

Post Office: How Corporate Business Stole People's Lives

In this article, writer [dave kelloway](#) examines the scandal involving the UK's Post Office falsely prosecuting hundreds of subpostmasters and mistresses due to issues with an accounting system.

Thanks to the excellent ITV drama **Mr. Bates vs. the Post Office**, most people have now heard about how the Post Office falsely prosecuted 736 subpostmasters and mistresses between 1999 and 2015. As we wrote in an [ACR article](#) in February 2022, the Post Office first refused to acknowledge any problem and then actively covered up the fact that Fujitsu accounting software (Horizon) used in all its offices was faulty.

Post office operators were accused of fraud, often amounting to thousands of pounds. They were all told that *'it was only them'* so it could not be a fault of the system. People sometimes paid up, thinking that it must be their mistake. They lost their livelihoods, were often declared bankrupt, and were pressurised into pleading guilty to avoid imprisonment. Many suffered from the abuse of local people, thinking they had been fiddling the pensioners out of their money. A criminal record meant that moving on to a different career was very difficult. Some were imprisoned. Many lost their homes, suffered severe mental stress, and at least four committed suicide. It is rightly claimed that this is one of the worst miscarriages of justice on record.

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Today we learn through a [Guardian exclusive](#) that even before the full rollout of the system, there had been a pilot scheme in 300 branches in the North East, and there had been a number

of complaints. Two managers were prosecuted during the pilot. Just as with a full rollout, there may be dozens of victims who have not come forward. Since the TV drama, fifty more victims have emerged. If you think it must have been your incompetence and/or if you feared the consequences and shame of public prosecution, then there was strong pressure to pay up and try to move on.

The TV drama brilliantly captures the courageous campaign by the victims and the extraordinary resilience and leadership of Mr. Bates and others. They fought for over 20 years to rescind the convictions and get compensation, both for the money the Post Office took fraudulently from the victims and for their general economic and mental distress. The Post Office has continuously tried to deny there was any systemic failure and tried to tranquillise the campaign by setting up a mediation procedure that failed to overturn the convictions and by delaying any pay outs. It has deliberately prolonged the agony of the victims. A public enquiry was finally set up in 2022 but has still not been reported. Without the media impact of the TV drama, it is probable that the victims would still be stranded in a bureaucratic and legal quagmire.

So it looks like there is now political momentum in this affair, and the government might be looking to remove the Post Office from the compensation process entirely and rule all the prosecutions as null and void. A petition calling for the removal of the CBE honour from the Post Office CEO, Paula Vennells, has gathered over one million signatures in a very short time. She left the Post Office with a £400,000 bonus. The TV show focuses on her and her immediate colleagues as the villains of the piece. There is a powerful scene where it cuts between her delivering a sermon as a Church of England minister and the effects of the scandal on victims.

The political class would not have finally come to this point without the self-organisation of the victims themselves, some lawyers, and the TV drama. There was the exception of Tory MP

James Arbuthnot, who supported the campaign through official channels. Ironically, he had actually fiddled with his parliamentary expenses, claiming for the heating of his swimming pool, among other offences revealed during the 2009 expenses scandal.

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What does the whole affair tell us about how our society works?

Public services under Thatcher adopted a corporate, capitalist model for its operations, both in terms of how staff were managed and how the service was delivered. Labour has basically endorsed this approach.

Such an approach was an integral part of the privatisation of services like gas, electricity, water, telecoms, British Rail, and more recently, the Probation Service. At the same time, this model was systematically applied to those sectors that remained under formally common ownership, such as the Post Office, education, or the NHS. Local or national democratic accountability was severely weakened or removed, so local education authorities now have little control over the school system, and privatised academy networks run many secondary schools. High student fees that each student must pay back over time support universities' operations largely as commercial entities. Health services have gone through several models of an internal market with a crude, artificial provider-client relationship imposed. Private capital, particularly US health corporations, has been allowed to take over certain functions and sectors. Private businesses, including hedge funds, are now running social care more and more.

