



Mexican firefighters have come to help fight catastrophic fires in Los Angeles. See editorial, p. 6.

LA fires show **Disaster response in U.S. collapsed**

By **Teddie Kelly**
 Cuyama Valley, California

Jan. 13. Multiple fires erupted across Los Angeles on Jan. 7 prompting mass evacuations. As of Jan. 13, the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE) has not contained the fires' spread. In less than a week, the fires destroyed 23,000 homes and

killed at least 24 people. Los Angeles's catastrophe resulted from multiple, simultaneous outbreaks in four LA neighborhoods: Pacific Palisades, Eaton, Kenneth and Hurst. The Palisades Fire is by far the biggest and still growing. By the night of Jan. 12, only the Kenneth Fire had been fully contained. Together the four blazes cover 39,000 acres, equivalent to twice

the size of New York's Manhattan island. There are 150,000 Angelenos living within mandatory evacuation zones and an additional 300,000 people remain without power across Southern California.

Fires intensified

Fires up and down the Pacific Coast have intensified in recent years. According to the California

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Dr. King's legacy & recent strikes

By **Martha Grevatt**

What do you give the person who has everything? Well, if you're an Amazon or Starbucks worker and that person is the CEO, there's only one answer. Give the boss a strike!

The Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. would have most definitely agreed. To the question asked in the classic labor song, "Which side are you on," his answer would have been, unequivocally, "I'm on the union side." This was demonstrated throughout his activist life, cut short in 1968 when he was only 39 years old.

It is well known that Dr. King was assassinated while in Memphis to support a strike of Black sanitation workers. But much earlier, speaking to the 25th anniversary dinner held by the United Auto Workers union in 1961, he described "ties of kinship between labor and the Negro people." (uawgmtalks.wordpress.com, Dec. 17, 2015)

Dr. King wrote in a 1962 letter to the Amalgamated Laundry Workers union: "As I have said many times, and believe with all my heart, the coalition that can have the greatest impact in the struggle for human dignity here in America is that of the Negro and the forces of labor,

because their fortunes are so closely intertwined." (afscme.org)

Dr. King had called for a Poor People's March in the summer of 1968 to link together the struggle against racism with the struggle against poverty and for economic justice for all workers.

There are many moving quotations from King's speeches at union events, leading up to the successful Memphis sanitation strike. If King were alive today he would be supporting the multinational, multigendered, multigenerational workers at Amazon and Starbucks who held strikes late last year during the holidays.

Largest U.S. Amazon strike

Amazon warehouse workers and drivers began their recent historic, coordinated strike at facilities Dec. 19 in four California cities; Atlanta; Chicago; and Queens, New York. At midnight on Dec. 21, they were joined by members of the Amazon Labor Union at the JFK8 warehouse in Staten Island, New York, where the ALU won the first union election at Amazon in the U.S. in April 2022. JFK8 workers maintained a 24-hour picket line even as the temperature dropped to 13 degrees Fahrenheit.




Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., Memphis, Tenn., March 28, 1968

In Queens, Amazon management turned on an outside water tap to flood the strikers during the cold weather. The New York Police Department attempted to confiscate picketers' heaters and surrounded an Amazon driver who stopped his van in solidarity with the strike. The police then physically attacked and broke up the strike line.

These determined workers conducted the largest

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Biden incomplete commutations
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Migrant workers and their allies anticipate attacks from MAGA forces after the inauguration. The Democrats haven't helped much; they've often hurt migrant communities. Solidarity is needed. Undocumented workers have shown solidarity in the other direction, acting heroically during the Los Angeles inferno.

'Let Palestine live,' says Workers World

"They wanted to erase Palestine from the world; now the whole world is Palestine!" This slogan is more true than ever, as millions of people from every corner of the globe, horrified at Israel's genocidal campaign in Gaza, have responded with huge demonstrations in solidarity with the Palestinian people and opposing the Zionist state's murderous siege and U.S. collusion.

Workers World newspaper critically reports on the catastrophic bombing of Gaza, where tens of thousands of people have been killed and two-thirds of the buildings have been demolished — hospitals, displaced persons camps, schools, houses, historic sites and more. The British medical journal Lancet just reported that 41% more Gazans have been killed than previously reported — nearly 65,000 from October 2023 to June 2024, mainly children, women and elders.

Our staff and writers join protests opposing Israel's devastation and Washington's lock-step support and provision of high-tech weaponry, including 2,000-pound bombs. Our coverage lambasts Israel's deadly strikes in Lebanon, Syria and now Yemen and the Zionist state's expansion into West Asia. The U.S. government's silence on the genocide and widening war is deafening.

A major difference between our newspaper and the corporate media: WW is partisan, unwavering in our support of the Palestinian people, their allies and resistance organizations and the peoples of West Asia against U.S.-backed Israeli aggression. Our staff vows to keep exposing

the real toll of Israel's militarism and denouncing Washington's complicity.

Our articles explode the corporate media's "Big Lie" about the Zionist state's founding and expose the truth: Israel was created by U.S. and British-backed Zionist expulsion at gunpoint of 750,000 Indigenous Palestinians from their homes, farms and villages to live in refugee camps in Gaza or elsewhere.



Washington, DC, Nov. 4, 2023. WW PHOTO: JOE PIETTE

Our newspaper calls for solidarity with the Palestinian people and all oppressed peoples. If you agree with the slogan "Free Palestine," then WW is the newspaper for you.

Join the WW Supporter Program

This pro-worker, anti-imperialist newspaper relies on our readers' backing. The WW Supporter Program was founded 48 years ago to help produce this pro-socialist newspaper and since the early 1990s, has supported the website workers.org, where new articles are posted daily and the weekly paper's PDF is displayed.

Workers.org contains timely news and analyses of global and U.S. struggles, posts bulletins from the Palestinian resistance, their allies and other national liberation movements and articles translated by our staff. Mundo Obrero publishes articles in Spanish.

Our writer-organizers report on anti-capitalist, anti-war and anti-imperialist struggles and promote people's movements against racism — and for the rights of Black, Latine, Indigenous, Arab and Asian peoples and women, workers, migrants, disabled and LGBTQIA2S+ people. **Workers.org is a resource for political activists.**

While WW's staff members and writers are volunteers, the 12 issues printed and shipped each year and the website incur expenses. Although many online publications require payment to read their articles, WW does not. **Our articles are free to all readers.**

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Workers World
121 W. 27th St., Suite 404
New York, NY 10001
Phone: 212.627.2994
E-mail: wwp@workers.org
Web: www.workers.org



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Editors: John Catalinotto, Martha Grevatt, Deirdre Griswold, Monica Moorehead, Betsey Piette

Web Editors: ABear, Harvey Markowitz, Janet Mayes

Tear Down the Walls! Editors: Mirinda Crissman, Teddie Kelly

Production & Design Editors: Gery Armsby, Sasha Mazumder

Copyediting and Proofreading: Paddy Colligan, Steve Gillis

Contributing Editors: G. Dunkel, K. Durkin, Sara Flounders, Otis Grotewohl, Gloria Rubac

Mundo Obrero: Deborah Rodriguez, Carlos Vargas

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Workers World Party is a revolutionary Marxist-Leninist party inside the belly of the imperialist beast. We are a multinational, multigenerational and multi-gendered 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 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, class solidarity, and joining us in the fight for a socialist future, please sign up at www.workers.org/join-form and an organizer will get back to you. Or contact a WWP branch near you. □

If you are interested in joining Workers World Party contact:

National Office
121 W. 27th St., Suite 404
New York, NY 10001
212.627.2994
wwp@workers.org

Atlanta
PO Box 18123
Atlanta, GA 30316
404.627.0185
atlanta@workers.org

Bay Area
P.O. Box 22947
Oakland, CA 94609
510.394.2207
bayarea@workers.org

Boston
284 Amory St.
Boston, MA 02130
boston@workers.org
instagram: @wwpboston

Buffalo, N.Y.
335 Richmond Ave.
Buffalo, NY 14222
716.883.2534
buffalo@workers.org

Cleveland
cleveland@workers.org

Durham, N.C.
919.322.9970
durham@workers.org

Houston
P.O. Box 3454
Houston, TX 77253-3454
713.503.2633
houston@workers.org

Minnesota
minnesota@workers.org

Philadelphia
P.O. Box 5634
Philadelphia, PA 19129
610.931.2615
phila@workers.org

Portland, Ore.
portland@workers.org

Salt Lake City
801.750.0248
slc@workers.org

San Antonio
sanantonio@workers.org

Seattle
seattle@workers.org

West Virginia
WestVirginia@workers.org

To save Chinatown

Philly struggle beats back the billionaires

By **Betsey Piette**
Philadelphia

The Save Chinatown Coalition, representing over 245 organizations, and the overwhelming 70% of Philadelphians polled in 2024 who opposed plans by the 76ers basketball team to build an arena in Center City, have cause to celebrate. The Philadelphia Inquirer leaked the news Jan. 12 that an agreement was reached for the team to remain in the stadium district in South Philadelphia.

According to posts on X, NBA Commissioner Adam Silver, NFL Commissioner Roger Goodell and Comcast Spectacor President Brian Roberts talked the Sixers into staying in the current location. After a two-year struggle to stop it, their planned 76 Place in Chinatown is off the table.

The arena would have threatened the very existence of historic Chinatown. Asian Americans United, one of Save Chinatown Coalition's most vocal organizations, celebrated the agreement with Comcast, which owns the 76ers lease for the current arena. AAU declared the team's decision to stay in South Philly a victory for the "multiracial, multilingual, intergenerational movement. The people of Philadelphia deserve a city that serves all communities. Our work continues and remains cautious to protect precious neighborhoods from exploitative development, but for now let's celebrate together." (WHYY, Jan. 12)

The No Arena Coalition statement said: "To every Philadelphian who called, marched, testified and warned City Hall that this was a raw deal: This win belongs to you, and the lesson for politicians is to trust the people. ... Over the past two years, Philly built a movement not only to save Chinatown but to defend our entire city from predatory billionaires who saw us for a profit playground, and tens of thousands of Philadelphians showed up.

"We were clear from day one that it was dangerous to play in the viper pit with billionaires, but City Hall toyed with the snakes, and they got bit. Twelve of 17 Councilmembers turned their backs on



WW PHOTO: JOE PIETTE

Arena opponents fill seats at the Dec. 11 City Council hearing, one of the last before Council members voted for the arena.

decades of research on the false promise of stadium developments, common sense, their voters and the 70% of Philadelphians who opposed this arena.

"This sham of a process laid bare what Philadelphians have long known: Decisions about the future of neighborhoods are not being made by the people of those communities nor with their best interest in mind, but by a select few who represent their own benefits and bank accounts and a City Hall that's bought and paid for."

Councilmember Nicolas O'Rourke, with the Working Families Party, who voted against the arena, stated: "Anybody following this issue closely could clearly see this was a power struggle between billionaires and corporations. Their plans can change on a whim, and these latest developments are a clear example of why the Mayor [Cherelle Parker] and City Council should never waste precious time and resources prioritizing billionaire projects over the work Philadelphians elect us to do." (WHYY, Jan. 12)

The news broke less than a month after several contentious and controversial public hearings and a 12-5 vote by the City Council on Dec. 19 to accept the 76ers' proposal to construct the \$1.3 billion 76 Place in the heart of several communities strongly opposed to the project. Along

with the Chinatown organizations, residents of neighborhoods south of the proposed arena — the Gayborhood and Washington Square West — joined the resistance to the project.

