracional e irresponsable política, a lo largo de todos estos años se han sucedido varias crisis migratorias: Camarioca en 1965, Mariel en



1980, y la "crisis de los balseiros" de 1994.

A pesar de ello, Cuba ha mostrado su permanente disposición a cooperar en la búsqueda de soluciones razonables a este complejo problema y ha trabajado sostenidamente por normalizar las relaciones con sus emigrados, favorecer las vías para una emigración ordenada y segura, así como

facilitar los viajes de los ciudadanos al exterior por asuntos particulares.

Las nuevas medidas migratorias anun-

ciadas por decisión soberana del Estado cubano, no constituyen un hecho aislado, sino que se inscriben dentro del proceso irreversible de normalización de las relaciones de la emigración con su Patria.

La inmensa mayoría de los cubanos asentados en más de 150 países mantiene vínculos estables con su Patria y con sus familiares, se opone al bloqueo y no desea la aplicación de una política agresiva contra su país de origen.

En la despedida a su Santidad Benedicto XVI, el 28 de marzo pasado, el Presidente Cubano expresó: "Reconocemos la contribución patriótica de la emigración cubana, desde el aporte decisivo a nuestra independencia de los tabaqueros de Tampa y Cayo Hueso y todos los que fueron sostén de los anhelos de José Martí, hasta los que se oponen hoy a quienes atacan a Cuba y manipulan el tema migratorio con fines políticos. Hemos realizado prolongados esfuerzos hacia la normalización plena de las relaciones de Cuba con su emigración que siente amor por la Patria y por sus familias y persistiremos en ello por la voluntad común de nuestra Nación".

WAS HURRICANE SANDY NICER TO CUBA THAN THE U.S.?! TWO GOVERNMENTS, TWO RESPONSES



Organized Evacuation. Villa Clara, Cuba.

Disorganized Chaos. Queens, New York, United States.

By Alison Bodine

Hurricane Sandy Devastates US and Cuba

132 people dead. An estimated 63 billion dollars in damages. 8.5 million people without power and heat. One might think that these statistics come from the effects of a devastating natural disaster hitting a developing country with little resources able to respond to powerful storms, but they do not. This is the aftermath of Hurricane Sandy in the richest country in the world, United States of America.

As hurricane Sandy swept across the eastern U.S. a path of destruction left the especially the poorest and most oppressed people devastated and without any support or resources. When the financial heart of the U.S., the New York Stock Exchange, opened 2 days after the storm, aid workers and doctors contracted by FEMA, the Federal Emergency Management Agency, were held up behind bureaucracy that left them waiting rather than helping those effected by the storm. Five days later 30,000 to 40,000 people in New York City were still in need of shelter, including 20,000 who live in public housing. After 11 days, tens of thousands of people in NYC public housing projects were still without heat, hot water and electricity.

Before hitting the U.S., Hurricane Sandy had already taken the lives of 65 people in the Caribbean. As the storm unleashed vicious winds and rain over Eastern Cuba, the provinces of Santiago de Cuba, Holguin and Guantanamo suffered the biggest losses. 11 people were killed, despite all precautions and care taken by the Cuban revolutionary government to save and protect human lives. 226,604 homes were completely or partially destroyed. Hundreds of thousands were left without electricity.

Yes, the impact of Hurricane Sandy in Cuba was immense, but looking at the aftermath, there is a clear difference the effect of this natural disaster on the people of Cuba and the people of the U.S.

It Starts with Preparation

Cuba is recognized internationally for their preparation for natural disasters that puts human lives before property and profits. As soon as it was clear the Hurricane Sandy was heading right towards Cuba, mass evacuations of over 340,000 people were organized.

As, Dr. Luis Foyo Ceballos director general of the Cuban Red Cross said in a recent interview "There is an important link to the longer-term disaster preparedness work of the Cuban and the government... Vital preparations we made prior to included evacuating people, livestock and valuables from low-lying areas that were at risk from sea and storm surges and strong winds."