A corporate model, aping the way big private companies

operate, means cutting jobs, attacking trade unions, and reducing the range and quality of services. Salaries for managers, based on targets more related to cutting costs than maintaining quality, have become similar to the hugely unequal distribution in the private sector. Corporate secrecy and lack of accountability, which have always been the norm in the private sector, now became established even in the public sector, which remained under common ownership, like the Post Office. It is no surprise that Post Office managers reacted the way they did to problems with the Horizon network system. They were more concerned about damage to the Post Office 'brand' than supporting their own operatives, as though delivering the post was like selling cars or baked beans.

Partnerships between digital corporations like Fujitsu reinforce this corporate model, and the systems they impose are not always fit for purpose in a public service environment. The public service managers were not able to critically evaluate the corporate digital projects.

As a senior manager in the secondary education sector, I saw with my own eyes how schools spent huge amounts of their budgets on adopting private company digital systems, particularly for school networks, attendance, and assessment. This was partly in response to Ofsted and Government requirements for data on exam results, absenteeism, and pupil computer skills. SERCO and other companies made a lot of their initial growth out of this market. However, the big education authorities, particularly the Inner London Education Authority (ILEA), had their own internal computer operations that could have developed to provide school systems. But this was the time when private was good, seen as always more efficient, and public was bad, seen as old-fashioned and inefficient. Of course, these big digital corporations are well organised in promoting and selling their products to public sector managers. Taking on large-scale digital reorganisations further amplified their sense of becoming like their corporate

counterparts. On occasion, there were some direct inducements between these corporations and public service managers. Certainly, you had the revolving door process where public service managers were recruited by corporations to sell their products to former colleagues. In all this, there was a lot of uncritical acceptance of how wonderful such systems were. Obviously, there was also a knowledge or competence gap where the public service manager was not up to speed about the way these systems worked.

Self-organisation and mass campaigning by victims of miscarriages of justice are vital for any victory against big public or private organisations. The main political parties did not take up the issue.

The TV drama shows visually how Mr. Bates started with half a dozen victims meeting in a village hall and, over the years, built up to five hundred coming together. The federation of subpostmasters and mistresses did not lead the campaign or help very much at all. Apart from the one Tory MP, the main parties did not respond. In fact, Ed Davey was a minister in the coalition government who was responsible for the area and is today under pressure for why he did nothing. His excuse is that the Post Office lied to him. But why did he never listen to the victims? It is a good example of what many commentators (and Starmer in a recent speech) refer to as a lack of trust in the political system or the way politicians do not really relate to people's real needs or struggles.

The British legal system is not very slow, and there is always pressure to come to a deal in order to get some sort of result.

This Government has severely cut back on legal aid; the family of Sarah Perry, the headteacher who committed suicide after a bullying Ofsted inspection, was denied it. Even people who had some savings, such as some of the post office operatives, could not sustain the huge legal fees required to fight the

institutions or the corporations, both of whom have very deep pockets. It is also incredibly slow; cases can take years to progress, as we saw with this case. Bates and his team did take up a class action case for five hundred victims using a top firm. They won, and it was the first decisive victory that put the Post Office on the back foot, but the deal was always that the case was taken up on a no-win no-fee basis, so the damages won were massively eaten into by the legal teams' costs. The TV drama shows this very well, as during the victory report back, the victims discover that this may mean only about twenty thousand each, which is far below the average they were owed and deserve. Even this victory was not total since it was based on a final plea bargain, as the lawyers correctly argued that the Post Office, with their bottomless funds, could keep dragging the case through the courts for years. At least this legal case established that the Post Office was in the wrong and the victims were not crooks.

The mass media, particularly the print media, rarely take up or campaign in such cases.

