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U.S. behind detention of Venezuelan diplomat

Release Alex Saab!

By Sara Flounders

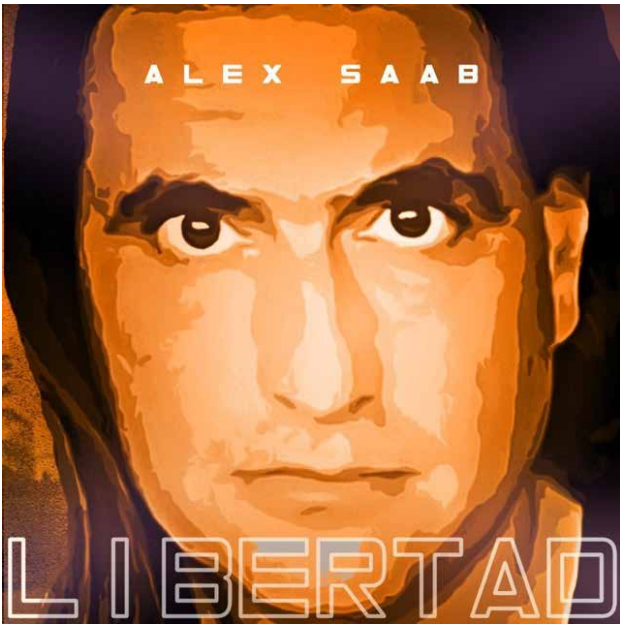
Sara Flounders is part of a humanitarian delegation to Cabo Verde, led by Bishop Filipe Teixeira of the Diocese of Saint Francis of Assisi, Catholic Church of the Americas. The delegation has tasked itself with exposing the U.S. role in the kidnapping, torture and detention of Alex Saab.

Nearly a year ago, on June 12, 2020, Alex Saab was pulled off a plane after the U.S. demanded his arrest, during a refueling stop in the Republic of Cabo Verde, a small and very poor island archipelago nation off the West Coast of Africa.

Saab, a Venezuelan diplomat to the African Union, was on a humanitarian mission to Iran at the time of his seizure to arrange emergency shipments of food, medicines and essential supplies for Venezuela. Held in Cabo Verde since then, Saab was held for months in prison in total isolation and darkness and has been tortured.

Alex Saab’s case has received international coverage, especially African news media and a great deal of attention in Venezuela, but in the U.S. corporate media, there has been almost no coverage. (See Venezuela’s orinocotribune.com, May 21) Plans for a large international campaign to defend Saab are being urgently prepared.

Saab never worked in the U.S., never lived in the U.S. and was involved in no transaction that included the U.S. Every aspect of Saab’s seizure and abusive treatment violates international law.



If the U.S. government can win its demand to extradite Alex Saab to the U.S., Washington could be emboldened to seize, charge and extradite anybody anywhere. This kidnapping is a chilling reminder of the notorious U.S. program launched in 2001 of secret rendition and disappearances of hundreds of people worldwide, some held for years without trial.

That Saab is a credentialed diplomat makes this violation of internationally guaranteed diplomatic immunity ominous. Although diplomats may be expelled from a

country, they are considered not susceptible to lawsuit or prosecution under any country’s laws.

U.S. sanctions on Venezuela, Iran and 37 other countries are illegal, violating international law and the U.N. Charter. Aimed at destabilizing a country through economic sabotage, sanctions create famines and shortages in essential supplies in order to target civilians.

The extradition request is entirely illegal, because there is no extradition treaty between the United States and Cabo Verde. Cabo Verde is an underdeveloped country whose population of 561,000 is spread over 10 volcanic islands and which imports 90% of its food.

U.S. targets Venezuela

The U.S. has attempted to stop shipment of any supplies to Venezuela for years and has especially targeted a direct, house-to-house, food delivery program, called the CLAP Program. This U.S. economic terrorism deprives Venezuelans of food.

The U.S. has long-standing charges against Alex Saab for his continuing diplomatic role of purchasing essential supplies for Venezuela, calling his work “money laundering.” In March, however, after three years of investigations, Swiss prosecutors found insufficient evidence to prosecute Saab.

The bogus charge against Alex Saab, as well as similar cases against North Korea’s Mun Chol Myong and China’s Huawei executive Meng Wanzhou, involve individuals engaged in perfectly legal international trade, not

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Another police murder protested 'We're here for Vincent'

By Martha Grevatt
East Cleveland, Ohio

A cross section of Cleveland area community activists turned out May 31 to express solidarity with the family of 18-year-old Vincent Belmonte, killed Jan. 5 by East Cleveland cops. Police stopped him while he was driving his partner to work, chased him and shot him in the back of the head. They then smeared Belmonte's character, portraying him as a carjacker although he was driving a borrowed car.

Belmonte's killer Larry McDonald, whose nickname is PacMan, is known as a "dirty cop" with a violent reputation.

The action opened with a land acknowledgment by Chrissy Stonebraker-Martinez of the InterReligious Task Force on Central America and Colombia. Speakers included Kareem Henton of Black Lives Matter Cleveland, Mariah Crenshaw of Chasing Justice, Brenda Bickerstaff



Members of Vincent Belmonte's family demonstrate for justice, East Cleveland, Ohio, May 31.



East Cleveland, Ohio, May 31.

WW PHOTO: SUSAN SCHNUR

of Safer CLE and Antoine Tolbert of New Era CLE. "We're here for Vincent," said Henton.

Members of the Belmonte family and their attorney — and members of other families whose loved ones were murdered by Cleveland and local suburban police — all gave powerful statements at the rally and along the route of the march that followed. Some plugged Safer CLE's ballot initiative effort to create an independent body to monitor police misconduct.

The rally site was chosen for its proximity to the place where unarmed Malissa Williams and Timothy Russell were chased by 62 patrol cars from Cleveland and five other local police departments Nov. 29, 2012. In the infamous "137 shots" incident, they were murdered in a hail of bullets fired into their vehicle.

Witnesses to the May 30, 2020, violent Cleveland police attack on a demonstration demanding justice for George Floyd spoke about their experiences one year ago.

The crowd stayed engaged, in part thanks to local Black Lives Matter activist and candidate for Cleveland City Council Aisia Jones, who chaired the rally. □

MUNDO OBRERO WORKERS WORLD

Workers World Party is a revolutionary Marxist-Leninist party inside the belly of the imperialist beast. We are a multinational, multigenerational and multigendered organization that not only aims to abolish capitalism, but to build a socialist society because it's the only way forward!

Capitalism and imperialism threaten the peoples of the world and the planet itself in the neverending quest for ever-greater profits.

Capitalism means war and austerity, racism and repression, attacks on im/migrants, misogyny, LGBTQ2S+ oppression and mistreatment of people with disabilities. It means joblessness, increasing homelessness and impoverishment and lack of hope for the future. No social problems can be solved under capitalism.

The U.S. is the richest country in the world, yet no one has a guaranteed right to shelter, food, water, health care, education or anything else — unless they can pay for it. Wages are lower than ever, and youth are saddled with seemingly insurmountable student debt, if they even make it to college. Black, Brown and Indigenous youth

Join us in the fight for socialism!

and trans people are gunned down by cops and bigots on a regular basis.

The ruthless ruling class today seeks to wipe out decades of gains and benefits won by hard-fought struggles by people's movements. The super-rich and their political representatives have intensified their attacks on the multinational, multigender and multigenerational working class. It is time to point the blame at — and challenge — the capitalist system.

WWP fights for socialism because the working class produces all wealth in society, and this wealth should remain in their hands, not be stolen in the form of capitalist profits. The wealth workers create should be socially owned and its distribution planned to satisfy and guarantee basic human needs.

Since 1959, Workers World Party has been out in the streets defending the workers and oppressed here and worldwide. If you're interested in Marxism, socialism and fighting for a socialist future, please contact a WWP branch near you. □

MUNDO OBRERO WORKERS WORLD

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Syria’s elections

‘The legitimate, democratic expression of the Syrian people’

Statement from the International Delegation to the 2021 Syrian Presidential Election

This independent delegation was assembled to witness the May 26, 2021, presidential election in Syria and to investigate on-the-ground conditions of Syrian life in the current period. Activists and journalists from Palestine, Syria, South Africa, France, Canada and the United States joined this delegation at the invitation of the Syria Solidarity Movement and Arab Americans 4 Syria. This joint statement summarizes our findings on the election and what it means for Syrians.

On election day, our delegation traveled to neighborhoods that had been outside of government control when the last presidential elections took place in 2014. Notably, we visited polling places in the towns of Arbeen and Douma in the hard-hit Eastern Ghouta region southeast of Damascus, where residents are returning and beginning to rebuild their homes, some after years of seeking refuge elsewhere. We

witnessed Syrians cast secret ballots in polling places where monitors from opposition parties were present alongside election officials, in accordance with the Constitution of the Syrian Arab Republic. We saw nothing to indicate unfairness or coercion in the casting of ballots.

We also conducted extensive interviews with members of the Syrian general public. We were not inhibited in any way from conducting these interviews and could freely do so outside the presence of government officials.

We overwhelmingly found that Syrian people place tremendous significance on this election. During and after the election, we observed huge enthusiasm. It appeared genuine and widespread. For many Syrians, the election represents the imminent ending of the war, the defeat of foreign plots and hope for the future. For young people, it encapsulates the first period of relative stability they have experienced in their living memory. Many expressed that they were not simply casting votes for their preferred candidate, but for a sovereign, unified Syria, free from imperialist

interference. For them, the presidential election was a referendum on the right of the Syrian people to determine their own future.

It is the unanimous conclusion of the undersigned representatives of the International Delegation to the 2021 Syrian Presidential Election that the reelection of President Bashar al-Assad, of the Arab Socialist Ba’ath Party and the National Progressive Front, is the legitimate, democratic expression of the Syrian people.

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Wyatt Miller, Minnesota Anti-War Committee, U.S.
Kobi Guillory, Co-chair, Chicago Alliance Against Racist and Political Repression
Amal Wahdan, Coordinator, One Democratic State Assembly Steering Committee, Syria Solidarity



PHOTO: JOHNNY ACHI, ARAB AMERICANS FOR SYRIA
Members of the International Delegation to the 2021 Syrian Presidential Election, Damascus, May 24.

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Alain Corvez, Adviser in international strategy, France
Rick Sterling, Journalist, U.S.
Paul Larudee, Retired Academic and Unretired NGO Administrator and Piano Technician □

‘Lab leak’ conspiracy signals New Cold War against China

By Joshua Hanks

Shortly after the Dec. 30, 2019, announcement by the Wuhan Municipal Health Authority that a dangerous new respiratory infection had been detected in the Chinese city, conspiracy theories began to spread faster than the novel coronavirus itself.

One which is receiving renewed attention claims the virus was created at the Wuhan Institute of Virology (WIV) and was either leaked or deliberately released. This conspiracy theory, supported only by wild speculation with no hard facts, represents one part of a broader offensive by the U.S. government against China, one which looks more and more like a new Cold War. It is supported by both U.S. capitalist parties, which aim to indefinitely preserve Western imperialism’s grip on the global order.

The first tweet mentioning the lab-leak conspiracy came Jan. 5, 2020, from @GarboHK, a self-described “British-HongKonger” who regularly retweets figures like Trump’s former secretary of state, Mike Pompeo. “Today the evil regime strikes again with a new virus,” his tweet read in part. It also blamed the 2002 SARS outbreak on China.

A few weeks later, on Jan. 23 the Daily Mail chimed in. This British tabloid, with a notable right-wing bias and of dubious credibility, nevertheless enjoys Britain’s highest circulation. It is a textbook example of how privately owned media operate under capitalism.