Time to Rebuild

In a Oct 27th article from Reuters, Alexis Martinez, who had lost the roof off of his own house in the storm, summed up the response of the Cuban government and people to the destruction when he described "My wife is mobilized for public health and me for the rubble brigade. Our son is with his grandmother, and the roof we'll see about later. Right now there are things more urgent to do."

Rather than hiding behind long lines of red tape the government of Cuba took immediate steps to ensure that people would be able to get back to their normal lives as soon as possible. Workers poured in from all over the island to participate in work brigades, with over 500 people

joining 72 brigades charged with restoring electricity alone.

In every level, people in Cuba are mobilized for reconstruction. Workers in other provinces have given their support to Cubans affected by the Hurricane, such as the farmers in Artemisa that sent 980 tons of root vegetables. Cuban schoolchildren resumed classes almost immediately, even if their schools were damaged, they were reopened in peoples homes or community spaces. 186 grocery stores that faced extensive damages were relocated and reopened. Construction supplies are being sold at a 50% of their normal cost, with partial or complete subsidies from Cuban government, as well as low interest loans are available.

Why the Difference?

So how is it that Cuba, a small island nation that has suffered under a criminal U.S. blockade for over 50 years can provide the planning, organization and quick disaster relief to those devastated by Hurricane Sandy? Because the government of Cuba puts human life and needs first.

Days after the Hurricane U.S. President Obama visited the disaster areas, promising immediate assistance to victims, and then continued on his busy campaign trail. Cuban President Raul Castro went to Cuban city of Santiago, where he remained until all power to the city was restored.

Now people in the U.S. are left alone with little resources and big battles with insurance companies, while people all over Cuba are united together and mobilized for reconstruction. The road to recovery in both countries is long but revolutionary Cuba is leading the way.

The Canadian Network on Cuba Launches its "Sandy Relief Fund" Campaign

At 1:25 a.m. on Thursday, Oct. 25th, Hurricane Sandy entered Cuba just west of Santiago de Cuba as a category 2 hurricane. However the extent and speed of Sandy gave it a destructive capability as great as any of the category 5 hurricanes. Its central path took it rapidly through the provinces of Santiago de Cuba, Holguín and Guantánamo, the former two provinces being the most populous in Cuba after the City of Havana.

The hurricane devastated the heroic city of Santiago de Cuba, destroying houses, damaging public buildings and monuments, leaving the city without water supply, electricity, shops, markets and trees. Despite massive evacuations, it took a toll of some 11 human lives, an unusually high number in Cuba for hurricanes (mainly by collapsing buildings) — 132,733 houses were affected with 15,322 totally destroyed and 43,426 losing roofs. Massive damage, not yet fully calculated, was caused in Guantánamo and Holguín before the hurricane left this province near Banes, precisely where hurricane Ike had entered four years earlier.

President Raúl Castro, visiting Santiago de Cuba on Sunday, Oct. 28, said that only urgent temporary measures can be taken and that the recovery of Santiago would take years.

The emergency measures are well underway. Roads to healthcare centres and other essential services were speedily cleared. Linemen have been arriving from seven provinces to work together with local ones to restore electricity and telephone services. Roofing materials are arriving from neighbouring provinces such as Las Tunas. Temporary systems have been set up to provide 85% of the affected population with drinking water, and food supplies have

been arriving from throughout Cuba to Santiago and other severely affected parts of eastern Cuba. Cultural activity has not been overlooked, with some cultural centres being promptly and reopened, with artists from different parts of the country to join local artists in lifting the spirits of the people.

Good friends of Cuba have also been prompt to supply assistance. Venezuela, for example, has given 650 tons of help including non-perishable food, drinking water and heavy machinery to Cuba, with some going to Haiti. However, the need remains great. Cuba continues to give its help to Haiti, which, although not directly hit by Sandy, suffered much destruction from flooding,

with scores of lives lost. Cuban provinces as far east as Villa Clara and Cienfuegos suffered from high winds and flooding due to heavy rainfall.