At rallies during the two-year struggle, staff from Jefferson Hospital, located just blocks from the proposed project, voiced concerns the arena would create traffic gridlock that would interfere with ambulances trying to reach the hospital.

The Council vote included approval of a \$60 million Community Benefits Agreement the Sixers agreed to pay over 30 years in lieu of paying property taxes to the city. Not only did the CBA contain no measurable benefits for the communities impacted, but it also let the team owners off the hook for taxes desperately needed for city schools, recreation centers and other public services. Among those who spoke against the arena were several librarians and school teachers calling for projects that would benefit the youth of Philadelphia and not just the billionaire developers.

When the Council approved the project, activist organizations immediately pledged to pursue legal actions to stop it. This, along with overwhelming public opposition to the project, had to be a factor in the pressure on the Sixers to accept the Comcast proposal.

Comcast, which owns the Wells Fargo Center where the Sixers currently play, was aggressively encouraging the team to stay

in the stadium district. They proposed a \$2.5 billion complete redevelopment of the South Philadelphia area, including a \$400 million overhaul of the Center.

People vs. the billionaires

A popular slogan used by organizers opposing the arena was the "people vs. the billionaires," targeting 76ers co-owner David Adelman and private-equity investors Josh Harris and David Blitzer, managing partners of the Philadelphia 76ers, who had successfully pressured the majority of the City Council to back them against the wishes of the people. Adelman had even openly clashed with Comcast Spectacor during the team's efforts to win city approval for the new arena.

Unfortunately, other major proponents of the Center City arena were leaders of the construction trades unions who undermined working-class solidarity by having their members speak in favor of the billionaires' project. At numerous City Council meetings, these unions disgracefully fought alongside the rich and powerful against the wishes of a community of color.

Unions rely on working-class solidarity for their very existence in the struggle against the capitalists who exploit workers. Building trades leaders claimed to be fighting for jobs for their members, but they ignored what it might mean for the working class as a whole when they sided with the exploiters against the community.

As it turns out, the building trades unions will have jobs for their members in whatever ends up being built in the stadium district. If these workers' union leaders had spoken in solidarity with Chinatown and others opposing the Center City arena, it is likely the Council vote would never have passed.

When all our communities and workers' organizations act together in solidarity, we can win affordable housing, mass transit, better schools and so much more. This could provide many more jobs than stadiums and other multibillion-dollar boondoggles.

The reverberations of this win are resonating across Philadelphia and everywhere else workers are fighting big capitalist developers. When we fight, we win! □



WW PHOTO: JOE PIETTE

Billionaires versus the people became a common theme at the many protests against the arena, such as on this banner held on Sep. 4, 2024.

Recent strikes revive Dr. King's legacy

Continued from page 1

Amazon strike in U.S. labor history. The Teamsters union (IBT), which the ALU joined in June, held over 200 picket lines in solidarity with the strike.

The strike was called to pressure Amazon, which has yet to negotiate a first contract at JFK8, despite the ALU winning a National Labor Relations Board-supervised election 2 1/2 years ago.

The strike was also called to demand that the company bargain with drivers employed by subcontractors. An NLRB regional director determined that Amazon is a "joint employer" of the drivers, who drive Amazon vans and wear Amazon uniforms.

Another big strike at Starbucks

On Dec. 20, Starbucks Workers United (SBWU) launched its strike at six stores. Each day of the five-day holiday-week strike more stores were struck, with a total

of over 300 stores hit by the final day. In addition, union supporters engaged in solidarity actions at numerous unorganized stores.

SBWU now represents approximately 10,000 Starbucks workers, having won representation elections at around 540 stores since the first union win in Buffalo, New York, in December 2021.

In February, Starbucks agreed to a framework for negotiations with SBWU to achieve a first contract to cover all of the unionized stores. However, around the time that notorious union-buster Brian Niccol took over as CEO in September, Starbucks began stalling negotiations.

Long-time Starbucks worker and SBWU bargaining delegate Michelle Eisen said Starbucks was "backtracking on months and months of progress and promises from the company to work toward an end-of-year framework ratification." (nyccl.org, Dec. 20)

Facing the company's stalling, the

union called this Unfair Labor Practice strike, the largest in its history, involving stores in 43 states.

The struggle continues!

The Starbucks strike ended Dec. 24 and the Amazon strike on Dec. 26. Both striking unions expressed solidarity with each other and with the REI ski shop workers, on strike at the SoHo store in New York City since Dec. 4.

These unions are led by class-conscious internationalists, as shown by the Palestinian flag displayed during a pre-strike SBWU delegates meeting held Dec. 19.

Since the strikes' conclusion, the unions have yet to make progress at the bargaining table. Struggles for a first contract continue at many other workplaces across the country. The REI ski shop workers have begun their second month on strike.

But these powerful, well-timed strikes sent a message to the Amazon and

Starbucks bosses: No contract, no deliveries, no coffee! This was hardly the holiday present Niccol and Amazon CEO Andy Jassy were hoping for.

At this moment the organized labor movement is understandably concerned about who the president-elect will appoint to the NLRB — and expects that it will be someone virulently anti-union. This will make it harder for unions to win favorable rulings from the Board when companies such as Amazon and Starbucks engage in union busting. And Trump has a very cozy relationship with the right-wing Tesla boss, Elon Musk, who despises unions.

But what these militant strikes demonstrated is that the ALU and SBWU will not easily be taken down, regardless of who sits in the White House and how that impacts the composition of the NLRB.

In the spirit of Martin Luther King, three cheers for the Amazon and Starbucks strikers! Victory to these young, fighting unions! □



Biden's commutations just scratch the surface

By Gloria Rubac

Three days before Christmas, President Joe Biden commuted death sentences of 37 of the 40 people on federal death row, thus sparing them the likelihood of Trump executing them when he takes office.

This decision was welcomed by many people, from Pope Francis to civil rights organizations to 34 of those 37 people who were facing death. Thousands of individuals had called, emailed, signed petitions, protested outside of the White House and held press conferences demanding that Biden spare those on the federal death row from certain execution.

The U.S. government has carried out only 16 executions since federal and state death penalties were reinstated in 1976 — three by President George W. Bush in 2001 and 2003 and then 13 under President Donald Trump in a six-month period, from July 2020 to January 2021. This is a small number compared to the executions in individual states, which now total 1,607 since the 1970s, with 1,310 of them having taken place in former Confederate states in the South.

Likewise, 11 of the 16 federal executions (69%) were of people tried and convicted in the South. Six of those (37%) were in Texas, which accounts for 38% of all state executions in the U.S. since 1976.

Biden has taken the most consequential step of any U.S. president to address the immoral and unconstitutional harms of capital punishment. But did Biden do the right thing? The answer is a resounding NO!

When Biden campaigned for president, he promised to abolish the federal death penalty. He did not! He could have asked governors and legislators in the states that

still have capital punishment to reconsider their laws, since it has been proven that the death penalty is racist, it kills innocent people, it does not deter crime, and it costs more financially to keep someone on death row than to give them a life sentence.

The only people remaining on federal death row are Dylann Roof, who killed nine people at a Charleston, South Carolina, Black church; Boston Marathon bomber Dzhokhar Tsarnaev; and Tree of Life synagogue shooter Robert Bowers, who killed 11 people. Biden decided they would stay on death row.



ART BY MONICA TRINIDAD

Texas activists speak out

In Texas, where six of the federal prisoners were tried in federal courts, opposition was swift.

Hadi Jawad, president of Human Rights Dallas, said in a press statement received by this writer: “We urge President Biden to reconsider this selective granting of clemency and commute the death sentences of the three remaining men. It’s the right thing to do.”

Jawad is the past president and a

longtime outspoken Muslim activist of the Dallas Peace and Justice Center. Jawad was a leader in defending The Holy Land Five, humanitarians arrested, tried and sentenced to prison in an anti-Muslim attack after 9-11.

Dr. Rick Halperin, co-founder of Human Rights Dallas and a leader in the movement to remove the death penalty, said: “By leaving three men on death row, who invariably now stand to be put to death, President Biden perpetuates the preposterous belief that there are indeed certain categories of people who ‘deserve’ execution and for whom no mercy or compassion can or will be shown. The death penalty is never the answer.”

The Texas Death Penalty Abolition Movement, a statewide activist organization based in Houston, stated: “The death penalty is on its way out. Biden missed his opportunity to do what people wanted. He and his Democratic Party are so out of touch with regular working people and with Black and Brown people who fill the prisons and death row, that it’s hard to see them as different from the Republican Party.”

“Yet they wonder why they lost the election! Why in 2024 did they not have opposition to the death penalty in their platform like it had been for decades? ... For every eight people executed in the last 50 years, one innocent person has been identified and set free. This is a shocking rate of error.”

“Furthermore, with cases like Marcellus Williams in Missouri, where the prosecutor’s office, several jurors and the victim’s family did not want execution, this innocent man was executed in September. Here in Texas, Attorney General Ken Paxton is still

trying to have an innocent Robert Roberson executed, despite evidence there was in fact no crime. Roberson is charged with killing his daughter, who died from serious health problems and not murder.

“Because Robert [Roberson] is autistic, investigators decided he was a killer, because his responses to their questions seemed ‘off.’ Then there’s Melissa Lucio, whose judge and prosecutor have both asked Texas’ highest criminal court to exonerate her. Cases like these prove that the system is broken and cannot be fixed. Capital punishment must be abolished now!”

Commutations undermine legal efforts

In a twist to the commutations, three of those Biden commuted did not want his commutation. Billie Allen has proclaimed his innocence since he was arrested at age 19, and he is now 47. Allen told National Public Radio Dec. 20 that he wanted to be pardoned not commuted. He said that the sentences of the three Biden kept on death row should have also been commuted.

Shannon Agofsky and Len Davis both filed emergency motions in court on Dec. 30 seeking injunctions to block the commutation of their death sentences. Their families have explained that their loved one is innocent and if taken off death row will lose the legal counsel required to be given those facing execution.

Abolish the death penalty now!

Gloria Rubac has been organizing against the death penalty since 1982. After working on the Coalition to Free Clarence Brandley, who was freed in 1990, she helped found the Texas Death Penalty Abolition Movement and is a lead organizer. She has witnessed two of her friends being executed and has protested over 400 executions in Texas.

Buffalo, NY

Justice for Robert Brooks!

By Workers World Buffalo bureau

Robert Brooks, a 43-year-old Black man imprisoned at Marcy Correctional Facility in upstate New York, was viciously beaten to death by a group of prison guards on the morning of Dec. 10, 2024.

A series of eight gruesome videos released to the public show prison staff punching, kicking, gagging and choking Mr. Brooks

while he was handcuffed until he finally succumbed to his injuries. The video has sparked outrage from nearly everyone who has seen it, and people are now strongly demanding justice for Robert Brooks.