Far-right politicians in the U.S., including Sen. Tom Cotton and former Trump officials Mike Pompeo, Steve Bannon and Peter Navarro, quickly jumped on the conspiracy theory bandwagon. Navarro once faked a source in an anti-China book he authored. (New York Times, Oct. 16, 2019)

Many scientists and health experts around the world roundly rejected the lab-leak conspiracy theory when it first appeared, noting that a natural origin is far more likely. If previous epidemics are any indication, finding the exact origin of

the virus could take a long time. The origins of most Ebola virus outbreaks remain unknown, and it took scientists 14 years to discover the route SARS took from bats to civets to humans. (nature.com, May 27) The exact origin of the COVID-19 virus remains unknown, a year and a half after it was first described — but that doesn’t make the lab-leak conspiracy theory any more likely.

Now, over a year since the conspiracy theory began to gain traction among far-right politicians and media outlets, it’s still spreading — and not just in right-wing tabloids. The Biden administration and liberal-leaning corporate media are lending it credence.

On May 25, the Jeff Bezos-owned Washington Post (a regular critic of the Trump administration) ran a headline: “Fact check: How the Wuhan lab-leak theory for pandemic origin suddenly became credible.” On May 30, CBS News interviewed Scott Gottlieb, introducing him as a former Food and Drug Administration commissioner “who sits on the board of Pfizer,” without noting that he was a former Trump administration official taking full advantage of the “revolving door” between Washington and the corporate world.

Gottlieb claimed in the interview that despite “an exhaustive search” for an animal that could have spread the virus to humans, “We have not found such an animal.”

Much of the renewed interest in the “lab leak conspiracy” revolves around two articles recently published in the Wall Street Journal. One referred to an undisclosed document from an anonymous official, who allegedly served in former U.S. President Donald Trump’s administration; this nebulous source claimed three WIV researchers were sick in November 2019. The second article alleged Chinese authorities had stopped a journalist from entering an abandoned mine, where WIV researchers had recovered coronaviruses from bats in 2012. The researchers have long maintained that none of the viruses were SARS-CoV-2.” (nature.com, May 27)

So the current wave of interest in the conspiracy theory is not due to any new evidence. An undisclosed document from an anonymous former Trump administration official is hardly a bombshell, and the accusation that

Wuhan Institute of Virology researchers were sick in November 2019 was addressed months ago by a World Health Organization investigative team that traveled to China earlier this year.

Dr. Marion Koopmans, a virologist with the WHO team, told NBC News on March 11 that “there were occasional illnesses, because that’s normal. There was nothing that stood out.” She added that the number of researchers who reported cold-like symptoms was “maybe one or two. It’s certainly not a big, big thing.” A few researchers reporting cold-like symptoms in late autumn is not a smoking gun for the virus’ source.

Several other members of the WHO team disputed the reportage from papers such as the New York Times, which has accused China of obstructing the team and lacking transparency. Peter Daszak, a British zoonologist on the team, said on twitter: “[t]his was NOT my experience on @WHO mission. As lead of animal/environment working group I found trust & openness w/ my China counterparts. We DID get access to critical new data throughout. We DID increase our understanding of likely spill-over pathways.”

Nearly a year ago, the magazine Scientific American published an extensive article on June 1, 2020, detailing the work of Shi Zhengli, a leading researcher at the WIV. In 2016 she was part of a team investigating a mine where six miners had come down with a respiratory illness and two died. While researchers identified coronaviruses in six bat species inhabiting the mine, a fungus was identified as the source of the miners’ illness. Conspiracy theorists assert, without evidence, that they actually had the novel coronavirus, which the researchers sampled and brought back to the lab, and that



Wuhan Institute of Virology in Wuhan in China’s central Hubei province.

it later escaped or was deliberately released.

When the novel coronavirus’ spread became known in Wuhan in late December 2020, Shi and her team immediately began testing patient samples and found that five of seven patients had genetic material common to all coronaviruses. Tests were repeated, and samples were sent off for a full genomic sequence, which was completed in just 40 hours — this process generally takes weeks — and immediately uploaded to the U.S. National Center for Biotechnology Information database Jan. 5.

Meanwhile, Shi reviewed her lab’s records to check for any mishandling of materials, especially during disposal, and whether any of the samples her team had brought from mines or caves matched those of the new coronavirus. Everything came back normal, and no samples matched. “That really took a load off my mind. I had not slept a wink for days,” she said. So far, no lab in China has found samples of the novel coronavirus in its inventory.

Yet these facts do not deter those committed to attacking China. A change in leadership in Washington has only given new life to the lab-leak conspiracy, while the Biden administration keeps in place a “coronavirus fact sheet” hastily issued by the State Department during the Trump administration’s last days. At the time this “fact sheet” was released in late January, Secretary of State Pompeo was busy telling reporters that Trump would be the next president, despite having lost the election.

However, while Democrats attack conservatives for supporting the “Big Lie” that Trump won the 2020 election, they seemingly embrace the false accusations made against China. □

Alabama miners’ strike ‘We are Union!’

By Minnie Bruce Pratt
Centreville, Ala.

May 31 — In Brookwood, Ala., the 1,100 miners of United Mine Workers (UMWA) Local 2245 are entering the ninth week of a strike begun April 1 against Warrior Met Coal. The company has refused to meet the miners’ just demands, and the bosses brought in nonunion workers to replace the strikers. Business Wire describes Warrior as “the leading dedicated U.S.-based producer and exporter of high quality metallurgical (‘met’) coal for the global steel industry.” (Feb. 24)

Three hundred striking workers marched to Mine #7 on May 25 to confront the strikebreakers, chanting, “We are Union! UM doesn’t break!” Black

strikers on bullhorns called out by name the scabs who were crossing the picket line: “Get out from behind the truck, D__! Come back where we can see you!” Mine worker unionization in Central Alabama has a tradition of Black and white worker organizing that goes back 100 years, in defiance of state segregationist law and policy.

A group of miners sat down in the road to block the entrance; eleven were eventually arrested. One miner said, “We don’t feel like we’re breaking the law, when this company is trying to destroy our people.” (perfectunion.us)

When those arrested were released later in the day, they joined a union rally in progress, where speakers included Cecil Roberts, UMWA international president,

and Liz Schuler, secretary-treasurer of the AFL-CIO.

In 2016 the miners accepted a drastic \$6-an-hour pay cut and sacrificed health benefits to bring the company out of bankruptcy. Management promised the cuts would be restored once the business was solvent.

In a 2020 end-of-year statement Warrior CEO Walt Scheller said: “Despite the ongoing impact of COVID-19 on met coal demand and pricing worldwide, we were pleased to be cash flow positive again in the fourth quarter and nearly break even for the year.”



PHOTO: KIM KELLY

Striking miners in Brookwood, Ala., sit in to block scabs at Warrior Met Coal Mine #7.

But when the miners demanded restoration of their pay and benefits, the company offered a contract with only a \$1.50-an-hour increase and kept in place brutal discipline and firing policies. The company contract offered nothing to improve unsafe working conditions. After walking out, the miners voted 1,006 to 45 to reject the company offer.

The miners labor in one of the world’s most life-threatening workplaces. The Brookwood mines are 1,400 to 2,100 feet underground — some of the deepest vertical-shaft coal mines in North America. In 2001, methane gas explosions and a cave-in at one of the mines killed 13 workers, including a former high school classmate of this writer. Coal is extracted in the Warrior Met mines with highly mechanized “longwall” machines. Dire physical risk is omnipresent, including methane gas explosions, strata failure that shears limbs, dust that permanently damages lungs, longwall mechanisms causing head and neck injuries, and deafening machine noise.

The company’s hard line, which is keeping experienced miners out of work, is also having a damaging impact on the surrounding environment, as inexperienced picket-line crossers are expected to run complicated machinery. Nelson Brooke with Black Warrior Riverkeepers says a polluted wastewater discharge smelling of chemicals is now flowing into local creeks from Warrior Met. These are creeks where children of the workers swim in the summer. Brooke says the Alabama Department of Environmental Management should immediately shut down Mine #7 and issue a cease-and-desist order to the company. (abc3340.com, May 3)

Weekly solidarity rallies are being held at Tannehill State Park. Community support, including fundraisers and a food pantry, is helping the striking miners and their families keep going. □

Killer cops arrested after protests

By Jim McMahan
Seattle

After more than a year of protests, on May 27 Washington State Attorney General Bob Ferguson announced felony charges against three Tacoma cops for the brutal murder of Black resident Manuel Ellis.

The cops — Mathew Collins, Christopher Burbank and Timothy Rankine — were taken to Pierce County Jail. Collins and Burbank face second-degree murder and first-degree manslaughter charges. Rankine is charged with first-degree manslaughter.

The arrests very much reflect national year-long protests against the police murders of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor and many others, as well as the demands of the Ellis family and the anti-racist movement of the Seattle-Tacoma region for justice.

Ellis, after temporarily stopping traffic while walking across the street, had been quickly assaulted by cops, led by Burbank and Collins, who knocked him to the ground. They then “choke-held” him, shot him several times with taser darts and hogtied him with his wrists shackled to his ankles. He was forcibly held face down under pressure, with 20 cops on

the scene, in the same manner as George Floyd. Paramedics insisted that the cops get off him, but Ellis died at the scene.

His last words were, “I can’t breathe, sir.”

The murder of Ellis by Tacoma cops took place on the Tacoma city line late at night March 3, 2020, two months before the murder of George Floyd. It took 450 days and several bogus police investigations for the cops to be arrested. The whole case might have been shelved by lying cops and civilian officials had it not been for the earthshaking movement for George Floyd and so many other people of color. More and more, families and loved ones of those murdered by cops are emboldened to come forward and fight back.

When she participated in Black Lives Matter protests, Manuel Ellis’ sister, Monet Carter-Mixon, came across three people who had taken video of her brother’s murder. The videos showed Ellis “wasn’t even resisting,” according to one videographer.



Tacoma, Wash., July 10, 2020.

Ellis’ mother, Marcia Carter-Patterson, expressed disappointment that more cops on the scene weren’t criminally charged. The community is watching to see if the charges against the cops are followed up by prosecution.

Tacoma Action Collective, a Black community organization, has called for “Justice for Manuel Ellis” throughout the last year. A huge portrait of Ellis has been painted on a building in Tacoma’s historic Black community, and a community garden in his name has been built and maintained at the intersection where he was killed. □

Workers need unions – Amazon offers ‘despair closets’

By Betsey Piette

Just when it seemed impossible for Jeff Bezos and other Amazon bosses to be any more clueless and insensitive toward their workforce, the company introduced “Ama-Zen,” a wellness-isolation box for employees.

While the company touts these tiny cubicles as “self-care” spaces for warehouse employees to “focus on their mental and emotional well-being,” thousands of Amazon workers, responding to a video on Amazon’s boxes released on Twitter May 26, mocked them as “despair closets” and compared them to prison solitary confinement cells. (youtu.be/LUX2bLZ3acg)

One major problem with the \$300 million “Working Well” program is that Amazon’s overworked warehouse employees are not given enough time to even “momentarily escape” from their jobs. One Twitter feed comment described these chambers as “Mental health porta potties.” Another suggested: “At least the employees

now have a place where they can piss in a bottle in peace” (a reference to the company’s suggested “option” for delivery workers denied time to use bathrooms).

Overall, the thousands of comments denounced this union-busting company’s latest action as dystopian — and another example of how workers are treated like robots. The company actually refers to these boxes as a way “to help workers recharge their internal batteries.”

In a press release introducing their “interactive kiosks” May 17, the company states: “During shifts, employees can visit Ama-Zen stations and watch short videos featuring easy-to-follow well-being activities, including guided meditations, positive affirmations... [and]



Ama-Zen — designed “to recharge the internal battery.”

just pause and regroup.”

“Working Well” is supposed to provide workers with “physical and mental activities, wellness exercises and healthy eating support.” However, the company’s hype fails to mention how overworked workers, on their feet for 10-plus-hour shifts and constantly in motion, would ever have time or energy for this program.

While it may sound good, nothing in Amazon’s statement addresses the on-the-ground reality raised by workers during the Bessemer, Ala., Amazon union drive earlier this year, including the lack of adequate break times and the dehumanization of workers’ labor. Key issues included the unrelenting pace set by Amazon’s “time off

task” system, where workers are constantly surveilled and penalized with docked pay, for every second taken away from production time. Workers unable to maintain the inhumane, robotic pace risk termination.