Canadians have responded generously in the past to disasters affecting Cuba and other Caribbean countries

suffering from natural disasters. With great gratitude we recall that from coast to coast they responded to requests from the Canadian Network on Cuba, the umbrella group representing friendship organizations with Cuba. We forwarded to Cuba after 2008, when the country was ravaged by three hurricanes, more than \$404,000.00cad.

When on January 12, 2010, Haiti suffered the horrific earthquake, the CNC, recognizing that the most effective way of helping Haiti was by doing so through Cuba, mounted its TO CUBA FOR HAITI Campaign, which so far has collected and sent to the Cuban Medical Brigade in Haiti \$453,728.12 cad. Cuba needs substantial help, both immediate



Canadian Network on Cuba

and long term, in order to overcome the crisis brought on by hurricane Sandy. Cuba's Ministry of External Commerce (MINCEX) is establishing an account to receive the financial contributions. As in all our previous fundraising efforts, every single penny donated will go to Cuba. Charitable tax receipts will be provided.

Our experience with regard to Cuba's response to natural disasters is that it knows how to multiply the value of any donations it receives. We feel confident, based on the island's unsurpassed humanitarian work both within Cuba and in other countries, that it has the skills, the organization and the ethical and moral values to put whatever aid it receives to the best possible use.

The CNC urges everyone who can afford to do so to support this effort by giving a donation: Payable to your local Friendship organization * and please also write "CNC Sandy Relief Fund" on your cheque's memo line. They will forward the info/money for tax receipts to the Mackenzie-Papineau MF. 2. Payable to the 'Mackenzie-Papineau Memorial Fund' and mail to the Mackenzie-Papineau Memorial

Fund, Att: Sharon Skup 56 Riverwood Terrace Bolton, ON L7E 1S4. Please also write "CNC Sandy Relief Fund" on your cheque's memo line. Charitable receipts will be issued by the Mackenzie-Papineau Memorial Fund in 4-8 weeks (Charitable Org - Revenue Canada Reg, #88876 9197R0001). There will be no administrative charges, not even for postage stamps or anything else.

- Keith Ellis, Coordinator, CNC Sandy Relief Fund (905 822 1972; zellis@yorku.ca)

- Isaac Saney, CNC Co-Chair and National Spokesperson

- Elizabeth Hill, CNC Co-Chair and Treasurer

* In Vancouver and British Columbia you can make cheques payable to: Vancouver Communities in Solidarity with Cuba.



The CNC "Sandy Relief Fund" is supporting ongoing reconstruction projects in Eastern Cuba.

THE CASE OF THE CUBAN 5 must be an issue everywhere!

VANCOUVER ACTIVISTS CONTINUE ORGANIZING FOR CUBAN 5 HEROES

By Sarah Alwell & Noah Fine

Don't put me staring at the darkness.

Don't intend to try me as a traitor.

I am a man, a good one, you can be sure,

And I will die someday, facing the sun

~ Antonio Guerrero, one of the 5 Cuban Heroes

To know the case of the Cuban 5 is to know the great injustice and brutality that the U.S. government has quietly been carrying out against the people of Cuba for the last 5 decades and against 5 innocent men, who have been unjustly imprisoned in U.S. jails for over 14 years.

But to know the case of the Cuban 5 is to also know the tremendous courage, humanity and dignity of 5 men who sacrificed their lives in the battle for justice and against all odds, refuse to give up in the struggle for a better world.

Gerardo Hernandez, Ramón Labañino, Fernando Gonzalez, Antonio Guerrero and René Gonzalez, known internationally as the "Cuban 5" were 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 René 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 his homeland and visit his family in Cuba.

The Struggle Continues!

Thousands of people all over the world are joining together to demand the immediate freedom of the Cuban 5 heroes, and here in Vancouver BC, the campaign for their freedom persists stronger and louder than ever as the Free the Cuban 5 Committee Vancouver continues to organize monthly protest actions as part of the international "5th of the month for the Cuban 5" campaign.