New York Governor Kathy Hochul, who claims to be “outraged and horrified” and admits that this was a “senseless killing,” announced on Dec. 22 that prison officials are “moving to fire the staffers involved.”

Yet despite these comments, not one of the 14 prison staffers connected to the lynching has been charged with this heinous crime.

A longtime pattern of violence

White supremacy in the U.S. is as old as the country itself and forms the foundation of the “justice” system today. Killings and beatings like this are not new; they have happened on a regular basis since the first Africans were abducted and brought for enslavement on this continent by white settlers.

The U.S. ruling class has made a habit of offering symbolic gestures to quell the anger that has risen over the centuries. These gestures may give the appearance that this country has progressed away from its racist colonial past, but killings like that of Robert Brooks or George Floyd remind us of the tyranny that is inflicted on communities of color across the country by police, prisons and courts.

Here in Buffalo, just within the last few months, the police have signed a contract with Dataminr Inc to use artificial intelligence (AI) to surveil social media. Buffalo is currently turning the recently closed, only grocery store that was located in the downtown food desert into a new police station.



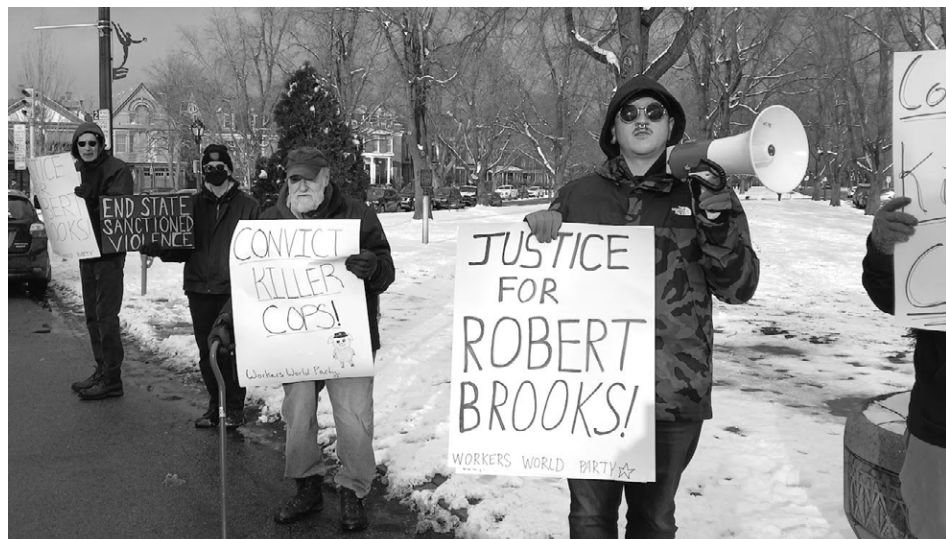
Robert Brooks

The Erie County Sheriff’s Office continues to plot on building a new jail. Anyone who lives in Buffalo knows how famously brutal the Erie County Holding Center already is.

These attempts to expand the racist police state and prison system will never make the city safer. Each and every one of these attempts will lead to more murders in our city like what happened to Robert Brooks. It is time for us to come together to fight this injustice. Not one more racist killing!

Protesters gather along a busy street on Jan. 11, in Buffalo to demand justice for Robert Brooks. The demonstration was held in solidarity with a rally in Utica, N.Y., on the same day by Jewish Voice for Peace – Syracuse branch, and Citizen Action – Central New York.

Justice for Robert Brooks! □



Saturday, Jan. 11, in Buffalo, N.Y. People demand justice for Robert Brooks, lynched by prison guards.

WW PHOTO: ELLIE DORRITTE

Housing crisis significantly worse in 2024

By Andrew Johnson

Capitalism, and class societies generally, have always been defined by poor housing conditions for the working classes. Contrary to popular myth, homelessness is not the result of individual failures or particular party governance, but rather an inbuilt inequity in the distribution of resources that permeates all class societies, which is particularly brutal in the current-day United States.

In 1872, Friedrich Engels remarked that since subpar housing and even homelessness are endemic to class society, the only way to solve the housing problem is to upend class rule itself, by a revolution of the workers against the capitalists. History proved Engels' assessment correct, as in the 20th century the new socialist states became the first (and to date, only) countries to effectively eliminate homelessness.

In contrast, the housing crisis in the United States and other capitalist countries has only worsened in the 21st century under increasing neoliberalization, full-blown privatization, gentrification and mass homelessness. According to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, a record high of more than 770,000



people experienced homelessness in 2024, up by 18% from 2023. Of those, nearly 150,000 were children, a staggering 33% increase over the previous year.

Housing is available, yet absurdly, more than 15 million housing units lie vacant amidst the ever-increasing homeless population, because rents are too high. (Medium.com, Feb. 24, 2024)

The current crisis is directly linked with the skyrocketing cost of rent across the United States, which has outpaced wages for some time. Capitalists already expropriate the surplus value produced by the working class, and landlords squeeze even more out of the "leftover" wages.

The wealthiest real estate corporations buy up existing housing to maximize rental profits. Billionaire speculators build high-rise luxury housing, and gentrification drives up prices and forces impoverished urban dwellers from their homes and neighborhoods.

In no state can a single worker making the minimum wage afford rental prices. Regions such as the Rust Belt and Midwest have not recovered from the foreclosure crisis of 2008, with many former homeowners still trapped in the rent system, or living on the streets.

The blatant profiteering in the housing market and the resulting homelessness is clearly a crisis of capitalism. In the short term, eliminating the profit motive from housing would alleviate some of the most egregious impacts.

However, Engels' conclusion is as relevant now as ever: Only a working-class revolution which abolishes the current class order can truly solve the housing problem. □

On the picket line

By Marie Kelly

WHEN WE
FIGHT
WE WIN!

Museum guards strike and win

The Seattle Art Museum Visiting Service Officers Union won recognition 2 1/2 years ago. But it took 860 days of negotiations before the workers won a first contract. A 12-day strike in December achieved what they couldn't win in all the other days of negotiations and ushered in a great victory. The contract vote of the 59 workers was nearly unanimous.

The VSOs are guards who provide security and assist museum visitors with knowledge about the artworks. Many of them are long-term workers. They were up against an anti-labor museum of the Seattle ruling class

with \$360 million in assets.

The SAM VSO's were active participants on the picket line throughout the strike, through speeches, chants and the display of a giant rat, as they welcomed all passersby with information about their struggle.

The union received the SAM's "last, best and final offer" in October. It fell far short of the demands of the workers, who struggle to live in high-priced Seattle, with rents going through the roof. One worker, a union co-representative, told ARTnews, "I've struggled to buy shoes, which I need as I spend all day in the galleries." (Dec. 6)

The new contract includes an immediate wage increase from \$21.68 to \$23.25 an hour, with a 4% wage increase at the beginning of 2025, followed by 4% wage increases at the beginning of 2026 and 2027.

SAM took away all the workers' pensions during the pandemic; now the unions' struggle won them back, not just for SAM VSO workers, but for the entire staff at the museum.

The contract restores the employer match 403b retirement program. The workers also won a union shop, where union membership is mandatory. This increases the power of the union.

The SAM VSO Union demonstrated what it takes to struggle and win against the most stubborn ruling-class bosses.

Jim McMahan contributed this item.

Writers support Palestine

Jenna Martin is an independent journalist and photographer who covers West Asia, including the West Bank. She recently joined the National Writers Union and the International Federation of Journalists. She chose to join the NWU because of its strong support of journalists in Palestine.

Martin states: "To say Palestine is a dangerous place for journalists is a massive understatement. Journalists in Palestine are regularly beaten, shot, detained and of course killed. Our equipment is seized or destroyed. I've been personally detained by the Israeli military more than once, the last time by an IDF soldier — with an American accent, no less — who told me he would 'shoot me with the gun I paid for.'" (nwu.org, Dec. 21)

Over 200 journalists have been killed and more have been wounded since October 2023 as the Israeli military routinely targets them as it does health care workers. Five journalists were just killed on Dec. 26 when their news van was targeted in an Israeli airstrike near the besieged Al-Awda Hospital. Gaza is the most dangerous conflict for journalists ever.

Ski patrol strike

At one of the busiest times of the season, Vail Ski Resort in Park City, Colorado, shut down all but 20% of its trails when the workers of Park City Professional Ski Patrol Association went on strike. Vail Resorts is the largest ski resort conglomerate in the U.S. with 42 ski resorts around the world.

Skiers have long complained of the "corporatization" of the resort and showed appreciation and support for the ski patrollers even if it meant a less than enjoyable winter vacation. Ski patrol workers are essential for the safety of resort skiers. The sport can be very dangerous if the trails are not monitored and maintained. Often, the patrol must rescue novice skiers who get injured on the slopes and sometimes handle emergencies due to avalanches.

The strike was authorized by the 200 union members, citing unfair labor practices after PCPSPA and Vail Resort had been in contract negotiations for 10 months.

The strike ended after two weeks with a victory for the workers. Starting pay will increase from \$21 to \$23 per hour, with some members with longevity getting as much as a \$7.75 per hour increase.

Seth Dromgoole, ski patroller and lead union negotiator, said in a statement: "This contract is more than just a win for our team — it's a groundbreaking success in the ski and mountain worker industry. This effort demonstrates what can be achieved when workers stand together and fight for what they deserve." □



Ski patrol workers on strike in Park City, Colorado, December 2024.

Real solidarity with Los Angeles

The response to the tragic, unprecedented fires raging in Los Angeles has by and large been one of compassion. This is true even from a poor country such as Mexico, which has dispatched its own firefighters to offer assistance.

Mexican President Claudia Sheinbaum explained: “We’re going to help, not just because the people and government of Mexico have always been generous, but also because there are a lot of Mexicans in this part of the United States.” (mexiconewsdaily.com, Jan. 10)

Meanwhile undocumented migrants in the Los Angeles area have voluntarily, without pay, assisted in putting out fires — with garden hoses and buckets in a city inadequately supplied with water and equipment to deal with the crisis professionally.

Maria Garcia, an undocumented Guatemalan immigrant, said: “Our values and our principles come first, that’s what our parents taught us. They always used to say, help others without concern for who they are or why they need help.” Garcia and her team of volunteers



Maria Garcia, an undocumented migrant from Guatemala, assists in putting out a fire in Altadena, California.

drove to Altadena, an area in Los Angeles County that needed their assistance. (npr.org, Jan. 10)

None of these heroic acts of solidarity have moved President-elect Donald Trump. Since winning the November election, he continues to employ the most vile, bigoted, chauvinistic rhetoric against migrants and against Mexico. He has promised to conduct mass deportations and to instigate a trade war by imposing tariffs on imports from Mexico.

And it’s not just Trump by himself attacking migrants. What are the Democrats and the so-called “anti-Trump” Republicans doing to block deportations of undocumented immigrants? Nothing helpful.

The assistance being offered by immigrants and Mexican firefighters is indeed laudable. But it will not turn around the racist, xenophobic backlash about to be ushered in on Jan. 20. That will take a classwide movement of undocumented and documented migrants and U.S.-born workers united in solidarity. □

Disaster response in U.S. collapsed

Continued from page 1

Department of Fish and Wildlife, “Fifteen of the 20 largest wildfires in California history have occurred since 2000, and ten of the most costly and destructive fires to life and property in the state have occurred since 2015.”