The union drive raised the lack of adequate time for warehouse workers to leave workstations to get water or to go to the bathrooms — which are often the length of football fields away from their workstations. As for Amazon’s videos, many voiced concerns that they will just be more company propaganda trying to badger workers to go against union drives.

By offering coffin-size boxes for use during nonexistent breaks, management only exposes their contempt for workers. One comment suggested “Amazon has introduced the ‘Ama-Zen’...to distract from the fact that they busted a unionization effort in Alabama.” Amazon CEOs know that unionized Amazon workers with collective bargaining power would fight for and win genuine workplace improvements. □

Colombia, Brazil, Chile

Masses battle rightist regimes

By John Catalinotto

Ongoing struggles in three South American countries show the general uprising that began in 2019 is still challenging right-wing ruling groups that had resumed control of governments.

A look at events in Colombia, Brazil and Chile demonstrate that the struggle continues. Up to this point, the axis of the mass movement has been to remove the right-wing ruling groups controlling the governments. It has not yet reached the level of an open attempt to smash state power — the army, courts and police that the ruling oligarchy in each country controls.

Colombia – repression and resistance

A general political strike that began April 28 has put ruling circles in Colombia in turmoil for over a month, as it has drawn more and more sectors of Colombian society into activity. News and analysis from progressive media in the South American region oscillate between reporting President Iván Duque’s brutal military repression and documenting the courage of Colombia’s mass movement in continuing to defy this repression.

According to a report in resumenlatinoamericano.org May 29, during the month of strike actions, Colombia’s police — especially the fascist ESMAD or anti-riot cops — and right-wing death squads killed at least 69 people, wounded many more and disappeared between 89 and 346 people.

Along with this repression, as the writer Fernando Rubio in lahaine.org acknowledges in his recent article: “For the first time in the history of the nation, a general political strike focuses on paralyzing the economy and ceases to be a marginal protest phenomenon, to challenge and strike at the central core of oligarchic domination.”

“This process puts in a strategic place the working class and the rest of the mass

of workers who — allied with the youth, the Indigenous Minga, the middle classes and the peasant masses — have focused the current movement on the terrain of the dispute for power to dislodge from the vital points in the regime of domination, the oligarchic clique that appropriates the national wealth.”

This heroic struggle has awakened support among organizations worldwide that speak in the name of the working-class revolution. Some 28 such organizations, including Workers World Party and the Party of Liberation in Argentina, recently signed a statement expressing “sympathy toward the Colombian people, with special respect and value for the mass of youth who are on the first line of street fighting. And our greetings in solidarity with combative social and political organizations, who are committed to the uprising before talking with Duque, looking for parliamentary or electoral advantages.”

“As well as condemning Duque’s current repression, we also repudiate the repression against social leaders and former demobilized guerrillas, as this totally broke the 2016 Peace Accords signed with the FARC-EP — the regime never signed an accord with the ELN.” [Both the FARC-EP and the ELN were organizations engaged in guerrilla war against the rightist regime.]

This is only one of many such statements condemning the Colombian regime, its position as lackey to U.S. imperialism and defending human rights in Colombia.

Brazil – Bolsonaro out!

In more than 200 cities of Brazil, thousands of demonstrators demanded the impeachment of President Jair Bolsonaro, whom they accuse of criminally mismanaging the Corona pandemic crisis, which has already killed at least 460,000 of Brazil’s 211 million people. Photos of protests — which reached over 10,000 people in Rio



“Bolsonaro out!” Ten thousand demonstrated in Rio de Janeiro, May 29.

de Janeiro alone — showed signs calling Bolsonaro’s actions “genocide.”

The leftist organizations and student movements calling the protests distributed protective masks and disinfectant gel and called on the demonstrators to keep their distance.

Bolsonaro’s approval ratings are currently the worst since he took office on Jan. 1, 2019, and recent polls show that former President Luis Ignacio “Lula” da Silva would outpoll him by about 55% to 34% in a 2022 election. Bolsonaro won the 2018 election only because a conspiracy involving the Brazilian judiciary put Lula in prison and disqualified him from running for president or even campaigning for the Workers Party (PT) candidate. Lula has since been vindicated and released from prison.

Chile – constitutional elections

In Chile, popular street actions have been taking place since October 2019, and in mid-May these led to surprising electoral results throughout the country. Often in revolutionary street actions — which in Chile, as in Colombia, the state has met with brutal repression — the more active sectors of society, often the youth, go far ahead of what the masses of

voters are ready for.

The May 16 elections, however, reflected the changes in consciousness brought about by more than a year and a half of street actions. Argentine analyst Atilio Boron wrote in his May 19 article in lahaine.org, “Finally on Sunday [May 16] the result was a categorical triumph for the left and a crushing defeat for the right.”

Fewer than a third of the seats went to right-wing parties, which means these parties will be unable to veto changes to the fascist-era Constitution. Boron called it “the worst election of the right wing since 1965.”

“There were other equally emblematic defeats,” wrote Boron, “such as the one experienced in a traditional (and strategic) bastion such as the Mayor’s Office of Santiago, no less, which elected Irací Hassler, a young communist who defeated the incumbent Felipe Alessandri, grandson of the conservative former president Jorge Alessandri, who had run for reelection. Or the overwhelming victory of Daniel Jadue, communist mayor of the commune of Recoleta, north of Santiago, who won with 65% of the votes and is emerging as one of the best positioned pre-candidates for the presidential election to be held in November of this year.” □

Pakistan

Resistance to state violence continues

By Tania Siddiqi

On the Muslim holiday Eid Al-Fitr, Gujjar Nala and Orangi Nala residents, known as affectees, established a protest camp outside of the Karachi Press Club to draw attention to the ongoing demolitions of poor peoples’ housing taking place in Karachi, Pakistan. At the demonstration, protesters connected their struggle with struggles against state-sanctioned terror taking place elsewhere in the world.

One affectee, holding a Palestinian flag, stated that Israel’s occupation of Palestinian land, the demolition of Palestinian homes and systemic attacks against the Palestinian people are similar to the government and corporate entities’ acts of terror targeting Karachi’s poor workers. He explained how Israel’s barbarity against Palestinians is like Bahria Town and the Sindhi government’s displacement of Orangi and Gujjar Nala residents — oppressors inflicting violence against the oppressed for the sake of occupying and controlling land. (Fawad Hazan’s Tweet, May 13)

Since Workers World last reported on Karachi Metropolitan Corporation’s (KMC) “anti-encroachment” (gentrification) drive against people residing near



PHOTO: KARACHI BACHAO TEHREEK

May 17, protest outside of Supreme Court, Karachi.

the Orangi Nala and Gujjar Nala, the state continues its attempt to dispossess the people, while the people continue to resist this state violence.

Orangi Nala and Gujjar Nala affectees, along with progressive organizations including the Awami Workers Party-Karachi and Karachi Bachao Tehreek (KBT), protested outside of the Supreme Court Karachi Registry during a hearing May 17. They sought to maintain a court-ordered stay that would suspend the government’s demolition of affectees’ homes.

That same day, Pakistan Peoples Party, the dominating political party in Sindh, ransacked Awami Workers Party-Karachi’s office, used by KBT for meetings and organizational work and by the Gujjar Nala

Mutasireen Committee. On May 18, affectees were able to secure a stay order until June 1. While this was a victory for the people, the state responded with horrific acts of violence.

KBT reported that during court proceedings, at least three homes were being demolished near Moosa Colony, Gujjar Nala. (KBT’s Instagram, May 18) That night KBT reported that Younis, a 32-year-old man, was barbarically murdered

by Sindh police during a drug raid near Gujjar Nala. The police operation included a baton charge, which led to a stampede. In order to protect himself, Younis attempted to run away, but fell into the Nala. “The police then crushed his skull by throwing a [large] rock at him.” (KBT Twitter, May 19)

Abid Asghar, President of Gujjar Nala Mutasireen Committee, was brutally attacked May 24 for his involvement in resisting demolitions along the Organi and Gujjar Nala (streams). Days before Asghar’s attack, the home of Shakeel, another member of the Mutasireen Committee, was set on fire.

Amid growing state violence against resisters, KBT members went to Gujjar Nala May 26 to document the state’s violations of the court’s stay order. When

KBT members arrived, KMC employees told them that KMC was at Gujjar Nala to clean the drains. However, demolition workers hired by KMC informed KBT that they were there to demolish homes.

After blatantly lying to KBT and violating the court order, KMC began aggressively yelling at KBT members, shouting that KMC members — government officials — were not answerable to the people. The state then threatened to arrest a KBT member for filming the state’s intimidation tactics. Other KBT organizers formed a human chain around him and fought for his safety.

After the May 26 events, the KBT issued a statement that they expected an escalation in KMC’s brutality targeting affectees, activists and KBT’s legal team. They called for solidarity and support to ensure that workers’ homes remain protected. (KBT Instagram, May 28)

For those of us in the Global North, who reside at the center of the imperialist empire, now more than ever we must engage in international acts of solidarity and generate strategies and tactics to strengthen our alliances with worker-led grassroots organizations around the world.

Solidarity with Orangi Nala and Gujjar Nala affectees, Gujjar Nala Mutasireen Committee, Awami Workers Party-Karachi, Karachi Bachao Tehreek and all who dare to struggle against state violence! Let’s build a workers’ world! □

Palestinians, allies bring struggle to D.C.

By Minnie Bruce Pratt

Many thousands of people demonstrated for Palestine May 29 in Washington, D.C., calling for an end to U.S. aid to Israel and a global grassroots campaign to #SanctionIsrael for its unrelenting violation of Palestinian rights and occupation of Palestinian lands. The protest was called by American Muslims for Palestine and the U.S. Council of Muslim Organizations, and it was endorsed by more than 100 organizations of diverse constituencies.

As people converged on the Lincoln Memorial, speakers demanded the U.S. government sanction Israel for its deadly attacks on Palestinians, including the war crimes committed during its latest attack on Gaza. During the Israeli May 9-20 military assault, at least 254 Palestinians

were killed, including 66 children and 39 women, and 1,910 were wounded, according to the Health Ministry in Gaza.

Rockets of the Israeli forces — fired from the protection of the “Iron Dome” funded by the U.S. — wreaked massive destruction on the already devastated infrastructure of Gaza. The Biden administration is currently proceeding to license \$735 million in weapons sales to Israel, despite public outcry as well as unprecedented opposition from some members of Congress.

Jinan Shbat, national organizer for the Arab-American Anti-Discrimination Committee (ADC), noted the significance of pro-Palestine actions in the U.S. in terms of the size and diversity of a crowd that included Jewish, African-American and other ethnic and religious groups. “For so long, our tax dollars have funded



A massive crowd rallied for Palestine at the foot of the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, D.C., May 29.

the ethnic cleansing of the Palestinian people,” she said. “We came today so we can say it loud and clear to this

administration that we as Americans will no longer be complicit in funding these atrocities.” (Arab News, May 30). □

Palestine’s relationship to class struggle worldwide

By Larry Holmes

The excerpted remarks are from a May 27 webinar: “From Palestine to Alabama — The Revolutionary Transformation of the Working Class — A Conversation with Larry Holmes,” sponsored by Workers World Party. Holmes is WWP’s First Secretary. Go to tinyurl.com/23u6b5he to see the entire program.



Larry Holmes

WW PHOTO: LIZA GREEN

This is such an auspicious occasion with the tremendous developments in Palestine. It had felt like the repression of the U.S.-backed racist Israeli state had paralyzed the movement and even had an impact on the solidarity movement.

But what we’ve seen in the month of May is nothing short of a revolutionary revival of the Palestinian Liberation struggle, in a way that on many levels is unprecedented. Because, in addition to the brave resistance of Hamas soldiers fighting with inferior weapons against the tanks and the planes and the bombs that the Israelis are supplied with by the U.S., Palestinians had a general strike [on May 18].

This is the first of its kind, not only in the occupied territories of Gaza and the West Bank, but even in the Arab communities inside Israel.