Once the victims are winning, of course they jump on the winning side and pile into those responsible and the Government, as we see with the screaming headlines in the right wing papers like the Express or the Mail this week. Only one small-circulation magazine, Computer Weekly, responded to the scandal. A postmaster rang up for technical advice, and I think I fortunately found Rebecca Thomson, a 26-year-old, who was not a techie. She helped Bates get more victims to come forward through her article. So it would have been really easy for the mainstream media to pick this up and carry the campaign forward. Obviously, the mainstream media is owned predominantly by right wing tycoons who are very pro-business and generally loath to rock the smooth running of the capitalist system. They focus on celebrity scandals, not on miscarriages of justice that affect hundreds of people. Their

considerable investigative resources were spent at the time tapping the phones of people like Huge Grant.

Will Fujitsu ever pay up for its faulty system?

Voices are finally being raised in parliament about the responsibility of this multinational for the faulty system. So far, it has not paid a penny. As today's Daily Mirror (9 January) reports:

"The Government has continued to work with Fujitsu in the wake of the scandal and has awarded it public sector contracts worth £3billion in the last 10 years. In November, the Post Office extended one contract with the firm – worth an estimated £36million – through to March 2025."

Of course, these private sector companies make sure their contracts are as watertight as possible to avoid having to pay out any money down the road. We have seen this with the Private Finance Initiative contracts made with hospitals or schools. Their lawyers are usually better than those in the public sector. However, public and political pressure could force them to pay out to avoid reputational damage to their brand. Consumers could boycott their products, for example.

Even the left, the trade unions, or other progressive forces were slow to take up the issue.

We have a lot less resources to take up all abuses of power and miscarriages of justice, but we were also slow to make a big deal of this case. Perhaps there was a perception that these people were not really part of the working class; they were not organised in a proper trade union and did not use the language we are used to on the left. Certainly they were small business people, and we should emphasise the word small. The incomes of many of them were less than those of many people organised in unions that we go out and support. There is a lesson here about the need for the left to have a strategic orientation towards those middle layers of society that we

need to win over to a fairer future society. Some may employ one or two people, often family members, but they are not the drivers of exploitation, either of working people or in terms of destroying nature. We need to have policies that relate to their needs for a secure, reasonable income and a better community. Indeed, as the TV drama showed, these people often play a crucial community role, looking after local people with their pensions, helping them sort out bills, and so on. Total digitalisation is not empowering for people who do not own a smart phone.

To a degree, a lot of the points made above were explicit or often implicit in the ITV drama. As always, Toby Jones and Julie Hesmondhalgh gave terrific performances, and the whole cast shone. It looked like they were all committed to the wider impact of the drama, as the actors and actresses have since confirmed. The modest but firm leadership of Bates in particular is an example to all activists about how to listen to people and build a campaign.

“As always, Toby Jones and Julie Hesmondhalgh gave terrific performances, and the whole cast shone.”

As we write these lines, it looks like victory is finally in sight. Will the Post Office, as an institution, pay any penalty? Will individual managers who conspired to prevent the victims from getting together by saying ‘it was only them’ ever be sanctioned? Will the CEO keep her CBE? The petition has reached over a million now. Can she be pursued today for her actions? We will see how far the political class will go to get full justice.

Mr. Bates vs. the Post Office is currently available for [streaming on ITVX](#), and there is also a Panorama programme available on IPlayer.

09 Jan 2024

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<https://anticapitalistresistance.org/post-office-how-corporate-business-stole-peoples-lives/>

Women's Delegation from Scotland to Rojava

On Christmas eve as bombs dropped on Palestine, Turkey began a fresh assault on Rojava, the Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria, destroying critical infrastructure, like power plants and grain storage, and killing civilians. Like Palestine, the ongoing struggle in Rojava is a decades (if not centuries) long fight for collective liberation and self-determination. The ongoing revolution has established a region-wide system of grassroots democracy led by women's liberation. Such liberatory realities will always be a threat to established power structures and the most recent escalation is no coincidence. Turkey's president Tayip Erdogan has already made two full ground invasions of Rojava, annexing the Afrin region in 2018, and Serekaniye in 2019. Now, he undertakes another aggression knowing that attention is elsewhere. As the events of the past few months have made visible the necessity and reality of anti-imperial struggle for so many, a group of women from Scotland who visited Rojava in 2023 reflect on the lessons from what they witnessed there for anyone interested in anti-colonial movements.