The reasons for this include industrial and urban development, extraction of natural resources and ecological strain from a growing human population. These are also key factors in the Earth’s rapid climate change. The state’s fire-fighting strategy has made the problem worse — namely, prioritizing fire suppression over controlled management of fires, which occur naturally and frequently in this region.

But in the U.S. in the 21st century what starts as a natural disaster becomes

something much worse. The causes are failing infrastructure, mismanagement of the emergency response and insufficient funding for relief from the federal government.

In 2005, Hurricane Katrina’s impact on New Orleans was made much worse because the Army Corps of Engineers built cheap and poorly constructed levees. The devastation in Puerto Rico in the aftermath of Hurricane Maria in 2017 was worse than in other areas in the Caribbean in part because of the inadequate disaster relief provided by the first Donald Trump administration.

What’s happening in Los Angeles is another example of the collapse of the government’s ability to respond to crises. In this case, the failure stems from the city government’s decision to slash the fire department’s budget in order to increase

funding for the police.

Fire Chief Kristin Crowley, the first woman in the city’s history to hold the position, publicly criticized budget cuts overseen by Mayor Karen Bass, who is herself the first woman and second Black person in that role. Crowley told reporters, “My message is that the fire department needs to be properly funded. It’s not.” (Foxla.com, Jan. 10)

Budget prioritizes cops

In 2023, \$1.8 billion of the city’s \$11.8 billion budget was allocated to the cops. “Fire and Public Works are the only other city departments budgeted for more than a billion dollars. At \$1.24 billion and \$1.67 billion, respectively, they’re far behind the LAPD.” (LA Times, Feb. 18, 2023)

A full 40% of all people employed by the city are under the command of the police department — roughly 40,000 people.

City workers have long fought for retirement benefits and pensions. The California Public Employees Retirement System (CalPERS) has distributed \$32 billion to municipal workers since its creation in 1969. Annually, the state now authorizes CalPERS to spend \$2.5 billion in retirement benefits. But less and less of that money now ends up in working-class bank accounts. By the 2023-2024 fiscal year, a staggering 37% of it went to retired cops.

Migrant and incarcerated workers

California’s agricultural industry could not function without half a million migrant workers, over half of whom are undocumented and all of whom are underpaid. The threat of deportation puts them at great risk to have their lives turned upside down. Bosses take advantage of this to pay them lower wages than they would pay to documented workers.

The state’s fire management department also superexploits incarcerated workers, putting them on dangerous, hard jobs while paying them almost nothing. One in 10 of the 7,500 fire fighters currently embedded with CAL FIRE teams in Los Angeles come from state prisons.

“The work of our incarcerated

firefighters and staff is an essential part of this effort,” according to the secretary of the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR). For this essential work, incarcerated workers are paid between \$5 and \$10 a day.

The CDCR first started sending incarcerated people to fight fires in 1915, when “convict leasing” was widespread across the country. During World War II, the CDCR was operating 41 prison labor camps across the state, called “Conservation (Fire) Camps.” By the 1980s, the Los Angeles County Fire Department had five camps of its own.

When the people who stare down hundred-foot walls of flame finally contain this LA inferno, one in 10 firefighters will be handcuffed and sent back to a concrete cell.

Distracting attention by yelling ‘looters!’

Meanwhile the LAPD seems to be in a panic to justify the enormous resources at its command. Representatives of the repressive state organs are stoking fears of “looters” pillaging the city.

A city supervisor condemned “those who are preying on our residents during this crisis,” as if anyone arrested for looting in Los Angeles right now is not a victim of the crisis themselves.

“There is zero tolerance for looters,” according to a representative for the Los Angeles Sheriff’s Department. He issued a warning that “anyone found roaming around wildfire evacuation zones could face misdemeanor charges. Looters would face felony charges if caught.” (People.com, Jan. 9)

Governor Gavin Newsom meanwhile has deployed 1,680 National Guard soldiers to Los Angeles — not to aid in fire suppression or the mass evacuations, but to impose a curfew across the burning city. He said, “Looting will not be tolerated.” (gov.ca.gov, Jan. 9)

The ability of the U.S. and California governments to respond to disasters has completely collapsed. And that’s the sum of it: when the people need food and shelter, the government sends tanks and guns. □



PHOTO: CALIFORNIA DIVISION OF JUVENILE JUSTICE

Incarcerated teenagers from the Pine Grove Youth prison camp were deployed to fight the Caldor Fire in Northern California, which burned from August to October 2021.

Global warming turned wildfires into infernos

By G. Dunkel

California's economic output, measured by Gross Domestic Product, would in total be behind only the total GDPs of the U.S., China, Germany or Japan. Its per capita GDP would be the best in the world, argues the California governor's report.

But this wealth has not enabled the state to contain and manage the wild fires that broke out in Los Angeles Jan. 7.

The fires are still burning Monday January 13 with dangerous winds predicted overnight.

Los Angeles is the second largest city in the United States, with close to 4 million residents. Its population is around 49% of Latin American origin, 12% Asian and 9% Black and it has a worldwide reputation as a center of the film industry.

It has had major wildfires before the current ones — five major ones since 2018. LA had pre-positioned fire crews following Weather Bureau forecasts. This preparation was inadequate.

The effects of global warming appear to have raised the world's average air temperature over the 1.5 C target set in the Paris Climate Agreement in 2015. A higher air temperature lets the atmosphere attract and hold more moisture, turning it into an "atmospheric sponge," which overcame all the efforts of the LA fire department.

To make for a worse situation, the above average rainfall in 2022 and 2023 produced an unusual amount of plant growth. The fall and winter drought in 2024, when less than an inch of rain fell during what was usually the "rainy" season, added to the drying effects of global warming to make the shrubbery vulnerable to burning rapidly.

The weather patterns produced by



Protest at Citibank's Manhattan headquarters and CEO Jane Fraser's home on July 27, 2024, to highlight children displaced by climate change.

global warming drew the winds formed over the Mojave Desert through the mountain passes leading to LA, heating the winds and speeding them up. There were wind gusts in the San Gabriel Mountains of 100 miles per hour. These winds fed oxygen to the blazes and pushed their flames before the wind. The smallest fire rapidly grew, almost explosively, and the high winds spread embers for miles.

At least 319,000 people are now under evacuation orders or in evacuation warning areas. These evacuation orders, and the voluntary evacuations many people did on their own, perhaps have been responsible for the low death total — as of January 12 just 24 people — and a low number of 16 missing.

AccuWeather late Thursday raised its estimate for damages from the LA fires to between \$135 billion and \$150 bil-

lion — triple the costs initially expected — after blazes ripped through some of Los Angeles County's wealthiest neighborhoods. Previously they had been spared.



Billionaire Elon Musk props up the ultraright

By Betsey Piette

Why does multimillionaire Elon Musk, one of the richest individuals in the world, need to throw his weight and financial support behind right-wing neofascists and want-to-be dictators such as Donald Trump in the U.S. and others around the world?

Musk is not simply one of the world's richest people. He is the monopoly owner of the electric car company Tesla, space launch technology and the social media

platform X and as such is a major influence over the global political discourse. Yet while he openly supported Trump's campaign, which was largely based on xenophobic attacks on undocumented workers, Musk came to the U.S. on a student visa but stayed illegally after it expired. (Electrek.co, Dec. 30, 2024)

Musk's wealth doesn't come from his own sweat and labor but from the superexploitation of workers at his Tesla plants where he has fought against workers' efforts to unionize. In April 2024, Musk let go 15,000 U.S. workers and in late December ramped up the use of H-1B visas for temporary foreign workers. Many of the laid-off U.S. workers were more senior engineers with higher compensation rates. They are being replaced with junior engineers from abroad working for lower pay and for longer hours. Musk often pushes Tesla employees to work 60-80 hours per week.

As owner of SpaceX, Musk filed a lawsuit against the National Labor Relations Board after the agency charged him with two instances of using illegal unfair labor practices. Musk's suit against the limited government protection for workers that has been around since 1935 claims that the NLRB is "unconstitutional," because its "administrative courts rule on cases that can be challenged in federal courts." (Portside, Jan. 7)

Increasingly, workers in the U.S. and around the globe are pushing back against bosses such as Musk and Amazon's anti-union owner Jeff Bezos. This helps explain why Musk is increasingly turning to supporting far-right politicians.

Meta weaponizes 'free speech'

Suddenly social media monopolists such as Musk and Meta's Mark Zuckerberg have discovered "free speech," which they interpret as a totally unhampered right-wing outlet allowed to spew whatever racist, sexist, homophobic, xenophobic,

transphobic garbage they choose to post. No holds barred now that Trump is back in office.

As the capitalist system declines worldwide, centrist capitalist governments in the U.S., Germany, France and Britain are proving incapable of protecting workers. As military spending for imperialist wars escalates, workers have grown more frustrated, and in some cases they are drawn to supporting far-right politicians like Trump, Nigel Farage in Britain and Marine Le Pen in France.

Musk has gone all-out to promote neo-Nazis in Germany who make up much of the base of the Alternative for Germany party which is gaining support in the parliamentary elections to be held Feb. 23. The AfD is vehemently racist and anti-immigrant. Musk, via X, has tweeted that "only the AfD can save Germany."

The Independent (UK) on Jan. 3 noted Musk praised the AfD "for its plans to reduce government overregulation, lower taxes and deregulate the market." Musk, who will open his first Tesla electric vehicle plant in a region east of Berlin, will benefit from any deregulation.

The megabillionaire's statement reveals his goals, as well as those of other multimillionaires, who want governments to create an environment where they continue to profit, regardless of the price that workers pay, and the damage to the environment is unlimited.

But that's not the future.

Around the world, workers are organizing. In Cuba, China and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Venezuela and Nicaragua, workers are demonstrating that another world is possible — one organized around the needs of the majority of the population and the need to save the planet, not the profits of a handful of wealthy billionaires.

Filthy rich capitalists such as Musk and Trump will promote policies that pit workers against each other and support global imperialism. The global working class needs to unite and fight back through workers' solidarity. □



The many fronts of the U.S.-backed genocide in Gaza

By Monica Moorehead

No compassionate human being, whether living in the Global South or the Global North, could hardly deny that what has happened in Gaza since after Oct. 7, 2023, is anything short of a horrific genocide conducted by the Zionist Israel Occupation Forces (IOF).

President Joe Biden's administration and its European allies led by Germany have unapologetically supplied their ally Israel with 2,000-pound bombs, armored tanks, fighter jets and other weaponry to carry out deliberate ethnic cleansing against a defenseless Palestinian civilian population, especially children. And once the Donald Trump administration occupies the White House again on Jan. 20, there is no reason to doubt that the same flow of arms will continue to reach the white, settler-colonial regime.

The U.S. government's support of Israel is not just on the military front but also on the political front. Legislation has been passed by both houses of Congress falsely equating opposition to Zionism and anti-Arab racism with antisemitism. This is intended to punish and silence any activist or group, especially on college campuses, who expresses any opposition to the genocide and its imperialist suppliers.