It’s the first general strike joined by millions, supported by the Palestinian General Labor Federation, by other unions and by community organizations.

And this brought into this resistance struggle — against this new violent Israeli attack on the Palestinian people — different social forces and gave the liberation struggle a class character. That’s what a general strike does: ratchet the struggle up a couple of notches.

The world on both sides of the class barriers is paying a lot of attention to it. Maybe we are being a little equivocal because we have to see what happens now. This very well may be the beginning of the third Intifada of the Palestinian people, on top of what happened 20 years ago when then-Gen. Ariel Sharon offended the Palestinians by going to the Al-Aqsa Mosque, and then what happened approximately 13 years earlier with the first Intifada.

And this could be the biggest Intifada. It seems there is more unity and more solidarity by millions of Palestinians and Arabs in the occupied areas and around the Middle East. And to my recollection, there’s never been more international solidarity.

One has never seen so many protests,

not only in large numbers but thousands of protests all over the globe — Europe, Asia, Latin America, Africa, South Africa, the Middle East, the United States — but also the size of these demonstrations in the tens of thousands if not hundreds of thousands of people.

Palestine electrifies the world

This revival of the struggle of the Palestinian people in such a strong united way, demanding an end to the apartheid Israeli state, may be the struggle that wakes up the workers and the oppressed of the world — because it appears to have electrified the workers and the oppressed everywhere. And the analogy with the struggle of the people of the United States, particularly Black and Brown people against racist police terror, is obvious.

It is the obligation, the revolutionary duty of communists, and all those who are in the class struggle, to help lead ultimately toward worldwide socialist revolution. In order to make that real, we have to support the national liberation struggles. And none is more important than the struggle of the Palestinian masses, their liberation forces against the racist, apartheid Zionist state and its occupation.

The workers have to support that — just like they need to support the uprising against the police here in this country. And it’s our job as revolutionary communists to do whatever we can, not only to make

statements but to turn those statements into actions. And the U.S. workers have a special role in this.

The Israeli apartheid state is more than the racist oppressor of Palestinians and Arabs; it’s a bulwark of U.S. imperialism. Its tanks, its weapons, its bombs are paid for by the U.S. And so we in the U.S. have an extra responsibility. And the U.S. labor movement must now feel the hot global pressure to reverse its longtime, sad unfortunate position of supporting the reactionary racist state of Israel.

Self-determination means breaking with imperialism

It is not up to the oppressor, to the imperialists, to the colonial colonizer to determine who negotiates or who represents the national liberation struggle of a people — it’s up to the people. And this tremendous powerful unity amongst the Palestinian people, manifested through a general strike, shows that they’re united.

The Israelis want to be recognized as the official representatives of the Palestinian people. The unity on the ground is so overwhelming that the Palestinian people are even thinking about that. They’ve demonstrated where the power lies.

As for the workers, the workers’ movement, the U.S. labor movement and for the left, we’re improving based on some of the statements in solidarity with the Palestinians coming from various unions, various radical trade unions. They’re a good start, but they can only be viewed as a start.

Ultimately, every struggle is a continuation of a struggle that must move to a higher and higher level. The aim of our struggle with respect to the labor movement, however you define that in this country, is to break with U.S. imperialism — period! Break with being associated with or supporting U.S. imperialist policy in relation to Palestine, the Middle East, Africa, Asia, Latin America and all over the world.

That’s the only solution, and it’s what

we used to call working-class internationalism, where the goals of the imperialists mean nothing. We are against them [the imperialists]. The objectives and goals of a global working-class movement include all the oppressed people, have no boundaries, no geographical boundaries, no language boundaries, not even cultural boundaries. As important as culture is, that has to be the direction.

That’s what the Palestinian response to this latest aggression has reminded me of, what this new Intifada is showing us, whether it’s supporting the uprising or the Black Lives Matter struggle, which is so important.

Remember what was happening a year ago; it was a global rebellion by the millions happening in Seattle; Portland, [Oregon]; as well as Minneapolis and all over the country, in London and other places.

Workers’ assemblies on Palestine

It’s our job to fight, to strategize, to plan to work with others to see that this struggle has an anti-capitalist character and also has a class character, which means calling on unions, on the labor movement, to hold work stoppages in solidarity with the struggle against racism, so that it is known that this is a class struggle.

If we don’t do this, then we know what will happen one way or another, even after tremendous uprisings with millions of people militantly taking the streets and shutting shit down. As that unravels and slows down, the message will be usurped by the Democrats. The only way that you can stop that is if the struggle, more and more, takes on an anti-capitalist and class character.

We’re going to have to come up with a strategy for labor in relationship to showing maximum solidarity with the Palestinian people and their just liberation struggle.

I’ve raised the wisdom of having a workers’ assembly in solidarity with Palestine. Maybe because of COVID, it still needs to be a virtual event. But people can strategize and see if it’s safe for something on a local or regional level, to be face to face.

But wrapping our heads around the prospects and the timing for a national workers’ assembly in solidarity with Palestine, as a planning session with trade unionists and workers, to map out a strategy that pushes the labor movement in the right direction — maybe that’s not the most important thing. But until someone can think of something better, I think it should be on the table. □

But what we’ve seen in the month of May is nothing short of a revolutionary revival of the Palestinian Liberation struggle, in a way that on many levels is unprecedented. Because, in addition to the brave resistance of Hamas soldiers fighting with inferior weapons against the tanks and the planes and the bombs that the Israelis are supplied with by the U.S., Palestinians had a general strike [on May 18].

On supporting the Palestinian struggle

By Olujimi Alade

Being a recovering liberal, May 2021 might have possibly been the most important month in my entire life. Seeing revolutionary theory put into practice by attending a rally on May Day and the #SaveSheikhJarrah rally May 15 has really inspired me to invest more deeply into political organizing.

The May 1 events enabled me to get a first-hand view of how the capitalist system affects the lives of the working class, young and old. Witnessing speakers from all walks of life talk about how the U.S. economic system has wrecked their lives really hit home to this recent college graduate, who has to pay the bills by working in the service industry.

As great as the May 1 event was, it seemed to be missing something. The problem was that I didn't know what, until I attended the #SaveSheikhJarrah rally two weeks later.

While hearing stories from the U.S. proletariat was necessary for my political development, I needed to hear the class struggle from beyond the borders of the wealthiest country in history. I needed to witness the fervor and passion of activists resisting the clutches of U.S. imperialist hegemony. I found this at the rally for Palestine on May 15.

Marching from Rittenhouse Square all the way to the Philadelphia Art museum, along with thousands of other people, inspired me to be the best ally I could possibly be for the oppressed and marginalized, not just in the United States but all over the world. Starting with #SaveSheikhJarrah and Palestine liberation as a whole, I will use my privilege as a Western leftist living in the imperial core to extend my solidarity to all people seeking self determination.

Concrete solidarity

By reading articles and listening to videos by Palestinian activists, I learned several ways to be a great ally to the Palestinian cause. The first one is to boycott corporations and companies that are complicit in Israel's oppression of Palestinians. The sad part about companies like Ben and Jerry's, HP, Puma

and Sabra is that they spent the past year exploiting righteous outrage at the uptick of state-sanctioned violence against Black and Brown people in the U.S. — while aiding state-sanctioned violence in the Gaza strip. They were doing business with companies that are bankrolling the Israeli army, creating a biometric ID system that Israel uses to restrict Palestinian movement, or they were just looking the other way while Palestinians are being oppressed daily. (tinyurl.com/7xdxxwkc)

We can't allow these charlatans to get away with continuing their exploitation of people outside U.S. borders by downplaying their exploitation within U.S. borders. Now that the younger generation is starting to realize the realities of systemic oppression, it can send a real message to the capitalist class by hitting them where it hurts the most: their pocket books.

Another way to be an ally is by boosting the voices of Palestinian people. As a major backer of the Israeli state, the U.S. and its media outlets have a vested interest in painting Israel in the best light possible while demonizing the Palestine Liberation Organization, Hamas and other Palestinian leaders.

A study conducted by the Canadian Research organization 416Labs uncovered just how slanted in Israel's favor U.S. media coverage has been. The five major U.S. newspapers — Chicago Tribune, Los Angeles Times, New York Times, Washington Post and Wall Street Journal — have cited Israeli sources over 2.5 times more than Palestinian sources and have published stories centering Israeli people four times more than those centering Palestinians. (*The Intercept*, Jan. 12, 2019)

With that kind of biased reporting, I myself once bought into the lie that Palestinians were a dangerous threat to Israel's peaceful settlement. Palestinian voices are not only being silenced through the press, they're being silenced on the ground: Since 2000, the state of Israel has been responsible for the murder of 46 Palestinian journalists. With the whole world watching, Israel bombed a building housing at least 17 local and international media outlets, including Al-Jazeera and

The Associated Press, in Gaza City May 15.

With all this violent repression, Palestinians are fighting an uphill battle to get their voices heard. What you can do as leftists in the U.S., or in the West in general, is feature the reporting and work of Palestinian journalists as much as possible. And it is extremely important to find Palestinian content creators and boost their visibility as well by giving them a shout-out whenever you can. With more representation in the mainstream, Palestinian authors, journalists, creators, etc. will be afforded the ability to showcase themselves and their humanity and with this visibility win more people over to their vital struggles.

Fight Zionist propaganda

In addition to amplifying Palestinian voices, it is important for us as Western leftists to fight back against bad-faith propagandists anywhere and in any way we can. With the future of Palestinian communities like Sheikh Jarrah hanging in the balance, we can't afford to have irrelevant squabbles over political ideologies. What is important is making sure the fallacious fearmongering of the Ben Shapiros, Richard Spencers and Michael Knowles of the world isn't affecting popular opinion and discourse about the struggle for Palestinian liberation.

We must be intrepid in our stances and bold in our dismantling of spurious assertions about Israel's alleged victimhood. This present moment is an opportune time for leftists and revolutionaries of various persuasions to unite and rally behind a noble and just cause.

Lastly, we need to contribute materially to the survival of Palestine and its people. In addition to spotlighting Israeli voices, the U.S. has been contributing to the settler-colonial project known as Israel for a long time. As of 2020, the U.S. has provided Israel with over \$146 billion in military, economic and missile "defense" funding. Adjusted for inflation, this amount



WW PHOTO: TONI ARENSTEIN

Protest for Palestine in Brooklyn, N.Y., May 15.

is equivalent to \$236 billion in 2018 dollars, making Israel the largest cumulative recipient of U.S. assistance since World War II. (tinyurl.com/c9vcud9b)

In contrast, Palestine is coming off debilitating sanctions that have left it with an unemployment rate of 52% and a poverty rate of around 53%. (*nbcnews.com*, May 1, 2019) With such dire circumstances facing Gaza residents, it is necessary for workers in the imperialist countries, who are better off by comparison, to contribute financially to the Palestinian cause to the best of our ability.

Even if we don't have the discretionary income to donate, we can certainly boost Palestinian organizations that are in need of assistance. It is important, however, that we donate exclusively to communities and organizations led and run by Palestinians themselves. Just like with the Black Lives Matter movement that picked up steam last year, there will be companies, corporations and other like-minded actors who will exploit the Palestinian cause for their own fame and wealth. Always make sure you know exactly whom you're donating to and which charities and organizations you're boosting.

If we all do our due diligence, we can do our part in giving Palestinians the support they need in order to continue their valiant fight. □

Abolition and Disability Justice Collective Solidarity with Palestine statement

From Workers World Party's Disability Justice and Rights Caucus:

*The Abolition and Disability Justice Coalition (abolitionanddisabilityjustice.com), which issued the (following excerpted) wonderful statement of solidarity with Palestine, describes itself as "abolitionist psychiatric survivors, people with disabilities and their accomplices. We believe in and work toward the liberation of all." It subscribes to the 10 principles of a leading disability justice organization, *Sins Invalid*, the first of which, *Intersectionality*, quotes Audre Lorde: "We do not lead single issue lives," and adds "Ableism, coupled with white supremacy, supported by capitalism, underscored by heteropatriarchy, has rendered the vast majority of the world 'invalid.'" (The complete statement is online at workers.org.)*

*The Disability Justice and Rights Caucus of Workers World Party changed our name last year from the Disability Rights Caucus because of the vanguard role of the Disability Justice Movement. We join with the ADJC, *Sins Invalid* and the Autistic People of Color Collective in their solidarity with the Palestinian people.*

The Abolition and Disability Justice Collective condemns Israel's most recent massacres of Palestinians and its ongoing occupation and settler colonization of Palestine. Disability justice cannot exist under settler colonialism, military occupation, imprisonment and apartheid. We write this in support of the Palestinian struggle for freedom, dignity and self-determination.