Why did we go?

We travelled to Rojava in spring 2023, where we met with women's groups under the umbrella of the confederal women's

organisation, [Kongra Star](#). We are all organisers or activists at home, with diverse backgrounds both culturally and in struggle: such as migrant justice, feminism, anti-capitalism and campaigns against the arms trade. In different ways, we could all see ourselves reflected in the struggle and the achievements of the Rojava revolution. We all have questions, now more than ever, about how we can change the world we live in for the better, and we felt we could learn a lot from the political process there.

The Kurdistan Freedom Movement has a tradition of grassroots organising and challenging oppressive power structures instead of recreating them. The revolution has followed this philosophy, not basing the organisation of society on nationalist or ethnic lines. Kurds, Arabs, Syriacs, Ezidis and all the people of the region self-organise and develop their own strengths, coming together in structures that treats diversity as strength. Together they have created the Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria and are transforming their society at all levels. The philosophy of Abdullah Öcalan, with its proposals for Democratic Confederalism (the organisation of society through democratic self-organisation not state institutions) and women's liberation, is the beating heart of a revolution which has been going on for over a decade. Kurdish women had been organising for many years when opportunity for revolution arose in 2012, at which point the people of Rojava, because of this committed long-term work of organising and education, were prepared to build up a society based on women's freedom and gender liberation, pluralism, ecology, grassroots democracy and self-governance.

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The special cemetery in Kobane for those who were lost in the war. It was a special place for those who were lost in the war. Photo Credit: Jennifer Clapham

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On our first day, we visited a Jineoloji Academy, Washokani refugee camp and Jinwar village. We learnt about the work and research of Jineoloji in the first meeting: it is a science of life, society, and the creation of a new world based on women's and ecological liberation. The aim of their analysis of oppression is to solve social problems, rather than merely theorise about them. In our discussion, we compared the Western rhetoric of "rights" to the concept of "freedom" in Rojava. In our organising in Scotland, we often come across tendencies to rely on governance structure to grant rights and solutions – e.g. by lobbying for laws or asking for grants. Freedom, as the women from the Jineoloji Academy explained to us, consists in autonomy and self-empowerment. It needs to be built from the ground up and cannot be granted from above. This encouragement of the flourishing of autonomy through collective action showed us how Rojava is a microcosm of all the world's social problems and provides inspiration for women's struggles in Scotland as well.

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Arriving at Washokani refugee camp. Photo
Credit: Jennifer Clapham

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The women-led aspect of the revolution goes beyond autonomous women's organising and encompasses the liberation of children and families as well. At Jinwar Women's Village, which started 6 years ago as one of the only women's villages in the world,

we learnt about how they also organise a regular children's assembly. Its purpose is to extend democracy to the youth by encouraging them to self-organise, solve their problems, and share skills, ideas and culture. The village also embraces herbal medicine and deepens the connection to the land through growing their own food; a testament to the administration's aims of caring for the environment and sustainability. After the discussion, we shared a delicious meal made with local nutritious ingredients, and it was easy to agree with the following message, voiced earlier in the day by one of the village's inhabitants: "Women are the heart and driving force of democracy – when we come together and feel together, no one can defeat us".



Jinwar women's village. Photo
Credit: Jennifer Clapham

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Messages to Scotland and learnings for us

It was clear how
much we were
learning and
what we were
getting out of
the experience.
We had to ask
ourselves what

they felt they were getting out of giving us so much time from their busy lives. Usually, the answer came in the form of a smile and asking us to build our own revolution at home. We shuffled awkwardly, asking if there were key messages, they wanted us to bring out to the world, while we work on that one.