When the government of South Africa — which itself carried out a decades-long struggle against apartheid — initiated a lawsuit before the International Criminal Court in November 2023, it documented in great detail the ongoing genocide in Gaza. One of the stipulations called for

issuing arrest warrants for Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and the former Israeli war minister, Yoav Gallant, for war crimes in Gaza.

The ICC has the right to make recommendations, but no power to implement them. Nevertheless, in an effort to defend their war criminal ally, the U.S. House of Representatives passed an anti-ICC sanctions bill on Jan. 9 with bipartisan support. The Senate will vote on the same bill in the near future.

According to CNN, "The legislation calls for the warrants against the Israeli officials to be 'condemned in the strongest possible terms.' And, according to the legislative text, the measure would impose sanctions with respect to the court over 'any effort to investigate, arrest, detain or prosecute any protected person of the United States and its allies.' The sanctions include prohibiting U.S. property transactions and blocking and revoking visas." (Jan. 9)

This bill also provides immunity for any active member of the IOF if they travel outside of Israel.

Many aspects of a genocide

At the present moment, while peace talks in Qatar have reached an imminent ceasefire in Gaza, the people in Gaza continue to suffer daily airstrikes, bombings, forced starvation and babies freezing to death in inadequate tents during the winter.

The Gazan Ministry of Health has attempted to keep the public informed on how many people have been killed and injured since Oct. 7, 2023, including the

untold thousands buried under the rubble following bombings and airstrikes. Virtually all health care facilities have been destroyed in northern Gaza by the occupying force. This includes the indiscriminate murder of patients, paramedics, doctors and nurses.

The Cradle, an online publication that covers developments throughout West Asia, on Jan. 9 published results from a recent study done by The Lancet, a British medical journal, stating that the death toll in Gaza was "likely" undercounted by at least 41% during the first nine months of the genocide. The joint study was conducted from October 2023 until June 2024 by academics from the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, Yale University and other institutions.

"We estimated 64,260 deaths due to traumatic injury during the study period, suggesting the Palestinian Ministry of Health (MoH) under-reported mortality by 41%. The annualized crude death rate was 39.3 per 1,000 people, representing a rate ratio of 14.0 compared with all-cause mortality in 2022, even when ignoring non-injury excess mortality," the study says. (thecradle.co, Jan. 9)

These scholars state that around 59.1% of those killed were women, children and elderly people.

The Lancet acknowledges that the Ministry of Health adequately reported on the number of deaths at the beginning of the war but didn't have the capacity to keep up with the rapidity of the death toll due to not only the destruction of hospitals but the ongoing disruption of



Israeli military destroys Al-Shifa hospital in Gaza in the spring of 2024, killing many patients.

communication controlled by Israel.

The study went on to say: "The escalation of Israeli military ground operations and attacks on health care facilities severely disrupted the [MoH's] ability to record deaths electronically. These challenges compelled the MoH to rely on less structured data collection modalities, particularly when hospitals were under siege or experiencing telecommunication blockades. This might have led to incomplete and geographically biased reporting, as seen in other conflict zones where prolonged warfare complicates casualty tracking."

The medical journal estimates that the death toll in Gaza could end up between 149,000 and 598,000, not only by military means but along with disease, destroyed health care infrastructure and severe shortages of food and water.

This study reflects an imperialist-backed genocide that is political, social and military.

South Africa's case against Israel, now joined by Ireland, is absolutely justified. □

Maduro inaugurated, plans to increase people's role in Venezuelan Revolution

By Hugo East

Nicolás Maduro was inaugurated for his third term as president of Venezuela on Jan. 10. Delegations from 125 countries and international organizations participated in the swearing-in ceremony.

In one of the first acts of his new term, Maduro implemented reforms to move Venezuelan politics away from the legacy of liberal capitalist democracy left by the country's colonial history and maximize mass participation. The Venezuelan president signed a decree on Jan. 10 to "create a broad, national commission for drafting the constitutional reform project" and called on "all political, economic, ideological, cultural and social sectors to a great, inclusive and unified dialogue to advance

together toward a constitutional reform that will further democratize Venezuela." (telesurenglish.net, Jan. 10)

In a Jan. 8 address Maduro said that the reforms will "define with clarity the model of Venezuelan development for the next 30 years and to democratize ... the political [and] social life of Venezuela, transform this state into a true democratic state of the people, for the people, with the people." (youtube.com)

In a Jan. 1 interview with Ignacio Ramonet of Telesur, Maduro elaborated on these plans, anchoring them in the values and spirit of the Bolivarian Revolution of 1999, as well as the 2006 initiative of then-President Hugo Chavez to develop communal councils in Venezuela.

Maduro characterized the plans as

building upon the 2024 projects of his own administration, which implemented "direct consultations with communities ... allocating budgets for community projects which were decided, defined, planned, voted on and approved by the popular vote ... [including] thousands of neighborhood projects to solve acute problems that the bureaucratism of the old state did not address." (youtube.com, Jan. 1)

At the inauguration on Jan. 10, Maduro further emphasized the new initiative's break with the political and economic policies of the past, asking, "What does the oligarchy offer? To [bring Venezuela] back



Venezuelans celebrate inauguration of reelected President Nicolás Maduro, Caracas, Jan. 10, 2025.

to ... the 'new-old' system of oligarchy, the old system. No, we cannot go back to that. ... We will do the revolution of 2025-2031, which will be a democratized revolution." (youtube.com, Jan. 10)

Ongoing machinations of U.S. Empire

While President Maduro set out this vision of a bright future for the workers of Venezuela, the United States' imperialist project continues its decades-long series of political, economic, informational and physical attacks on Venezuela. The devastating economic sanctions continue.

The U.S. has declared opposition leader Edmundo González Urrutia the winner of the Venezuelan election. President Biden met with him at the White House Jan. 6.

According to the Maduro administration, two senior U.S. government officials — one from the FBI and one from the military — were arrested on Jan. 8 along with seven mercenaries, alleged to have been engaged in an attempt to commit acts of terrorism within Venezuela. (Barrons.com, Jan. 8)

Most recently, on Jan. 10, the day that Maduro was sworn in, the U.S. announced it had increased to \$25 million its reward for information leading to Maduro's arrest. □

Cypriots protest visit from Israeli president

By Sue Harris

People rallied at Cyprus Central Airport Jan. 11 to express outrage at the visit from Israeli President Isaac Herzog. They were protesting Israel's genocidal policies toward Palestine and Lebanon. Other



Cyprus Central Airport, Jan. 11.

people protested in front of the presidential palace.

The Cyprus Peace Council organized the protests. In a statement to the media, the Peace Council described Herzog's visit as "provocative," emphasizing that "while the Israeli army is killing tens of thousands of civilians, women, children and elderly people in Palestine and Lebanon, the president of Israel cannot be welcomed in Cyprus."

The demonstrators in Cyprus expressed great sympathy towards Palestine and Lebanon. At both the airport and the presidential palace, organizations in solidarity with the Peace Council took

part, including the Council of Russian Citizens and Friends of Russia in Cyprus. The demonstrators said that Israeli violence threatened the stability of the whole region and demanded the complete end of military operations and bloodshed.

According to the Jan. 10 Times of India, the discussion between the Cypriot leader, Nikos Christodoulides and the Israeli president concerned hostages but also the potential use of Cyprus' strategic position for military purposes. Cyprus is an island in the Mediterranean Sea very close to Western Asia and Türkiye.

These demonstrations in Cyprus are a reminder of the global support for Palestinian humanity and an end to war everywhere. □

Ukraine: Trump seeks profits, not 'peace'

By Otis Grotewohl

Before the U.S. elections, incoming President Donald Trump claimed he wanted to see an end to the war in Ukraine. In fact, he bragged that he could stop the conflict "within 24 hours of taking office." (The Hill, Dec. 30)

Recent developments, however, show there will likely be little difference between the incoming Trump administration and the outgoing Biden administration regarding military aid and funding to Ukraine.

When asked by podcaster Lex Fridman on how he intends on ending the conflict, Trump responded by saying, "I can't give you those plans, because if I give you those plans, I'm not going to be able to use them. They'll be unsuccessful. Part of it's [a] surprise." (al-Jazeera, Dec. 30)

A Nov. 6 Wall Street Journal article reported that Trump's plans for a "cease-fire" in Ukraine involve delaying Kyiv's NATO membership by 20 years, citing various sources close to the incoming president.

Russian President Vladimir Putin and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sergey Lavrov have openly ridiculed Trump's pompous posturing. Putin rejected the idea that a deferral in Ukraine's membership in NATO would be satisfactory enough for Moscow during an annual press interaction in late December.

Putin and Lavrov highlighted that outgoing U.S. President Joe Biden already made a similar suggestion in 2021. At that time, Biden allegedly offered to defer Ukraine's admission into NATO for a minimum of 10 to 15 years.

In response to the leaked reports about Trump's tentative ideas for a "peace" agreement, Lavrov stated: "We are not happy, of course, with the proposals made by members of the Trump team to postpone Ukraine's admission to NATO for 20 years and to station British and European peacekeeping forces in Ukraine." (The Hill, Dec. 30)

Lavrov further asserted he believes that peace can only occur through "reliable and legally binding agreements that would eliminate the root causes of the conflict and seal a mechanism precluding the possibility of their violation."

Trump seeks profits, not 'peace'

Trump and his far-right cohorts have been publicly critical of the Biden administration's approach towards the Russia-Ukraine conflict. Despite their sporadic use of the word "peace" regarding the ongoing proxy war against Russia, Trump and his inner circle prioritize personal financial gain. Trump's appointment of 13 billionaires to his cabinet or staff exhibits the new administration's profit-driven motives.

In distinguishing himself from his predecessor, Trump has been more critical towards NATO, albeit from a reactionary, chauvinist viewpoint. According to the Financial Times: "Trump's team has told European officials that the incoming U.S. president will demand NATO member states increase defense spending to 5% of GDP but plans to continue supplying military aid to Ukraine." (Dec. 20)

In a recent interview with Time magazine, Trump promised he would continue



Chicago, mid-May 2012, during week of anti-NATO actions.

the Biden administration's support for Ukraine. "I want to reach an agreement, and the only way you're going to reach an agreement is not to abandon," Trump said. (cnn.com, Dec. 12) For Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky and the Azov Battalion forces, anything short of NATO membership is considered "abandonment."

Trump and his wealthy acquaintances have no interest in helping anyone suffering in war-torn Ukraine. However, open-ended war in the region only benefits investors directly involved in the military and weapons industries. A "ceasefire," on the other hand, could potentially open more investment opportunities for additional stakeholders, and that provides the main incentive for Trump to obtain some type of "peace" agreement.

Challenges to ending the proxy war

Regardless of what Trump wants, the U.S. imperialist war hawks and defense contractors are dedicated to prolonging

the war aimed at destroying Russia, no matter how many Ukrainians and Russians are killed.

U.S. military and political leaders have intervened in Ukraine since the Soviet Union collapsed in 1991. This U.S. involvement escalated with the 2004 nationalistic and anti-communist "Orange Revolution" and intensified during the 2013-14 neo-Nazi led "Maidan" coup.