Israeli settler colonization is a disability justice issue that underscores the urgency of abolition and its internationalist dimensions. Israel routinely maims and traumatizes Palestinians, using money, weapons and policing tactics from the U.S. and Canada, among other settler-colonial states.

Israel has systematically targeted and killed disabled and nondisabled Palestinians, and Israel's ongoing violence is uniquely disabling for children and Palestinians of all ages. Disability is spatially concentrated in the refugee camps and in Gaza because of the violence of the occupation, and there is a "layering" of disablement, especially in Gaza, as the numbers of disabled people increase with every act of warfare on an already overburdened infrastructure.... (icph.birzeit.edu)

Israeli police have brutalized and killed countless disabled people with impunity. Police also cause injuries and trauma with these technologies, resulting in the disablement of negatively racialized people. Within the 1948 lines we have seen an intensification of racialized police violence against Palestinian citizens of Israel....

Israeli restrictions on the movement of people and goods...prevent disabled Palestinians from gaining access to aids like wheelchairs, prosthetics, hearing aids, medications and more.... Due to chronic power outages in occupied Palestine, people often lack light to communicate using sign language, cannot use equipment powered by electricity to move or breathe and cannot dependably keep life-sustained medications at required temperatures. ...



PHOTO: MUSTAFA HASSONA

A Palestinian disabled man throws a stone with a slingshot towards Israeli forces during a "Great March of Return" demonstration at the Israel-Gaza border, Sept. 6, 2019.

Palestinians with disabilities are less likely to be able to escape the buildings that Israel bombs in time to save their lives. Palestinians with disabilities are less likely to be able to stand in long lines to get through checkpoints to access a hospital, school or loved ones....

We bear witness to the latest wave of atrocities as they continue to unfold, and we say 'No more!' Disability justice requires solidarity with Palestine. [A list of 10 specific demands is given here.] Abolition and apartheid cannot coexist. There is no disability justice under military occupation. Palestine must be free. □

Ohio

‘Good riddance’ to ICE detention in Butler County

By Martha Grevatt

Ohio immigrant rights organizations and attorneys held a virtual press conference May 28 to announce a win: Immigrants will no longer be subjected to the deplorable conditions of detention at the Butler County Jail, in Hamilton. Organizers are demanding Immigration and Customs Enforcement release everyone detained in the jail.

Abdoulaye Lam and Demba Diawara, who were later deported to Mauritania, gave prerecorded testimony about the abusive treatment they were subjected to in the jail. Prison guards beat them and called them racial slurs. The food served was “horrible.” They were not given clean clothes. There were no hot showers, and the building was unheated in the winter. When they



Third International Human Rights Day protest outside Butler County Jail, Dec. 10, 2020.

complained of stomach pain, they were not allowed to see a nurse.

“This is something I will never, ever forget,” Lam said. Diawara demanded: “Shut down this jail!”

Lam and Diawara had spent many years in the U.S. and had small businesses in the community before being arrested and ultimately deported. Their

spouses are legal residents, and their children were born here. “My daughter cries every single day,” said Diawara.

Speakers credited the “bravery and courage of the people who are inside,” like Lam and Diawara, for sending out letters about jail conditions, which led to a lawsuit. Rather than refraining from subjecting detainees to an inhumane situation, notoriously racist Butler County Sheriff Richard K. Jones ended the county’s contract with ICE.

Lynn Tramonte, representing the Ohio Immigrant Alliance, said, “We say good riddance.” Previously ICE ended its arrangement with the Morrow County Jail, where 100% of those incarcerated had contracted COVID-19 after being denied face masks, soap and implementation of social-distancing measures. Similar victories have been achieved in Georgia and Massachusetts.

Immigrant rights activists are

collaborating with state abolition groups to fight intolerable county jail conditions, which people incarcerated by the criminal injustice system also face. Justice will not be served if people without documents are merely transferred to other horrible facilities — or if they are deported.

“Ohio is not a place where we want to detain immigrants,” said Danya Contractor, with the mutual aid group Ohio Immigrant Visibility. The two remaining county jails in Ohio that contract with ICE are Geauga County in Chardon and Seneca County in Tiffin.

Technically, anyone who has been in the U.S. since at least November 2020, and is not deemed to pose a risk to the community, is legally eligible for release. However, immigration attorney Brian Hoffman pointed out that this is nearly impossible to prove before a judge without an attorney. Only 14% of migrants in ICE detention have attorneys, and the percentage is even lower in some states.

Abolish ICE! Free them all! □

LGBTQ2S+ people Overrepresented in prisons

By Mirinda Crissman

At every stage in the criminal injustice system, LGBTQ2S+ people are overrepresented, including within the juvenile justice system.

According to the Prison Policy Initiative, this is true from arrest to sentencing to incarceration to probation to parole: “In 2019, gay, lesbian and bisexual individuals (with an arrest rate of 3,620 per 100,000) were 2.25 times as likely to be arrested than straight individuals (with an arrest rate of 1,610 per 100,000). This disparity is driven by lesbian and bisexual women, who are 4 times as likely to be arrested than straight women (with an arrest rate of 3,860 per 100,000 compared to 860 per 100,000). Meanwhile, gay and bisexual men are 1.35 times as likely to be arrested than straight men (with a rate of 3,210 arrested per 100,000 compared to 2,380 per 100,000).” (tinyurl.com/LGBTQbehindbars)

Incarceration rates reflect the discriminatory trends of the arrest rates, with queer women facing the brunt of disproportionality. They, along with trans women — whose sexual orientation may overlap with queer identity or not — tend to have the least amount of data to show what is happening to them.

“Once behind bars, trans people face extremely high rates of harassment and physical and sexual assault, are frequently denied routine health care and are at high risk of being sent to solitary confinement. Black and Pink found that 44% of transgender, nonbinary gender and [Indigenous] Two Spirit [people] in their sample were denied access to hormones they requested.” (Prison Policy Initiative)

This high percentage of LGBTQ2S+ people persists in prisons, jails and migrant detention centers and interlocks with other oppressions based on race, disability and income. Data demonstrates that Black, Latinx and Indigenous people are locked up in numbers incredibly disproportionate to their share of the population. Many LGBTQ2S+ people are people

of color, and many have disabilities.

There are no data on Two-Spirit Natives incarcerated. However, according to the Appeal, South Dakota leads the country on jail admissions based on arrests for nonviolent crimes, and Native people account for the majority of all arrests in that state.

“In South Dakota, the people who are arrested and admitted to jail are disproportionately Native. Although Natives make up 8.7% of South Dakota’s population, they are roughly half of those booked into jails in the state. Racial disparities in incarceration rates exist nationwide — Black people are jailed at more than 4 times the rate of white people — but disparities in South Dakota are far greater: According to data from the Vera Institute of Justice, Natives between the ages of 15 and 64 are incarcerated at 10 times the rate of white people in South Dakota.” (The Appeal, Sept. 18, 2019)

Roots of oppression

Gender-based oppression and oppression based on sexual orientation have their roots in the rise of private property and capitalism. These oppressions have similar roots as other class-based oppressions like race and disability.

Oppression based on gender and sexual orientation is maintained through various social enforcements such as, but not limited to, criminalization and the structure of the nuclear family. These tactics rely on the punishing power of imposed isolation, confinement and imprisonment.

Overrepresentation of LGBTQ2S+ people in the criminal legal system is largely due to obstacles LGBTQ2S+ youth face after fleeing abuse and lack of acceptance at home. In order to survive, many are pushed toward drug sales, theft and sex work — which dramatically increase the risk of arrest and confinement.

Up until 1973, the American Psychiatric Association listed homosexuality in its Diagnostic and Statistical Manual (DSM). That medical definition — and the assumptions that continued even after it was delisted — has been

used to confine, isolate and punish many LGBTQ2S+ folks. Because of the material conditions faced by LGBTQ2S+ individuals, many find themselves with high rates of depression, anxiety and suicidal ideation. In this context, someone needing mental health care can end up confined for an indefinite stint in a hospital under strict surveillance — experiencing something more like punishment than help.

Shared struggles, abolition, liberation

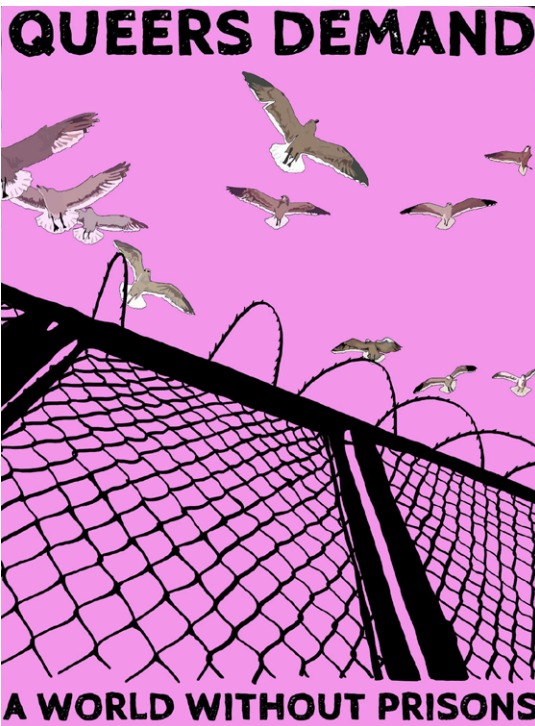
Liberation for those oppressed based on their gender or sexual orientation means envisioning and building a world without prisons, jails and migrant detention centers. These structures do not keep people safe from violence, but perpetuate violence rooted in the origins of these institutions on this continent.

Prisons, jails and detention centers in the U.S. evolved from enslavement of African people. Enslavement legally codified Black people as property. During the shift from slavery to the system of convict leasing to today’s mass incarceration, there have been continuously shared struggles to abolish these institutions that are based on profiting on people.

Now the fight has turned to ending the profit-making prison-industrial complex and abolishing the legal status of capitalist private property. Abolition also means the end to borders and criminalization of migrants, who are simply workers and oppressed people seeking to find a place they can survive.

Societal organization based around meeting human needs can and must be built in the wake of the afterlife of enslavement.

Many of the reasons LGBTQ2S+ people end up being held in prisons, jails and detention centers could be alleviated first and foremost by abolishing capitalism. This project of abolition — whether it be prison abolition or the abolition of



“We reject hate crimes legislation, ‘gender-responsive’ prisons, and all other measures that use gay rights rhetoric to expand the systems that murder and imprison us. We are in solidarity against a prison industrial complex that targets people of color, immigrants, queer and trans people, sex workers, and poor people. We believe in queer imagination and transformative justice to build a new world based on liberation and interdependence.”

— Art and Caption by T. Boucher

capitalism — is not simply a negation. It is a generative project that requires collective building.

This means building up social support for LGBTQ2S+ youth within families, schools, communities and other institutions; eliminating discrimination against LGBTQ2S+ people in housing, employment, and other realms; eliminating homelessness, for housing is a human right; ending criminalization of sex work; and providing free, gender-affirming health care for all.

LGBTQ2S+ people’s liberation is bound to the struggle for Black liberation, just as it is bound up with the struggle for disability justice. Our liberation is bound to the struggle against settler colonialism and capitalism at home and around the world.

No cages! No borders! We will accept nothing less. □

End privatization of prison mail!