Meeting with the women who run domestic violence resolution centres. Photo Credit: Jennifer Clapham

Spreading the word about the revolution, and the Turkish state's attempts to destroy it is a start. Rojava is a living example of how we can organise ourselves and society differently. It is direct democracy, with women involved at every level of organising, a new society with communal living at the centre. It is messy, imperfect, and still not complete – but it shows it is possible. At a time when it is hard to find any light, we must hold onto and know that a better world is possible.

The women of North and East Syria are not asking for anyone's help and are more than capable of changing their own world. Still, we were reminded many times of the UK's responsibility in the arms trade that leads to the bombs dropping on Rojava,

and the complicity of global powers in the Turkish state's attacks on infrastructure. The neighbourhood communes and assemblies there lamented the shortages of water and resources, which are problems with material roots in the UK. For example, BAE systems – who have multiple sites in Scotland – are helping Turkey develop their own aircraft.

In addition to drone strikes and shelling of infrastructure, Turkey also targets political organisers, particularly women. We have already looked on, horrified, as Yusra Darwish, a friend who welcomed us with tea and discussed neighbourhood organising with us, was killed in a Turkish drone strike in June. Now we are watching as power stations, water supplies, hospitals and even the region's only oxygen factory, are targeted in an effort to break the will and the ability to survive of the people of the region. The fabric of everything that made such an impression on us, that has become an inspiration for radicals all over the world, is under attack.

Call to Action

States that destroy infrastructure, kill civilians and deny people the right self-determination are a threat to democracy and liberation everywhere. And if we believe in a fairer, just world for everyone, then we need to stand up and fight against it. We can start by breaking the silence. Share your knowledge of these attacks with your friends, discuss it with your family, and post about it online. Follow news sites like the ones detailed below.

You can also donate to Heyva Sor a Kurd (Kurdish Red Crescent) who are on the ground in North-East Syria providing vital humanitarian and medical assistance (details at end).

Lastly, join, support, or set up a local solidarity group, such as the Kurdistan Solidarity Network or Scottish Solidarity with Kurdistan.

Stay up to date on events in the region:

ANF News (<https://anfenglishmobile.com/>) or Medya News (<https://medyanews.net/>). As well as groups such as the Rojava Information Centre (Twitter: @RojavaIC) or Riseup 4 Rojava (<https://riseup4rojava.org/>).

Solidarity networks:

<https://kurdistansolidarity.net>

[Scottish Solidarity with Kurdistan | Facebook](#) Look on Facebook: "ScottishSolidaritywithKurdistan"

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Main Picture: Arin Mirkan square in liberated Kobane, pivotal in the fight against ISIS. Photo Credit: Jennifer Clapham



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The Hydrogen Economy – yet another mirage

Sean Thompson writes on [Red Green Labour](#):

Over the past few years, much has been made (particularly by fossil fuel industry lobbyists) of the potential for the development of a 'hydrogen economy'. The great attraction of hydrogen to the proponents of the status quo, whether Tory or Labour, is that it feeds into their fantasies about 'green growth' – a lower carbon version of business as usual. Hydrogen, it is claimed, could replace fossil fuels as an energy source, not only for energy intensive heavy industries

like steel and glass production but also for powering cars, public transport, aviation and home heating. However, as the estimable Ben Goldacre said of other sensational claims “I think you’ll find it’s more complicated than that.”

Hydrogen comes in three colours:

- Grey: Hydrogen produced from a natural gas feedstock.
- Blue: Hydrogen produced from a natural gas feedstock with capture of the by-product CO₂.
- Green: Hydrogen produced by splitting water molecules through electrolysis using renewable energy sources

According to the International Energy Agency, 95 million tonnes (Mt) of hydrogen is produced worldwide and 99% is ‘grey’. In 2022, hydrogen production generated more than 900 Mt of CO₂ emissions – more than the entire global aviation industry footprint of almost 800 Mt. At the same time, less than 0.1 per cent of the world’s hydrogen production (less than 0.08 Mt) was green hydrogen.