U.S. imperialism will continue to accelerate the proxy

war against Moscow, no matter who is "commander-in-chief." Remember that although former President Barack Obama campaigned with a program to remove U.S. troops from Afghanistan, the Pentagon generals sabotaged every step in that direction. Obama increased U.S. forces in 2009 instead.

Congress had appropriated more than \$174 billion by last April towards the ongoing proxy war, draining resources that could otherwise be used to provide health care, cancel student debt and rebuild the failing U.S. infrastructure. The outgoing Biden administration announced one last "substantial" weapons aid package for Ukraine on Jan. 7.

Only a militant, multinational, anti-imperialist movement can genuinely help workers in Ukraine and Russia, as well as the rest of the world, by fighting to end the NATO-led proxy war and all wars funded by U.S. tax dollars. □

South Korea impeachment sparks revelations of Yoon Suk Yeol's warmongering

By Hugo East

South Korea's impeached President Yoon Suk Yeol faces mounting popular, political and legal pressure as more details emerge about his Dec. 3 declaration of martial law. The South Korean police and the Corruption Investigation Office (CIO) are currently renewing their efforts to detain Yoon after the presidential security service prevented his arrest in a six-hour standoff on Jan. 3.

Revelations have shed light on some of the potential motivations and plans for President Yoon's martial law declaration. The move may have been part of an attempt to start a hot war with the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (North Korea.) In a Dec. 13 article, Ju-Hyun Park, an organizer with Nodutdol, the anti-imperialist organization of Koreans of the diaspora living in the U.S. or Canada, wrote:

"Citing anonymous military sources, lawmaker Kim Byung-joo, a former four-star general ... told fellow lawmakers on December 10 that 20 members of the Special Forces' Headquarters Intelligence Detachment (HID) unit 'were on standby at a location in Seoul' on the night of the martial law order. Kim [Byung-joo] claims the HID unit would have been mobilized to the National Assembly to arrest lawmakers, and questions whether they would have killed those who resisted, possibly while wearing fake North Korean uniforms. ...

"On December 13, influential independent journalist Kim Eo-jun appeared before the National Assembly with a bombshell claim. According to Kim [Eo-jun], whose studio was targeted by the military in the early hours of the

coup attempt, a source from 'the embassy of an allied country' told him Yoon planned to assassinate Han Dong-Hoon, the leader of the president's ruling party, on the night of the martial law order.

False flag operation?

"Kim Eo-jun claimed Special Forces in North Korean uniform were to act as an 'assassination squad' undertaking the following plot: 'First, Han Dong-hoon is to be assassinated during transportation after his arrest. Second, attack the arrest unit escorting Cho Kuk, Yang Jeong-cheol and myself, pretending to rescue them. Third, North Korean military uniforms will be buried at a specific location. Fourth, after some time, the uniforms will be discovered, and the incident will be attributed to North Korea.'"

Cho Kuk is an anti-Yoon politician who leads the minority Rebuilding Korea Party, and Yang Jeong-cheol is an influential former aide of former President Moon Jae-in.

Ju-Hyun Park added: "Kim Eo-jun also said he received tips that Yoon planned to 'kill American soldiers to induce the U.S. to bomb North Korea,' and that a biochemical terror attack had also been under consideration. Yoon would have thereby manufactured a situation from which he could emerge as the 'reunification president' who successfully ended Korea's division by means of conquest." (People's Dispatch Dec. 13)

South Korean politics has been plunged into chaos since Dec. 3, with several members of President Yoon's inner circle having resigned, and some have been detained by



Massive protest by Korean Confederation of Trade Unions against Yoon in Seoul, Dec. 4, 2024.

the CIO. In addition, the National Assembly voted Dec. 27 to impeach the acting president, Prime Minister Han Duck-soo.

The people of South Korea organized mass protests to block the initial martial law declaration and continued them during the subsequent political turmoil. Hundreds gathered outside of President Yoon's residence Jan. 4, calling for his ouster and arrest.

A pattern of U.S. colonial manipulation

These recent dramatic events are just the latest in a well-established pattern in South Korean politics, with roots in the U.S. military occupation and its role as neocolonialist power in South Korea.

In a Jan. 3 interview, independent Korean-American journalist and geopolitical analyst KJ Noh stated: "This is the cycle where the United States puts in a dictator, the Koreans overthrow the dictator, and the United States puts in another one. This happened in 1948, 1960, 1972, 1979, 1980, 1987, 2015, and here we go again.

"Yoon Suk Yeol was Washington's man in Seoul. Nobody that I know of had any

respect for him as a politician. He's a person who had never held elected office in his life, until suddenly he became the American favorite, because his foreign policy was the exact mirror-image of U.S. foreign policy for Asia. It was a direct clone of the U.S. Indo-Pacific strategy. ...

"When he became the President, he said he would turn this into the republic of prosecution, which is what he did. He was prosecuting unions; he was prosecuting peace organizations;

he was prosecuting workers; the media; any and everybody; civil society itself. He was trampling it underfoot. And the U.S. was just continuing to praise him and saying, 'This man is the leader of a global pivot state which is leading the fight of democracies over autocracies.' And the next thing you know, he has declared himself the dictator of South Korea by declaring martial law. ...

"[T]he United States has operational control over South Korea's military the moment it declares DEFCON-3, or preparation for war. So, if we have a situation where the U.S.-favored president declares martial law, uses the pretext of war with North Korea as the justification for martial law, then what happens is South Korea's 500,000 troops, plus potentially 3.1 million reserve troops, fall immediately under U.S. operation control.

"In other words, we have a situation which primes the entire peninsula for war against China and also creates tremendous moral hazard for this escalation to war." (youtube.com/watch?v=YtjBjMhJglk) □

The Panama Canal: from Teddy Roosevelt to Donald Trump

Just what is motivating President-elect Donald Trump's threats to take over the Panama Canal, buy Greenland and make Canada the 51st U.S. state? Does he think he can impose a new historic era of U.S. domination, or is he simply following in the footsteps of his imperialist predecessors — Republicans and Democrats alike?

During his first term, Trump's "America First" policy was purportedly based on U.S. isolationism. Is his recent demand that the Panama Canal "be returned to us, in full, quickly and without question," an indication his second term has emboldened him to assert U.S. interests abroad more aggressively? And what motivates his false claim that Chinese soldiers occupy the canal?

Panama's President José Raúl Mulino's response to Trump that "every square meter of the Panama Canal and its adjacent area belongs to Panama," indicates he is taking Trump seriously. And so should we.

In Panama, dozens of protesters gathered outside the U.S. Embassy chanting "Trump, animal, leave the canal alone," carrying banners reading "Donald Trump, public enemy of Panama." Saul Mendez, leader of a Panamanian construction union that helped organize the protest, quoted France's AFP news agency saying: "Panama is a sovereign territory and the canal here is Panamanian. ... Donald Trump and his imperial delusion cannot claim even a single centimeter of land in Panama." (dw.com, Dec. 25)

To dismiss Trump's demands as frivolous ignores U.S. history and how Washington

first came to control the canal.

In 1903, U.S. President Theodore Roosevelt financed a revolt to seize territory controlled by the Republic of Colombia in order to create the Republic of Panama. The newly formed "republic" and the U.S. then signed a treaty giving the U.S. control over a 10-mile-wide strip of land to build and operate the canal in exchange for money.

The U.S. ruled the Canal Zone as a settler-colony for more than 60 years, but uprisings by Panamanians in the 1960s and 1970s combined with U.S. military losses in Vietnam led then-President Jimmy Carter to sign a 1977 agreement to return control to Panama.

That legislation, ceding full control over the canal to Panama by 1999, has been unsuccessfully opposed by subsequent U.S. administrations. In December 1989, however, under President George H.W. Bush, the U.S. bombed and invaded Panama and overthrew President Manuel Noriega. Washington claimed this invasion ensured "the integrity of the Panama Canal treaties."

Competition from planned Nicaragua canal

With the canal under Panama's full control since 2000, a massive project from 2007 to 2017 greatly expanded the canal's capacity. Recently, however, severe drought around the canal that lowered water levels has hindered its function. These problems led Panama to set restrictions on traffic and impose higher fees.

The number of ships able to use the canal dropped from 14,080 in 2023 to 9,944 in 2024, a drop of 29%, according to the Panama Canal Authority.

The U.S. is the Panama Canal's number one user. China is number two. In November, China announced that its government has been negotiating with Nicaragua's President Daniel Ortega to construct an alternate waterway to connect the Caribbean Sea to the Pacific Ocean. This challenge from China may well be the motivation behind Trump's threatened takeover and false claims about Chinese soldiers controlling the Panama Canal.

During his first term, Trump repeatedly promoted the idea of the U.S. buying Greenland from Denmark. The Indigenous population of Greenland would clearly challenge any sale. Greenland's prime minister, Múte Egede, has said, yet again, that the island "is not for sale."

But Trump hasn't stopped. While announcing his pick for ambassador to Denmark, Trump arrogantly tweeted: "For purposes of National Security and Freedom throughout the World, the United States of America feels that the ownership and control of Greenland is an absolute necessity." (CNN, Dec. 22)

Trump's new "America First" pronouncements also included a jab at Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau.



Protesters chanted anti-Trump slogans in front of the U.S. Embassy in Panama, Dec. 24, 2024.

While threatening to increase tariffs on Canadian imports to the U.S., Trump said it would be a "great idea" for Canada to become the 51st U.S. state.

'America First' – same old U.S. imperialism

It may be tempting to dismiss Trump's comments on social media, but in fact he is following in his predecessor's footsteps. President Joe Biden laid the groundwork for major U.S. military expansion during his presidency through increased war threats against both Russia and China and total support for Israeli aggression and territorial expansion in West Asia, which includes the recent overthrow of the Bashar al-Assad government in Syria. The field is wide open for Trump.

It is critical for the anti-imperialist movement to understand that Trump makes these threats not as an individual but as the next head of the world's major capitalist and military power — made all the more dangerous because its economic system is in serious decline. □

Honor the resistance in Palestine!

By Will Hodgkinson
Boston

Hundreds of people answered the call of the Boston Coalition for Palestine (BCFP) to disrupt the city's official "First Night" celebration on Dec. 31, 2024. Gathering in City Hall Plaza, where bands and a parade were sponsored by the city's business elite, speakers, carolers and chanters on a powerful sound system filled the plaza, proclaiming, "No celebration while Palestine, Lebanon, Syria and Yemen are burning!"

Speakers and organizers — including from the Palestinian House of New England, North American Indian Center of Boston and United American Indians of New England, Palestinian Youth Movement, Jewish Voice for Peace, Party for Socialism and Liberation, Massachusetts Peace Action, MIT, Harvard, Northeastern and various campus Students for Justice in Palestine chapters and Workers World Party — in unity demanded: "End all U.S. aid to Israel! End the genocide and siege on Gaza, now!"

When the protesters moved to join the parade, in which the public was ostensibly invited to participate, they were immediately surrounded and blocked by a phalanx of cops. Undaunted and with their ranks swelling, the pro-Palestine demonstrators held their ground, eventually taking the downtown streets with tens of thousands of spectators, many cheering the BCFP's unabashedly pro-resistance messages.