By mYia X and Phebe Eckheldt
Boston

Banning paper letters for the incarcerated: Would you consider this torture? Would you consider this sensory deprivation? Would you consider this a violation of human rights? We do!

Imagine not having seen your family, children, loved ones for years, and now you are unable to receive paper mail from them. This means no birthday, anniversary or graduation cards. No love letters or picture postcards. No crayon drawings from your 4-year-old or photos of the new baby in the family. Nothing to hang on the wall in your cell to look at daily and cheer you up. A letter is tactile, something you can hold in your hand, smell perfume on, read over and over. It is a lifeline to those behind bars.

Ban on paper mail is ‘punishment’

Susan M.’s disabled brother has been in prison in Massachusetts for 27 years. She explained to Workers World: “This is gratuitous punishment. The Department of Correction weaponizes COVID-19 to further isolate prisoners. There have been no visits since last March, only adding to the previously escalating restrictions affecting contact between inside and outside.

“Months prior to COVID-19, the DOC curtailed written correspondence by banning prisoners’ receipt of original hard-copy mail. Cards and letters are now sloppily photocopied by disgruntled guards. Nothing from loved ones is ever held by the incarcerated. Such constraints cut off the family and surveil us at the same time. Everything that is written between us is seen by staff and stored.”

Susan explained further: “This practice has a chilling effect. Correspondence is a lifeline inside. Some people get only one or two letters a year. Communication is an intimate connection that makes them feel human again. They can also tell us what is happening, give advice and help us. This reciprocal contact restores their humanness. It keeps them connected to the larger world.”

In Massachusetts, guards are photocopying all letters that come into the Souza-Baranowski Correctional Center and six other prisons. Guards resent having to do this, and copies are often illegible or missing pages. State prison administrators and correctional officers claim this process is needed to deter contraband from being sent in.

There is “not publicly robust data suggesting mail is the primary culprit” for introducing drugs into prisons, wrote Ella Fassler. (Truthout, Feb. 25) Attorney Sara Rose, with American Civil Liberties Union of Pennsylvania, says evidence shows “the vast majority, at least of the drugs they discuss coming in, were coming in through staff or visitors.” (Prison Legal News, February 2020)

The exponential push for ending physical mail is

primarily about expanding profit opportunities for private companies while simultaneously placing undue burdens on the incarcerated, their families and support networks.

Prison profiteers

A Tufts University report says, “there are thousands of companies and a wide range of contracts in both private and public prisons.” A staggeringly high number of corporations are involved in the prison industrial complex — a whole network of parties with vested interests. (tufts.eduprisondivestment, 2021)

“The Prison Industry: Mapping Private Sector Players,” a report released by Worth Rises in May 2020, identifies and “exposes over 4,100 corporations that profit from the devastating mass incarceration of our nation’s marginalized communities.” Billions of dollars are stolen from families — loved ones and children — who are supporting their incarcerated loved ones.

There is a lot of money to be made through privatization of services in prison: on food, phone calls and books. If Smart Communications (SC) is contracted to a prison, they get MailGuard as an add-on, which includes tablets and kiosks. MailGuard, which started in 2020, is a pilot program with the Federal Bureau of Prisons.

Tablets are sometimes free, but incarcerated people use them to send emails and photos and buy books, music and games. This means big profits for companies like SC. It means lots of expenses for the poorest and most vulnerable — the incarcerated and their families.

This communications company got a contract with Pennsylvania DOC in 2018 for \$4 million per year. SC wants to introduce MailGuard to Massachusetts prisons. This means that physical mail would be sent to SC in Florida, to be inspected, scanned, digitally forwarded and loaded into a database.

Originals are destroyed. The scanned letter/mail is sent back to the prison for viewing in a public kiosk (with no privacy) or via tablet or mailed back as photocopies for staff to print and distribute.

Families pay the price

Most services for those in prison are privatized by subcontractors, and they exploit the incarcerated and their family members. What they provide is often low quality and violates inmates’ civil rights.

A report entitled “Who Pays? The True Cost of Incarceration on Families,” states: “One in three families go into debt just to be able to

communicate with their incarcerated loved one.” (whopaysreport.org, September 2015)

Families must put money into email accounts, or sometimes incarcerated people must buy “stamps” to use email. There is an increase in “stamp” costs when character counts increase or there are attachments. Mail through MailGuard can be delayed two days, which means families often must use email and pay more.

In most cases, the incarcerated person was the major earner in a family. And 54% were the main sources of income according to the article, “Prison Industrial Complex Nickel and Diming Inmates for their Mail.” (Business Insider, March 14)

Companies like SC are making millions off the most vulnerable and the poorest. Single mothers and women on welfare must decide between paying for food and

children’s essentials or emails and phone calls. It is exceedingly difficult to sustain connections with loved ones and to foster meaningful relationships with children.

This “profit-driven incarceration,” as prisoners’ rights group Just Detention International calls it,

continues to be emotionally and financially stressful to the families and loved ones and potentially alienates or drives them apart.

For disabled people with traumatic brain injury or visual impairment, tablets and kiosks are not accessible. For those in solitary confinement, tablets are either forbidden or restricted. JDI stresses it “undermines crucial confidential communications, including between incarcerated survivors of sexual abuse and outside advocates.”

In January, there was a hearing on the privatization of paper mail organized by the Massachusetts DOC. The number of people attempting to join the virtual meeting overwhelmed the capabilities of Zoom, thus limiting overall public engagement.

Solidarity matters!

Solidarity is potent in the fightback against the policies and exploitation facing the incarcerated and their families.

In an interview conducted last year with an incarcerated mother currently at the Bedford Hills Correctional Facility, Tami Eldridge stated: “My children and I have irreplaceable memories of moments and events that we can look back on and share, that would not have been possible through any of these new forms of communication. I have what some of us long-termers call ‘an archive of love letters’ from my children that I am able to revisit.

Eldridge stressed: “Moments like my children’s first time writing in scripted letters, their first picture they drew of me, their first song they wrote, them learning how to write poetry, their first crush and my most prized treasure: simply writing a few lines to show that, even when they were busy, they thought to say something to me and send it with a stamp.” (The Brennan Center, Sept. 29, 2020) □



On George Floyd lynching anniversary, the struggle goes on

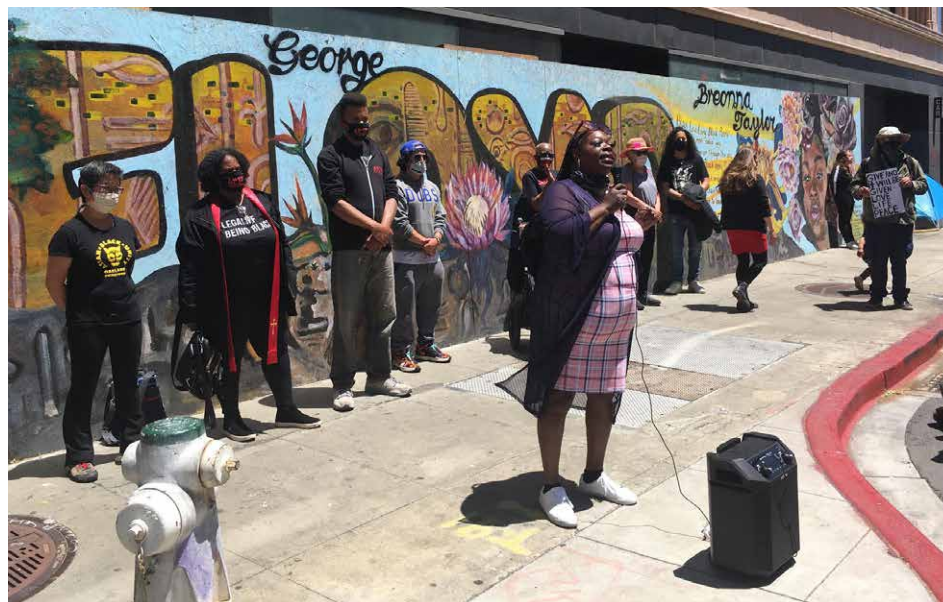
By Dave Welsh
Oakland, Calif.

Oakland’s social justice community came together May 25 at the downtown mural of George Floyd, on the one-year anniversary of Floyd’s lynching at the hands of Minneapolis police. Cat Brooks, co-founder of the Anti Police-Terror Project, denounced “militarized and out-of-control police departments” in Oakland and across the country that target Black and Brown people in particular.

George Galvis, executive director of Communities United for Restorative Youth Justice, pointed out that during the several weeks the trial of Floyd’s

killer Derek Chauvin was going on, 64 more people were killed by police in the United States. Minister Cherri Murphy said Oakland spends more on police than on programs that benefit the people and is now cooking up plans for an “unnecessary” new police headquarters at a cost of \$473 million.

Barbara Doss said not only police but prison guards are involved in the continuing pattern of killings of Black community members by agents of the state. Doss lost her son Dajuan Armstrong, a 23-year-old father, when he was asphyxiated by guards in 2018 at nearby Santa Rita Jail, which houses 4,000 inmates. “I’m not letting it die down,” she said. “I’m here to stand up for justice for my son.” □



WW PHOTO: DAVE WELSH

Barbara Doss, mother of Dajuan Armstrong, at May 25 press conference and rally.

Reparations NOW for Black Tulsans!

People of African descent inside the U.S. have been fighting for the right to reparations, beginning when 4 million people were freed as chattel following the Civil War. The first call for reparations was for 40 acres and a mule — 40 acres of land for a free farmer and a mule to pull the plow.

For over 150 years, every atrocity and crime suffered by Black people — from police terror to disproportionate poverty to lack of political representation — has cried out for some form of reparations or justice. The long-term solution will only come about when all class relations, including white supremacy, are uprooted by a revolutionary transformation of society to bring about socialism.

One of the most egregious atrocities that cries out for immediate reparations took place 100 years ago in Tulsa, Okla. For two days, May 31 and June 1, racist vigilante whites went on a rampage in the African American Greenwood District, known as “Black Wall Street,” destroying homes, churches, schools and businesses owned by Black people. Greenwood had become economically prosperous due to the oil boom. But the Ku Klux Klan had gained strength in numbers throughout the country, and Tulsa was no exception.

Original reports claimed the death count of Black people to be 36, but according to some historians, the death count could have been as high as 300. Ten thousand Black people became homeless, and 40 blocks of the



District were obliterated. For decades this massacre was hidden from the history books.

What sparked the “Tulsa Race Massacre” was the May 30, 1921, arrest of a young Black man, Dick Rowland, who was accused of assaulting a white elevator operator, Sarah Page. When a white mob of 1,500, with backing of city officials, tried to lynch a jailed Rowland, an armed group of 75 Black brave men, many of them World War I veterans, confronted them but were forced to retreat to segregated Greenwood. Rowland was eventually exonerated.

According to the 2001 Oklahoma Commission to Study the Tulsa Race Riot of 1921, “Tulsa was likely the first city to be bombed from the air” in the U.S., with kerosene bombs dropped by white men from airplanes. Sixty-four years later on May 13, 1985, the City of Philadelphia dropped a bomb on the predominantly

Black Osage Avenue destroying 60 homes in an attack on the MOVE family.

Lessie Benningfield “Mother” Randle, a 105-year-old survivor of the Tulsa massacre, filed a 2020 lawsuit saying that \$100 million worth of property was destroyed in 1921, with no compensation from the mainly white ruling-class oil barons. The lawsuit goes on to say, “Greenwood and North Tulsa Community residents continue to face racially disparate treatment and City-created barriers to basic human needs, including jobs, financial security, education, housing, justice and health.” (CNN, Sept. 2, 2020)

The lawsuit calls for establishing “a victim compensation fund, mental health and education programs for residents of Greenwood and North Tulsa and a college fund for descendants of massacre victims. It seeks construction of a hospital in the community and asks that Black residents from the Greenwood and North Tulsa communities have priority consideration for city contracts.”

The Black people of Tulsa are long overdue for these reparations on behalf of the pain and suffering endured by their ancestors in 1921 — passed down as the present-day racist inequities they face.