In the run-up to COP28, its president, Al Jaber, Minister of Industry and Advanced Technology of the United Arab Emirates and head of the Abu Dhabi National Oil Company (ADNOC), repeatedly urged agreement by governments to almost double current global hydrogen production from 95 Mt to 180 Mt per year by 2030. Reaching that goal with green hydrogen would require a 2,068-fold production increase in seven years. This is, to say the least, a highly unlikely scenario, so the reality would be a massive boom in grey hydrogen and good news for ADNOC and the rest of the fossil fuel industry.

The idea that green hydrogen can replace the energy currently provided by fossil fuels for most transport and for domestic heating/cooling is fanciful in the extreme. Even more fanciful is the suggestion currently being promoted by aviation industry lobbyists that hydrogen might be used to power zero carbon flying, either by using it to manufacture

yet to be discovered 'alternative' aviation fuels or via hydrogen fuel cells for electrically powered aircraft.

- A kilogram of hydrogen – the unit of measurement most often used – has an energy value of about 33.3 kWh. So a tonne of hydrogen delivers about 33 MWh and a million tonnes about 33 terawatt hours (TWh). To provide a sense of scale, the UK uses about 300 TWh of electricity a year.
- Many estimates of the eventual demand for hydrogen are of at least 500 Mt. A world that requires 500 Mt of hydrogen will need to produce 22,000 TWh of green electricity a year just for this purpose. 22,000 TWh is roughly equivalent to 15% of total world primary energy demand, and today's global production from all wind and solar farms is a little more than 10% of this figure.
- A huge global increase in green energy generation capacity will thus be needed to produce 500Mt of hydrogen. As an example of the scale of increase needed, for every gigawatt of capacity, a well-sited North Sea wind farm will provide about 4,400 GWh a year, or 4.4 TWh. At a future efficiency level of about 75%, this will produce around 100,000 tonnes of hydrogen. Therefore most of the UK's current North Sea wind output from 13 GW of wind would be needed to make just one million tonnes of H₂.
- The amount of electrolysis capacity required to make 500 million tonnes of hydrogen a year depends on how many hours a year that the electrolyzers work and how efficient they are. If we assume an average of about 60% of the time, at a prospective 75% efficiency level, then the world will need around 4,500 gigawatts of electrolysis capacity – about five hundred times what is currently in place.

While the creation of such a vast new industry is clearly possible over a period of time, particularly if such an huge

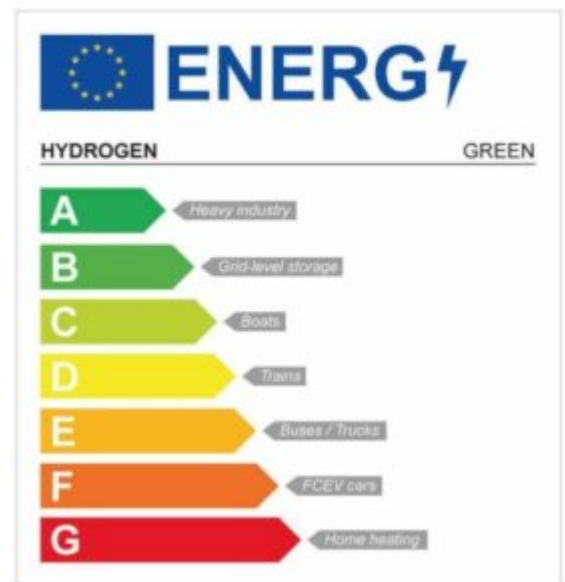
initiative isn't left to the hidden hand of the market or the not so hidden hands of the fossil fuel industry, it is clearly not possible in the time left to us to avoid global catastrophe. Nonetheless, the use of hydrogen and the development of green hydrogen production capacity will be essential if we are to move to a zero carbon economy – but because the supply of truly clean hydrogen is going to be limited – certainly for the next two or three decades – it should be prioritised for uses where there are no alternatives.