On October 5th supporters of the Cuban 5 heroes in Vancouver gathered together

in front of the U.S. Consulate to demand freedom for the Cuban 5 and justice for the victims of anti-Cuba terrorism, marking the 36th anniversary of the 1976 bombing of Cubana flight 455 which killed all 73 innocent passengers on board. While the Cuban 5 remain imprisoned, the terrorist responsible for the bombing, Louis Posada Carriles, continues to walk free in Miami, Florida.

On November 5th, as part of the culmination of the 5th Annual Vancouver International Che Guevara Conference, dozens of people came together in front of the U.S. Consulate to once again demand freedom for the 5 Cuban Heroes. Many new faces joined to participate in the 84th monthly protest, most of which had heard about the case of the Cuban 5 for the first time during the Che Guevara Conference where the case of the 5 Heroes was an important topic of discussion throughout the workshops.

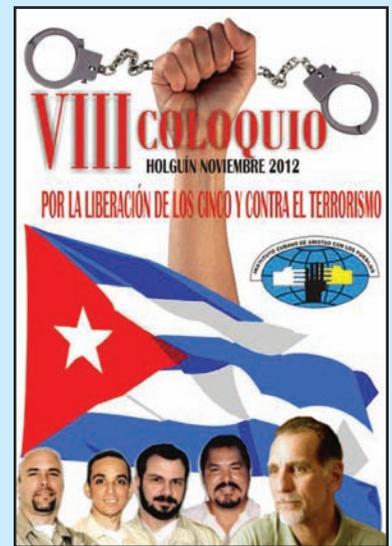
Protesters promised to return to the U.S. consulate every single month until the Cuban 5 are free and with their families in Cuba.

Next, the Free the Cuban 5 Committee Vancouver will be participating in the "8th Colloquium for the Freedom of the Cuban 5 Heroes & Against Terrorism" to be held in Holguin, Cuba, from November 28th – December 1st, where hundreds of people from all over the world will come together to discuss how we can strengthen the international campaign for the freedom of the 5 heroes.

The Free the Cuban 5 Committee Vancouver also encourages all people in Vancouver to join the 85th monthly protest action on December 5th outside the U.S. Consulate (1075 W. Pender St.) at 4pm to demand "Hey Obama: Free the Cuban 5 Now!"

For more information please visit:

www.freethe5vancouver.ca



Colloquium for the Cuban 5 in Holguín

Leonardo Pupo Pupo www.granma.cu

HOLGUIN.— More than 340 delegates from 47 countries, as well as ambassadors from the Spanish-speaking nations of ALBA and Haiti, are taking part in the 7th International Colloquium for the liberation of the five Cuban heroes and against terrorism, from November 28 through December 1 in this eastern city, AIN reports.

The diplomats will speak at the Holguín event, which brings together friends from various countries in solidarity with the cause of the Cuban Five unjustly imprisoned or detained in the United States for preventing acts of terrorism against their people.

This was announced at a press conference by Amaury Torno, Cuban Friendship Institute official in Holguín.

This year, the largest delegations are from Russia, Bulgaria, Italy, Venezuela, Canada, Spain and the United States, Torno confirmed.

As is the case in each event, this 8th Colloquium will become an international forum to denounce the injustices committed against Gerardo Hernández, Fernando González, René González, Antonio Guerrero and Ramón Labañino.

Participants will bring their solidarity to the residents of five Holguín municipalities damaged by Hurricane Sandy as it passed over eastern Cuba on October 25.

René, Ramón, Gerardo, Fernando and Antonio were victims of a biased and irregular trial in the United States and unjustly sentenced to long prison terms in that country where, risking their own lives, they obtained information about terrorist groups operating there in order to warn of and avert acts of violence against the Cuban people.

The Occupations of Iraq, Afghanistan, Palestine & Canada...

What are the Similarities? What are the Issues at Stake?



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