In general, the U.S. descendants of enslaved African people, forced to work unwaged labor for hundreds of years under unspeakably inhumane conditions, deserve reparations — now! □

French unions respond to housing crisis

By G. Dunkel

According to the French housing alliance Right to Housing (DAL — Droit au Logement), cops are prepared to evict 30,000 families starting June 1. Some 130,000 families have been notified that they need to leave their homes immediately, while tens of thousands could have their electricity shut off any time after June 1. France has more than 300,000 homeless people out of a total population of around 67.4 million.

June 1 is when the winter’s suspension of evictions and shut-offs expires.

The General Confederation of Labor (CGT), along with Right to Housing, the feminist collective Fasti, formed to defend immigrant rights, and Paris d’Exil,



Beside an anti-racist mural in France, a sign exhorts ‘No evictions without resheltering!’

an NGO focused on welcoming exiles, formed a coalition in March and called major demonstrations in 31 French cities under the slogan: “A roof is a right.” These demonstrations were coordinated with actions in other European countries and endorsed by many progressive unions, associations and political parties, including the Greens and the Communist Party of French Workers.

The CGT is the second-largest and oldest union in France, with a militant history of defending workers’ retirement rights and unemployment insurance, on the job, in the streets and in the political arena.

The program of this coalition is simple: decrease rents, increase investment in public housing and end evictions and removals. They point out that state assistance for lower-income individuals needs to increase and that officials who carry out an eviction are responsible for finding new housing for those evicted. In some cities they have set up large numbers of tents for the homeless.

The way the French government has responded to the COVID-19 pandemic sharply increased the profits of landlords and real estate investors.

The DAL and the CGT, through posts on their web pages and Facebook, managed to organize a number of small but significant demonstrations May 29 and 30 in Paris, as well as in Lille, Bordeaux, Lyon, Toulouse, Marseilles and other cities.

While French politics places a great deal of emphasis on protests, demonstrations and marches, the elections — especially for president — are also important. The next French presidential election is still 11 months away, tentatively scheduled for April 23, 2022, and the housing crisis is going to be a major issue.



The banner of French housing advocates reads ‘Enforce the DALO law! A roof is a right!’

Even France’s far-right party, the National Rally (RN, Rassemblement National), has declared the housing crisis a major problem for France. Its proposed solution takes up nearly nine pages and contains a lot of tweaks — such as making the purchase of real estate cheaper and providing low-cost loans to young people, encouraging them to buy public housing — which would give the public housing authorities the capital to produce more public housing. The RN proposals exclude non-French residents.

The RN and some voices in the corporate English-language media elsewhere, like the New York Times and BBC, are predicting that the RN could win in next year’s election, that it could break through the barrier erected by France’s two rounds of voting. But to get to the second round, this far-right party would have to do better than the French left. □

U.S. behind detention of Venezuelan diplomat: Release Alex Saab!

Continued from page 1

U.S. trade. (thegrayzone.com, April 27)

Cabo Verde is a member of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). This body ordered Saab’s immediate release in March. But under U.S. pressure, Cabo Verde has yet to respond to ECOWAS and is preparing an extradition trial.

Saab’s case has made waves on the African continent where 15 African countries are already under U.S. sanctions. It resonates in U.S.-sanctioned Iran and in Venezuela, where social media campaigns and demonstrations have demanded

Saab’s release.

A campaign for release of Alex Saab of half a million Twitter posts led to Twitter censoring and suspending over 1,500 accounts. Despite aggressive efforts to silence support, an international campaign is growing,

Saab’s defenders presented the facts of his case in a May 19 panel, which featured two of Saab’s lawyers, Cabo Verde’s Geraldo da Cruz Almeida and Nigeria’s Femi Falana, in addition to activists William Camacaro, John Philpot, Stanfield Smith and Sara Flounders (this article’s author). It was streamed not only in the U.S. but to

countries in Latin America, Africa and West Asia with simultaneous translation into English, Portuguese and Spanish. (tinyurl.com/78ubp35j)

Organized by the Alliance for Global Justice and co-sponsored by the Alberto Lovera Bolivarian Circle of New York, Chicago ALBA Solidarity, Frente Hugo Chávez para la Defensa de los Pueblos Vancouver, Task Force on the Americas, Orinoco Tribune, Council on Hemispheric Affairs, International Action Center and CODEPINK, the panel drew a wide international audience. The Orinoco Tribune has published a report of the panel, which can be read at tinyurl.com/5cssayh9.

Ambassador Saab sent a letter to the African Union, as Venezuela’s Deputy Permanent Representative to the African Union, on May 25, a day celebrated across the continent as Africa Day, commemorating the founding of the Organization of African Unity on May 25, 1963. Alex Saab’s statement connected the celebration of “liberation from foreign control and oppression” to his imprisonment and “the importance for the continent of Africa to rise to fight elements of foreign dominance and imperialist domination.” The letter was published in CitiNewsRoom, in Accra, Ghana and in other African news publications. (tinyurl.com/f6xfar8e) □

Defending pro-Nazi forces

U.S., E.U. threaten Belarus

By Otis Grotewohl

Western imperialists and their media pundits are once again crying “foul” against the sovereign government of Belarus and its duly elected president, Alexander Lukashenko. On May 23, a Ryanair passenger plane, scheduled to fly from Greece to Lithuania, was forced to land in Minsk, Belarus.

On the plane was 26-year-old Roman Protasevich, whom the imperialists identify as a journalist. Protasevich has a history of encouraging violence against President Lukashenko and his supporters. He and a few other passengers, apparently close to Protasevich, were detained by Belarusian authorities.

According to a May 24 article in Pravda.ru, “It was a Ryanair pilot who made the decision to land the plane with Protasevich on board in Minsk after he received a message about a possible bomb on board.”

The Western corporate media is omitting this part of the report. Instead they charge the Lukashenko government with “hijacking,” claiming the landing was somehow politically motivated. U.S. and European Union operatives blame Lukashenko for forcing the plane down, without providing a shred of evidence that his administration did anything wrong.

Pravda.ru points out that “Svetlana Tikhanovskaya, whom the West recognizes as the President of Belarus, was flying over the territory of Belarus too, but nothing happened to her.” Tikhanovskaya is considered the “leader” of the anti-communist and neoliberal opposition to Lukashenko.

The corporate media is ignoring many simple facts, and it is painting Protasevich out to be some kind of “victim.”

Who is Roman Protasevich?

Even though the Western bourgeois press is fawning over Protasevich, calling him a “human rights” advocate, they offer little information about him. Protasevich is co-founder of the infamous Belarusian opposition channel known as Nexta, and he now works for another opposition channel known as Belamova.

Nexta is widely known for encouraging violent attacks against the Belarusian state and is popular among supporters of the EU. Nexta is often discredited, even by major media outlets such as BBC, for promoting false information about Russia and Belarus. (BBC News, May 24)

Protasevich got his start in the anti-communist, oppositionist movement against Lukashenko in 2011 at the age of 16. Some corporate media analysts have

been quick to point out that at that age he was expelled from school for posting YouTube videos that were hostile toward the Belarusian government. They omit reporting that Protasevich was a leader of a neo-Nazi organization in Belarus known as the “Youth Front.”

According to various social media posts, Protasevich was active in the Maidan movement that led to the violent coup in Ukraine in 2014. In one image, Protasevich can be seen participating in the destruction of one of the last V.I. Lenin statues left in Ukraine. He was wrapped in the Belarusian National Republic flag, which was used when the German Imperial Army occupied Belarus during World War I and later by Nazi collaborators during World War II. (FOIA Research, May 25)

A leader of the Azov Battalion — an openly neo-Nazi militia that was one of many white-supremacist groups contributing to the Ukrainian coup — publicly claimed Protasevich fought alongside Azov in 2014 and worked for their press. (Grayzone, May 26)

U.S., EU want to overthrow Lukashenko

The treatment of Protasevich by the Western media, particularly in the U.S., is strikingly identical to their coverage of



Neo-Nazi Roman Protasevich taking part in destruction of a statue of Bolshevik Revolution leader V.I. Lenin in Ukraine, 2014.

the anti-Putin candidate, Alexei Navalny, a few months ago. Like Protasevich, Navalny is another free-market proponent with strong Nazi connections.

The U.S. has taken steps to overthrow Lukashenko ever since he was first elected in 1994, when he won on a campaign against corporate privatization and neoliberal policies.

As a former member of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, Lukashenko has consistently rejected neoliberalism, maintained pro-socialist imagery and has restored some socialist programs from the Soviet-era. As a result of many fulfilled promises, Lukashenko has been re-elected five times since 1994.

Protasevich admitted on camera to taking part in the organization of “mass unrest” in Belarus in August and September, 2020. (New York Times, May 25)

This past summer, U.S. and EU officials thought they had an opportunity to finally oust Lukashenko. Oppositionists carried out massive rallies, many of which turned violent. Imperialist officials falsely declared opposition leader Svetlana Tikhanovskaya as the “official” president of Belarus — similar to the unsuccessful attempt by the U.S. to proclaim Juan Guaidó as president of Venezuela.

In terms of the false charge against Belarus for hijacking, it should, be noted instead that the U.S. government was involved in the forced landing of a plane for political reasons in 2013 — a flight carrying Bolivian President Evo Morales. (Grayzone, May 26)

The U.S. and European imperialist governments and media have demonized Lukashenko and are calling for sanctions against the Belarusian people. White House Press Secretary Jen Psaki said Washington is working with NATO and the EU about “potential next steps.” (The Hill, May 24) These are the forces that bankrolled and coordinated the 2014 coup in Ukraine, in which Protasevich proudly participated. □

Massive response of Greek workers to attack on the 8-hour day

By G. Dunkel

For the past month, Greek workers have been protesting the right-wing New Democracy government’s attempt to enshrine a 10-hour work day into law — as well as serious restrictions on the right to strike and other rights workers have won over decades of struggle. New Democracy has justified these attacks as being the only possible response to creditors’ demands for more austerity, based on Greece’s external debt being 205% of its GDP.

The government proposal, reflecting what is current workplace practice in Greece, would allow employers to force workers to accept comp time (paid time off equal to the hours of overtime worked, avoiding premium pay for overtime) in lieu of overtime pay.

The Greek Communist Party (KKE) and the All Workers Militant Front (PAME) organized the rally in Athens at Syntagma Square. It drew tens of thousands of workers, including “self-employed” and unemployed people, students and pensioners, to protest this bill.

KKE General Secretary Dimitris Koutsoumbas ended with the message: “We refuse to become slaves in the 21st century! The monstrous antilabor law must not be submitted!” Earlier he pointed out, “The working class, the people, have no other choice but to respond to the war with war — with their own weapons: the broad information campaign, the organization,



Athens, May 27.

PHOTO: GREEK COMMUNIST PARTY

the unwavering class struggle, their righteous demands, the overthrow of this dark situation.” (tinyurl.com/rrkayzum)

Besides Athens, there were major demonstrations in Greece’s second largest city Thessaloníki, Patras, Ioannina, Volos, Trikala, Katerini and Livadia. □

Representación excesiva en las prisiones: Las personas LGBTQ2S+

Continúa de la página 12

lista — se ha utilizado para confinar, aislar y castigar a muchas personas LGBTQ2S+.

Debido a las condiciones materiales a las que se enfrentan las personas LGBTQ2S+, muchas se encuentran con altos índices de depresión, ansiedad e ideación suicida. En este contexto, alguien que necesita atención de salud mental puede acabar recluido durante una temporada indefinida en un hospital bajo estricta vigilancia, experimentando algo más parecido a un castigo que a una ayuda.

Luchas compartidas, abolición, liberación

La liberación de los oprimidos por su género u orientación sexual significa imaginar y construir un mundo sin prisiones, cárceles y centros de detención

de migrantes. Estas estructuras no mantienen a las personas a salvo de la violencia, sino que perpetúan la violencia arraigada en los orígenes de estas instituciones en este continente.