Will Hodgkinson of Workers World Party gave the following edited speech, which was interrupted many times by cheers from the gathering crowd. (report by Steve Gillis)

It's such an honor to be with all of you tonight, speaking out in unequivocal, unshakable solidarity with the Axis of Resistance fighting for the liberation of Palestine.

As Workers World has held since its founding, we cannot separate the worldwide struggle of the working class from the struggles of all Indigenous nations and all oppressed peoples against capitalism, imperialism and settler colonialism.

And because capitalism cannot exist without imperial-

ism, without settler colonialism, true victory in any one of these struggles will never be possible without victory in all of these struggles, without the complete self-determination of all oppressed nations around the world.

Tonight, there is absolutely nothing to celebrate this New Year after over a year of this latest horrific stage of Zionist genocide, as the Zionist entity attacks hospitals and kidnaps and tortures doctors. As babies in Gaza starve and freeze in the rain. There is nothing to celebrate as Zionist forces, backed by the U.S., dismember Syria, tear its sovereignty to shreds and continue to expand their colonial land grab.

What we do honor and salute instead is the resistance to Zionist genocide in Palestine, Yemen, Lebanon and Iran. They are leading the way to a new future. Because as this imperialist aggression intensifies, the resistance will strengthen.

Mobilize worker power against the empire

And that's why it is essential that we here, all of us in the imperial core, that we workers mobilize and use our power in the U.S., this settler-colonial empire, that is making the Zionist genocide possible. We must join and support the resistance and escalate and continue to organize to shut down the companies and universities — all these institutions here — that are not just complicit in the genocide but actively participating in it.

The Zionist garrison and the U.S. empire it belongs to are overextended. They are rotting, and across the world billions of people see them for what they are. Their depravity is on full display. You see that in the media where pundits are full of tears for a dead health insurance CEO and then turn around and defend and support genocide, the mass murder of children. That's how the ruling class values human life. Shame!

But the ruling class is scared, because they see the resistance is only increasing and growing. They see its momentum and power that will break them and sweep them aside.

And that's why we must continue the struggle into the new year, so that we see the fall of imperialism, the fall of the U.S. empire and the Zionist regime, so that we see a free Palestine and Land Back in our lifetimes!

From the river to the sea, free Palestine! □

Sick-out for Gaza health care workers



In a fierce show of solidarity with health care workers in Gaza, protesters held a press conference and rally across from NYU Tisch Hospital in New York City on Jan. 6 to demand an immediate end to the genocide in Gaza and the release of Dr. Hussam Abu Safiya and his colleagues.

On Dec. 27, Israeli forces detained Dr. Safiya, a pediatrician and the director of Kamal Adwan Hospital in northern Gaza, after the army invaded the hospital and ordered everyone evacuated. Safiya's whereabouts are unknown. In October, Israeli forces killed his son with a drone strike.

Dr. Safiya described the horrific conditions at the hospital in a guest essay, "I'm One of the Last Doctors in This Hospital in Gaza. I'm Begging the World for Help," published in the New York Times on Dec. 2. "The human mind cannot imagine all the death and body parts and blood that surround us around the clock," he wrote.

The Jan. 6 "Flood NYC for Gaza" action was part of the national day of calling out sick from genocide. Protesters held photos of some of the hundreds of health care workers who have been abducted by Israeli occupation forces.

They chanted "300,000 dead, NYU your hands are red!" and "NYU you will learn, refugees will return." The demonstration was called by Within Our Lifetime, Healthcare Workers for Palestine, and Doctors Against Genocide.

— Photo and article by Brenda Ryan

France out of Africa!

By G. Dunkel

France began its colonization of West Africa about 175 years ago, when Louis Faidherbe was appointed the colonial governor of Senegal. In the 1960s, France was forced, reluctantly, to grant formal independence to its colonies. These countries were seething with resentment and anger after decades of colonial exploitation, enforced by murder and massacres when the French government's control was slipping.



Protesters in Niamey, Niger, hold a T-shirt reading 'France Must Go' at September 2023 protest as they demand the departure of the French army.

A good example of how France treated its colonial subjects is the mass execution of hundreds of African soldiers, who had been prisoners of war in Nazi Germany, at Camp Thiaroye in Senegal in 1944, because they were militantly demanding their pay. The attitude of the French politician who spoke at the official commemoration of the Dec. 2 massacre, when he did not recognize the contribution African soldiers made to the freeing of France from the Nazis, refreshed the anger over this war crime.

French neocolonialism collapsing

According to France 24, a website owned by the French government, "Over the past decade, France has been forced out of more than 70 percent of the African nations where it previously maintained a military presence. Today, its forces are largely confined to Djibouti, with 1,500 soldiers, and Gabon, with a little over 350 troops." (Jan. 2)

Djibouti is a small country on the Red Sea in East Africa; Gabon is a sparsely

populated nation in Central Africa, with an Atlantic coastline at the Equator.

What this means is that France has lost its ability to enforce the neocolonial relationships it had with its former direct colonies. It still has significant economic ties, but they are slipping as new economics tends to follow new political relationships.

Three former French colonies — Mali, Niger and Burkina Faso — have formed the Alliance of Sahel States (AES). It originated as a mutual defense pact created on Sept. 16, 2023, following the 2023 Nigerien crisis, in which the West African regional free trade bloc, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), threatened to intervene militarily to restore former leaders after a coup in Niger earlier that year.

The countries comprising the AES have about 72 million people, while ECOWAS has around 400 million.

The Alliance is growing stronger and



Anti-French demonstration, Bamako, Mali, 2024.

is hoping to add additional members. Significantly, the AES has recently created its own insignia that features a baobab tree, a very important tree in the Sahel.

In a joint statement released in late December, the leaders of the three Sahelian countries described the closure of French bases as "trickery" aimed at "carrying out destabilizing actions."

"The French imperialist junta, feeling its interests threatened, supported by certain heads of state in the sub-region, is desperately trying to bring the emancipatory dynamic to a halt," the leaders said. (france24.com, Jan. 2) □

Galápagos Islands

A cradle of evolution slated for extinction

By Lyn Neeley

Ecuadorian President Daniel Noboa approved a resolution to let the U.S. build military bases on the Galápagos Islands, 600 miles west of Ecuador's coastline in the Pacific Ocean. The U.S. Armed Forces will arrive on Jan. 10 with ships, submarines, personnel, weapons and military equipment to control and patrol the region. The military base is exempt from paying the administrative taxes that other organizations must pay.

The U.S. government agreed that the stated objectives of the contract are to secure the Galápagos, combat drug trafficking and illegal fishing and prevent violent crimes between criminal groups.

The history of U.S. military intervention and the so-called "War on Drugs" shows that these official objectives are a pretext to dominate South America, extend U.S. military presence in the South Pacific and minimize Ecuador's sovereignty in the region — an issue in the upcoming Ecuadorian presidential election.

The base threatens to destroy the delicate environment of the Galápagos, which UNESCO declared a World Natural Heritage Site in 1978.

Ecuador's left-wing former President Rafael Correa outlawed foreign military bases in Ecuador from 2007 to 2017. He expelled the last U.S. base in Manta in 2009, stating: "Galápagos is not an 'aircraft carrier' for gringo use. It is an

Ecuadorian province, World Heritage Site, patriotic ground."

However, U.S. imperialism is rapidly preparing for war with China. It controls 400 military bases and 300,000 troops encircling China in the Pacific region. That's 60% of the U.S. Navy's fleet. There are now 76 U.S. military bases in Central and South America, including in Argentina, Colombia, Panama and again in Ecuador today.

The importance of Galápagos

The fragile balance of the Galápagos ecosystem, rich seas and volcanic soils that have been conserved for generations is about to be destroyed with the arrival of the U.S. military. The construction of a military base and the presence of military equipment in the area could generate irreparable damage to this environment.

Animals and plants living on the Galápagos cannot be found anywhere else on earth. Giant tortoises, penguins, finches, hawks and iguanas — thousands of species — are unique to the 21 islands. Charles Darwin, the scientist who first proposed the theory of evolution in the 19th century, marveled at how such a rich collection of life could have gotten to the islands since they are over 600 miles west of Ecuador. He eventually realized that because the species were isolated from the mainland, they had developed genetic mutations independently over time that allowed them to survive on the rugged islands.

When Darwin studied the subtle differences between each species on the various islands, he realized they had developed recognizable differences based on their food sources and habitats. Variations were particularly clear when comparing the beaks of the Galápagos finches and how they related to the food sources on each island. This led to Darwin's famous theory of evolution and publication of his book, "On the Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection."

The Charles Darwin Foundation, founded in 1959, leads efforts to conserve the islands. It protects 65,000 square miles of ocean around the islands. There are strict rules on the islands' protected land that limit the impact of humans: Do not touch, collect or harass wildlife, stay on the trail with the guide, don't leave trash and pay

the entry fee to help with conservation.

Andres Arauz, 2023 vice presidential candidate for Correa's party, Revolutionary and Democratic Ethical Green Movement (MOVER), previously Proud and Sovereign Homeland (PAIS Alliance), commented on the return of the U.S. military to the Galápagos: "I am hurt, because they want to turn an ecological paradise, a World Heritage Site, islands full of peace, into a brothel for U.S. Navy sailors and convert

the economy of the islands to dependence on gringo military spending.

"I am hurt, because a gringo president who claims to be Ecuadorian [Daniel Noboa] has surrendered the sovereignty of my country. I am hurt, because he doesn't care that our most precious paradise is a foreign military base to control the Pacific in the context of interstate war. To combat drug trafficking, warships are not needed." (peoplesdispatch.org, Dec. 18, 2023) □

El legado de M.L. King

Continúa de página 12

SBWU representa ahora a unos 10.000 trabajadores de Starbucks, habiendo ganado elecciones de representación en unas 540 tiendas desde la primera victoria sindical en Buffalo, Nueva York, en diciembre de 2021.

En febrero, Starbucks acordó un marco de negociaciones con SBWU para lograr un primer contrato que cubriera todas las tiendas sindicadas. Sin embargo, más o menos en el momento en que Brian Niccol, notorio rompe sindicatos, asumió el cargo de consejero delegado en septiembre, Starbucks empezó a estancar las negociaciones. La veterana trabajadora de Starbucks y delegada negociadora del SBWU, Michelle Eisen, dijo que Starbucks estaba «dando marcha atrás en meses y meses de progresos y promesas de la empresa de trabajar para lograr una ratificación del marco a finales de año». (nycccl.org, 20 de diciembre)

Ante el estancamiento de la empresa, el sindicato convocó esta huelga de Prácticas Laborales Desleales, la mayor de su historia, que afecta a tiendas de 43 estados.

La lucha continúa

La huelga de Starbucks terminó el 24 de diciembre y la de Amazon el 26 de diciembre. Ambos sindicatos en huelga expresaron su solidaridad entre sí y con los trabajadores de la tienda de esquí REI, en huelga en la tienda del SoHo de Nueva York desde el 4 de diciembre.

Los sindicatos están dirigidos por internacionalistas con conciencia de clase,

como demuestra la bandera palestina desplegada durante una reunión de delegados del SBWU previa a la huelga celebrada el 19 de diciembre.