Las prisiones, las cárceles y los centros de detención de Estados Unidos evolucionaron a partir de la esclavización de los africanos. La esclavitud codificó legalmente a los negros como propiedad. Durante el paso de la esclavitud al sistema de arrendamiento de convictos hasta el encarcelamiento masivo de hoy, se han compartido continuamente las luchas para abolir estas instituciones que se basan en el beneficio de las personas.

Ahora la lucha se ha centrado en acabar con el complejo industrial penitenciario que se lucra y en abolir el estatus legal de la propiedad privada capitalista.

La abolición también significa el fin de las fronteras y la criminalización de los migrantes, que no son más que trabajadores y personas oprimidas que buscan un lugar donde puedan sobrevivir.

La organización de la sociedad en torno a la satisfacción de las necesidades humanas puede y debe construirse después de la esclavitud.

Muchas de las razones por las que las personas LGBTQ2S+ acaban recluidas en prisiones, cárceles y centros de detención podrían aliviarse, en primer lugar, con la abolición del capitalismo. Este proyecto de abolición — ya sea la abolición de las prisiones o la abolición del capitalismo — no es simplemente una negación. Es un proyecto generativo que requiere una construcción colectiva.

Esto significa construir el apoyo social

para los jóvenes LGBTQ2S+ dentro de las familias, las escuelas, las comunidades y otras instituciones; eliminar la discriminación contra las personas LGBTQ2S+ en la vivienda, el empleo y otros ámbitos; eliminar la falta de vivienda, ya que la vivienda es un derecho humano; poner fin a la criminalización del trabajo sexual; y proporcionar atención médica gratuita y que afirme el género para todos.

La liberación de las personas LGBTQ2S+ está ligada a la lucha por la liberación de los negros, al igual que está ligada a la lucha por la justicia para los discapacitados. Nuestra liberación está ligada a la lucha contra el colonialismo y el capitalismo de los colonos en nuestro país y en todo el mundo.

¡No a las jaulas! ¡No a las fronteras! No aceptaremos nada menos. □



Bogotá, Colombia, 5 de mayo.

Un llamado de acción del Orgullo: Del 14 al 21 de junio ¡Defiende a los jóvenes trans!

Por Martha Grevatt

1 de junio comienza el mes del Orgullo. El expresidente Donald Trump lleva más de 130 días fuera el cargo. Pero los implacables ataques a la comunidad trans, especialmente a los jóvenes trans y a las mujeres trans de color, no muestran signos de ceder.

En 33 legislaturas estatales, se han aprobado o presentado 117 proyectos de ley que niegan los derechos civiles básicos a las personas trans. Esto hace que 2021 sea un año récord para este tipo de legislación intolerante, según la Campaña de Derechos Humanos. La mayoría de estos proyectos de ley se dirigen a los jóvenes trans, que ya tienen una tasa de suicidio desproporcionadamente alta.

Todos los estados, excepto dos, tienen proyectos de ley que prohíben a los deportistas trans participar en deportes que no se corresponden con el sexo que se les asignó al nacer, especialmente en los deportes femeninos. Los proyectos de ley perpetúan el mito de que las mujeres trans representan un peligro para otras mujeres y niñas — que en realidad son hombres que se visten de mujer porque son depredadores sexuales que buscan acceso — o que tienen algún tipo de ventaja competitiva injusta. Los gobernadores de tres estados han firmado proyectos de ley de este tipo, con nombres que suenan inocuos como “Ley de Equidad en el Deporte Femenino”.

Ni la ciencia ni las estadísticas respaldan estos estereotipos retrógrados. “Creo que estas respuestas excluyentes son una solución en busca de un problema”, dijo Melanie Willingham-Jaggers, directora

interina de GLSEN, una organización de defensa de los jóvenes LGBTQ+. “No hay un dominio categórico de los atletas trans, pero sí entendemos los beneficios



categoricos para los jóvenes que practican deportes”. (CNN, 15 de abril) Las niñas y las mujeres se enfrentan a muchos obstáculos en el deporte, ninguno de los cuales tiene que ver con la participación de los atletas trans, y todos ellos provienen de la discriminación patriarcal.

Veinte estados tienen proyectos de ley para negar a los adolescentes trans la terapia que les salva la vida, incluyendo el asesoramiento trans y la terapia de reemplazo hormonal. La mal llamada “Ley para salvar a los adolescentes de la experimentación (SAFE)” de Arkansas se convirtió en ley después de que la legislatura anulara el veto del gobernador Asa Hutchinson.

Otros proyectos de ley bloquearían los planes de estudio transpositivos, prohibirían a los profesores referirse a los alumnos por su identidad de género e impedirían que los documentos de identidad estatales, como los permisos de conducir, reflejaran la identidad de género de una persona. Estos ataques legislativos se suman a las “leyes de baño” aprobadas anteriormente,

que han impedido a la mitad de los jóvenes trans utilizar el baño correspondiente a su identidad de género.

Todo esto sucede a pesar de la orden ejecutiva de Biden del 8 de marzo, que establece que “todos los estudiantes deben tener garantizado un entorno educativo libre de discriminación por razón de sexo, incluida la discriminación en forma de acoso sexual, que abarca la violencia sexual, e incluye la discriminación por orientación sexual o identidad de género”.

Hay que poner fin a estos proyectos de ley perjudiciales, pero sólo la lucha masiva puede detenerlos.

¡Las vidas trans negras y morenas importan!

Cuando aún no ha transcurrido la mitad del año, en 2021 se han producido al menos 26 asesinatos violentos de personas trans, la gran mayoría de ellas mujeres trans negras, indígenas y latinas. Si la tendencia continúa, 2021 será el año más violento para las personas trans desde que HRC comenzó a hacer un seguimiento de sus muertes en 2013. El año pasado fue el más violento, con 44 asesinatos; desde 2013 ha habido 200.

Los factores que contribuyen al alto nivel de ataques viciosos contra las mujeres trans de color incluyen la pobreza y la falta de vivienda, las relaciones íntimas abusivas, la falta de atención de salud física y mental, la no aceptación de las familias biológicas y la dependencia del trabajo sexual para sobrevivir. Todas estas condiciones tienen

su origen en el estigma y la discriminación contra las personas trans y su intersección con el racismo y el sexismo.

La discriminación en muchos ámbitos de la vida está bien documentada. La mayoría de las personas trans informan de comentarios intolerantes por parte de sus familiares. Más de 1 de cada 10 han sido aconsejadas por profesionales de la salud mental para que dejen de ser transgénero. Los medios de comunicación suelen utilizar nombres erróneos y nombres falsos, incluso en la información sobre víctimas mortales.

El desempleo de los transexuales triplica el promedio nacional, y es aún mayor cuando se suma a la discriminación racista y sexista.

La policía no protege a la comunidad trans de la violencia intolerante. De hecho, se encuentran entre los asesinos de las personas trans, incluyendo a Tony McDade, un hombre trans negro al que la policía de Tallahassee, Florida, disparó fatalmente el 27 de mayo de 2020.

Se necesita urgentemente una respuesta militante de la clase trabajadora para defender a la comunidad trans. Los movimientos LGBTQ2S+, progresistas y laborales deben demostrar unidad y solidaridad contra la intolerancia.

El Caucus LGBTQ+ de Workers World Party/Partido Mundo Obrero ha iniciado una convocatoria para una semana de acción del 14 al 21 de junio.

Nosotros decimos: ¡Defiende a la juventud trans! ¡Detener los ataques antitrans! ¡Las vidas trans negras, morenas e indígenas importan! Organiza una acción donde vives. □

Representación excesiva en las prisiones: Las personas LGBTQ2S+

Por Mirinda Crissman

En todas las etapas del sistema de injusticia penal, las personas LGBTQ2S+ están sobrerrepresentadas, incluso dentro del sistema de justicia juvenil.

Según la Iniciativa de Política Penitenciaria, esto es así desde el arresto hasta la sentencia, pasando por el encarcelamiento, la libertad condicional y la libertad vigilada: “En 2019, las personas gays, lesbianas y bisexuales (con una tasa de arresto de 3.620 por cada 100.000) tenían 2,25 veces más probabilidades de ser arrestadas que las personas heterosexuales (con una tasa de arresto de 1.610 por cada 100.000). Esta disparidad está impulsada por las mujeres lesbianas y bisexuales, que tienen 4 veces más probabilidades de ser detenidas que las heterosexuales (con una tasa de detenciones de 3.860 por cada 100.000 frente a 860 por cada 100.000). Mientras tanto, los hombres homosexuales y bisexuales tienen 1,35 veces más probabilidades de ser detenidos que los heterosexuales (con una tasa de 3.210 detenidos por cada 100.000 frente a 2.380 por cada 100.000)”. (tinyurl.com/LGBTQbehindbars)

Las tasas de encarcelamiento también reflejan las tendencias discriminatorias de las tasas de detención, y las mujeres homosexuales son las más afectadas por la desproporción. Ellas, junto con las mujeres

trans — cuya orientación sexual puede coincidir con la identidad queer o no — también suelen ser las que menos datos tienen para demostrar lo que les ocurre.

“Una vez entre rejas, las personas trans se enfrentan a índices extremadamente altos de acoso y agresiones físicas y sexuales, se les niega con frecuencia la atención sanitaria rutinaria y corren un alto riesgo de ser enviadas a régimen de aislamiento. Black and Pink descubrió que al 44% de las personas transgénero, de género no binario e [indígenas] de dos espíritus de su muestra se les negó el acceso a las hormonas que solicitaron”. (Prison Policy Initiative)

Este alto porcentaje de personas LGBTQ2S+ persiste en las prisiones, las cárceles y los centros de detención de inmigrantes y se entrelaza con otras opresiones basadas en la raza, la discapacidad y los ingresos. Los datos demuestran que las personas negras, latinas e indígenas están encerradas en cantidades increíblemente desproporcionadas con respecto a su porcentaje de población. Muchas personas LGBTQ2S+ son personas de color y muchas tienen discapacidades.

No hay datos sobre los nativos de dos espíritus encarcelados. Sin embargo, según el Llamamiento, Dakota del Sur está a la cabeza del país en cuanto a ingresos en prisión basados en detenciones por delitos no violentos, y los

nativos representan la mayoría de todas las detenciones en ese estado.

“En Dakota del Sur, las personas que son arrestadas e ingresadas en la cárcel son desproporcionadamente nativas. Aunque los nativos representan el 8,7% de la población de Dakota del Sur, son aproximadamente la mitad de los que ingresan en las cárceles del estado. Las disparidades raciales en las tasas de encarcelamiento existen en todo el país — los negros son encarcelados a un ritmo más de 4 veces superior al de los blancos — pero las disparidades en Dakota del Sur son mucho mayores: Según datos del Instituto de Justicia Vera, los nativos de entre 15 y 64 años son encarcelados a un ritmo 10 veces superior al de los blancos en Dakota del Sur”. (The Appeal, 18 de septiembre de 2019)

Raíces de la opresión

La opresión basada en el género y la opresión basada en la orientación sexual tienen sus raíces en el auge de la propiedad privada y el capitalismo. Estas opresiones tienen raíces similares a las de

otras opresiones basadas en la clase como la raza y la discapacidad.

La opresión basada en el género y la orientación sexual se mantiene a través de diversas medidas sociales como, por ejemplo, la criminalización y la estructura de la familia nuclear. Estas tácticas se basan en el poder punitivo del aislamiento, el confinamiento y el encarcelamiento impuestos.

La sobrerrepresentación de las personas LGBTQ2S+ en el sistema jurídico penal se debe en gran medida a los obstáculos a los que se enfrentan los jóvenes LGBTQ2S+ después de huir de los abusos y la falta de aceptación en sus hogares.

Para sobrevivir, muchos se ven empujados hacia la venta de drogas, el robo y el trabajo sexual, lo que aumenta drásticamente el riesgo de detención y reclusión.

Hasta 1973, la Asociación Americana de Psiquiatría incluía la homosexualidad en su Manual de Diagnóstico y Estadística (DSM). Esa definición médica — y las suposiciones que continuaron incluso después de que fuera retirada de la

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