Desde la conclusión de las huelgas, los sindicatos aún no han logrado avances en la mesa de negociación. Las luchas por un primer contrato continúan en muchos otros centros de trabajo de todo el país. Los trabajadores de la tienda de esquí REI han iniciado su segundo mes de huelga.

Pero estas poderosas y oportunas huelgas enviaron un mensaje a los jefes de Amazon y Starbucks: ¡Ni contrato, ni entregas, ni café! Difícilmente fue éste el regalo navideño que Niccol y el director general de Amazon, Andy Jassy, esperaban.

En este momento, el movimiento obrero organizado está comprensiblemente preocupado por quién nombrará el presidente electo para la NLRB, y espera que sea alguien virulentamente antisindical. Esto hará más difícil que los sindicatos obtengan fallos favorables de la Junta cuando empresas como Amazon y Starbucks se dediquen a reventar sindicatos. Y Trump tiene una relación muy acogedora con el jefe derechista de Tesla, Elon Musk, que desprecia a los sindicatos.

Pero lo que estas huelgas militantes demostraron es que la ALU y la SBWU no serán derribadas fácilmente, independientemente de quién se siente en la Casa Blanca y de cómo eso afecte a la composición de la NLRB.

En el espíritu de Martin Luther King, ¡tres hurras por los huelguistas de Amazon y Starbucks! ¡Victoria para estos sindicatos jóvenes y luchadores! □



PHOTO: URYADNIKOV SERGEY / ADOBE STOCK

The Galápagos Islands are named after the giant tortoises with the name, galápagos (Spanish), that were once numerous on the islands.



El reverendo Martin Luther King Jr.

COMENTARIO MO/NW

El legado de M.L. King y las recientes huelgas

Por Martha Grevatt

¿Qué le regalas a la persona que lo tiene todo?

Bueno, si eres un trabajador de Amazon o Starbucks y esa persona es el director general, sólo hay una respuesta. ¡Dale al jefe una huelga!

El reverendo Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. estaría definitivamente de acuerdo. A la pregunta formulada en la clásica canción obrera, «¿De qué lado estás?», su respuesta sería, inequívocamente, «Estoy del lado de los sindicatos». Así lo demostró a lo largo de su vida de activista, truncada en 1968 cuando sólo tenía 38 años.

Es bien sabido que el Dr. King fue asesinado cuando se encontraba en Memphis para apoyar una huelga de los trabajadores sanitarios negros. Pero mucho antes, hablando en la cena del 25 aniversario celebrada por el sindicato United Auto Workers en 1961, describió los «lazos de parentesco entre el trabajo y el pueblo negro». (uawgmtalks.wordpress.com, 17 de diciembre de 2015)

En una carta de 1962 al sindicato Amalgamated Laundry Workers, King escribió: «Como he dicho muchas veces, y creo de todo corazón, la coalición que

puede tener el mayor impacto en la lucha por la dignidad humana aquí en América es la de los negros y las fuerzas del obrero, porque sus fortunas están estrechamente entrelazadas.» (afscme.org)

Dr. King había convocado una Marcha de los Pobres en el verano de 1968 para vincular la lucha contra el racismo con la lucha contra la pobreza y por la justicia económica para todos los obreros.

Hay muchas citas conmovedoras de los discursos de King en actos sindicales, que condujeron a la exitosa huelga de saneamiento de Memphis. Si King viviera hoy estaría apoyando a los trabajadores multinacionales y multigénero de Amazon y Starbucks que realizaron huelgas a finales del año pasado durante los días festivos.

La mayor huelga de Amazon en EE.UU.

Los trabajadores y conductores de los almacenes de Amazon iniciaron su reciente huelga histórica y coordinada en las instalaciones el 19 de diciembre en cuatro ciudades de California: Atlanta, Chicago y Queens, Nueva York. A medianoche del 21 de diciembre se les unieron miembros del sindicato Amazon Labor Union en el almacén JFK8 de Staten Island, Nueva York, donde el ALU ganó las primeras elecciones

sindicales de Amazon en EE.UU. en abril de 2022. Los trabajadores de JFK8 mantuvieron un piquete de 24 horas incluso cuando la temperatura descendió a 13 grados Fahrenheit.

En Queens, la gerencia de Amazon abrió un grifo de agua exterior para inundar a los huelguistas durante el frío. El Departamento de Policía de Nueva York intentó confiscar los calentadores de los piquetes y rodeó a un conductor de Amazon que detuvo su camioneta en solidaridad con la huelga. A continuación, la policía atacó físicamente y disolvió la línea de huelga.

Estos decididos trabajadores llevaron



Huelga de Amazon, almacén JFK8 en Staten Island, Nueva York, 23 de diciembre de 2024.

a cabo la mayor huelga de Amazon en la historia laboral de Estados Unidos. El sindicato Teamsters (IBT), al que la ALU se afilió en junio, realizó más de 200 piquetes en solidaridad con la huelga.

La huelga se convocó para presionar a Amazon, que aún no ha negociado un primer contrato en el JFK8, a pesar de que el ALU ganó unas elecciones supervisadas por la Junta Nacional de Relaciones Laborales (NLRB) hace dos años y medio.

La huelga también se convocó para exigir que la empresa negocie con los conductores empleados por subcontratistas. Un director regional de la NLRB determinó que Amazon es un «empleador conjunto» de los conductores, que conducen camionetas de Amazon y visten uniformes de Amazon.

Otra gran huelga en Starbucks

El 20 de diciembre, Starbucks Workers United (SBWU) lanzó su huelga en seis tiendas. Cada día de la huelga de cinco días durante la semana de vacaciones se pusieron en huelga más tiendas, con un total de más de 300 tiendas afectadas para el último día. Además, los simpatizantes del sindicato participaron en acciones de solidaridad en numerosas tiendas no organizadas.

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Panamá, Groenlandia, Canadá

La hipocresía de los negacionistas del cambio climático

Por Betsey Piette

Cuando existe la posibilidad de obtener beneficios, incluso los más ardientes negadores del cambio climático aprovecharán la oportunidad para sacar provecho de los daños causados por la catástrofe climática. Tal es el caso del presidente electo Donald Trump y su pandilla de partidarios corporativos.

A finales de diciembre, Trump anunció sus planes para que Estados Unidos recuperara el control del Canal de Panamá y comprara la nación insular de Groenlandia, insistiendo en que ambos eran fundamentales para la seguridad estadounidense. Lo que Trump no reconoció fue el impacto que los daños del cambio climático -que está afectando al transporte marítimo mundial- han tenido tanto en Panamá como en Groenlandia.

El 31 de diciembre de 2024 se cumplieron 25 años desde que Estados Unidos cedió a Panamá el control total del canal. Aunque un proyecto masivo realizado entre 2007 y 2017 amplió enormemente la capacidad del canal, una grave sequía en 2023, debida al calentamiento global, redujo los niveles de agua, dificultando el funcionamiento del canal.

En el lago de agua dulce Gatún, esencial para el paso por



El mapa muestra la Ruta Marítima Septentrional (NSR), el Paso del Noroeste (NWP) y la Ruta Marítima Transpolar (TSR).

el canal, los niveles de agua descendieron a mínimos históricos, obligando a las autoridades del canal a restringir el tráfico e imponer tarifas más elevadas. El resultado han sido retrasos de semanas para cruzar el canal y un descenso del 29% de los barcos que lo utilizan, de 14.080 en 2023 a 9.933 en 2024.

También existe la posibilidad de que China compita por un nuevo paso marítimo interoceánico en Centroamérica. En noviembre, el gobierno chino anunció que ha estado negociando con el presidente de Nicaragua, Daniel Ortega, la construcción de una vía fluvial alternativa para conectar el mar Caribe con el océano Pacífico. Este desafío de China puede ser la motivación de las amenazas de Trump de apoderarse del canal.

Competencia por los futuros pasos del Ártico

Groenlandia, una isla norteamericana situada en los océanos Atlántico Norte y Ártico entre Canadá y la Europa continental, es estratégica para los barcos que acceden al Ártico. Debido al calentamiento global, el retroceso de los campos de hielo en Groenlandia ha abierto el acceso a nuevas zonas para perforar en busca de petróleo y gas, además de lugares para extraer minerales críticos. Al mismo tiempo, el deshielo del hielo marino, que ha provocado una subida del nivel del mar de hasta 23 pies, está abriendo más rutas comerciales oceánicas para la navegación libre del bloqueo de los campos de hielo.

Aunque Trump califica el cambio climático de engaño, su antiguo asesor de Seguridad Nacional, Robert C. O'Brien, atribuyó recientemente al cambio climático el interés de Trump por comprar Groenlandia. Dijo: «Groenlandia es una autopista desde el Ártico hasta Norteamérica, hasta Estados Unidos. Es estratégicamente muy importante para el Ártico, que va a ser el campo de batalla crítico del futuro, porque a medida que el clima se calienta, el Ártico va a ser una vía que tal vez reduzca el uso del Canal de Panamá.» (New York Times, 31 de diciembre)

Es posible que Trump también esté ansioso por dar un paso adelante en la afirmación del dominio estadounidense en el Ártico debido a la creciente competencia con China y Rusia. Los dos países están cooperando actualmente para

establecer rutas marítimas alternativas en el Ártico en zonas antes impracticables la mayor parte del año. Entre ellas se encuentran la Ruta Marítima Septentrional a lo largo de la costa septentrional de Rusia, el Paso del Noroeste que atraviesa aguas canadienses y una posible ruta transpolar que cruce el Polo Norte.

El Grupo de Trabajo del Consejo Ártico para la Protección del Medio Marino Ártico (PAME) publicó un estudio actualizado el 31 de enero de 2024, en el que se constata un aumento del 37% de los buques que podrán utilizar las vías navegables del Ártico entre 2020 y 2023 en comparación con el periodo 2013-2019. El estudio atribuye el aumento del número de barcos en el Ártico -y el incremento del 111% de las distancias que recorren, de 6,1 millones a 12,9 millones de millas náuticas- a los cambios en el medio marino, principalmente a la disminución de la extensión del hielo marino y a la pérdida del hielo más antiguo y grueso.

Esto tiene implicaciones significativas, ya que dará lugar a temporadas de navegación más largas y a nuevos accesos a regiones del Ártico antes de difícil acceso. (arctic-council.org)

Campo de batalla del futuro

O'Brien tenía razón cuando calificó el Ártico como un «campo de batalla crítico del futuro». Las amenazas de guerra del imperialismo estadounidense contra Rusia y China no cesarán con el final de la administración Biden y la toma de posesión de Trump como presidente. La competencia entre la China socialista y el EE.UU. capitalista ya ha llevado a Trump a amenazar con aranceles cada vez más altos contra China, mientras Washington rodea a China con cada vez más instalaciones militares estadounidenses.

El acceso a las rutas comerciales mundiales que se están abriendo debido al calentamiento global desempeñará un papel clave en esta guerra comercial, a pesar de que Trump niega el impacto del cambio climático.

En los últimos años, China se ha dedicado a establecer políticas para hacer frente al calentamiento global. Estados Unidos, por su parte, ha impulsado un militarismo en constante expansión, la causa número uno de la catástrofe climática. □