In an analysis for Bloomberg in 2020, Michael Liebreich pointed out that hydrogen has serious limitations in many applications:

“as an energy storage medium, it has only a 50% round-trip efficiency – far worse than batteries. As a source of work, fuel cells, turbines and engines are only 60% efficient – far worse than electric motors – and far more complex. As a source of heat, hydrogen costs four times as much as natural gas. As a way of transporting energy, hydrogen pipelines cost three times as much as power lines, and ships and trucks are even worse.”...“What this means is that hydrogen’s role in the final energy mix of a future net-zero emissions world will be to do things that cannot be done more simply, cheaply and efficiently by the direct use of clean electricity and batteries”

The [UK] Government’s own Climate Change Committee (CCC) analysis in their [6th Carbon Budget Report](#), showed that hydrogen production is not the best use of renewable energy if it can be used in other ways, thus we should only use hydrogen where it is near-impossible to reduce demand or use electricity directly. As a leading analyst at CCC has put it: *“In our view, you should be looking to electrify wherever you can. Where that’s prohibitively expensive , or where that’s not feasible, that’s the role that you’re looking for hydrogen.”*

The EU Energy Cities network has actually put together [a hierarchy of uses for hydrogen](#) (see graphic) which seems a good starting point. A is use by energy intensive heavy industrial processes needing high temperature heat like steel, chemicals or glass, B is grid-level storage – storing otherwise ‘waste’ energy produced by off shore wind during periods of low electricity demand, C, D and E for powering heavy transport – shipping, trains and buses/HGVs respectively. Way down at F and G are hydrogen fuel cells for cars and home heating. Speculative technologies like synthetic aviation fuel don’t even figure on the list.



It’s important that an incoming Labour [UK] government doesn’t commit to high cost options involving blue – or even grey – hydrogen, which would suit the gas industry, but which would do little or nothing to reduce CO2 emissions. And it’s equally important that governments realise that, whilst green hydrogen is vital, it will not be available in infinite quantities and isn’t going to be a panacea for all the delivery challenges and investments that need to be made across buildings, transport and industry.

Despite this, both Tory and Labour politicians, along with a rag bag of lobbyists for various techno-fix solutions, from nuclear to carbon capture and sequestration and the wilder regions of geo-engineering, try to avoid the reality that there are no silver bullets that will somehow exempt capitalism from the laws of physics.

For example, in 2020, the Tory [UK] government launched its ‘Ten Point Plan for a Green Industrial Revolution’, which included a commitment to investing up to £500m in new hydrogen

technologies. It claimed that the energy produced could be used *“to carry on living our lives, running our cars, buses, trucks and trains, ships and planes, and heating our homes while keeping bills low.”* It announced that as part of a trial of hydrogen heating, two ‘hydrogen villages’ of around 1,000-2,000 homes, in Whitby, near Ellesmere Port and Redcar, Teesside, where the homes would be converted to hydrogen for heating instead of natural gas. In July this year, the plans for the Whitby pilot were abandoned in the face of local opposition and in December the proposed Redcar pilot was also scrapped. This leaves National Grid’s £32m pilot project in Fife, where about 300 homes in Methil and neighbouring Buckhaven in Levenmouth were due to be converted from natural gas to hydrogen next year, as only remaining attempt in the UK by energy industry to show that hydrogen is a viable (and cost effective) alternative to natural gas for domestic heating. Unsurprisingly, the project is much delayed and there are doubts whether it will actually get going. Ofgem has warned that *“delay in the commencement of this project would materially impact the evidence base for an energy system transition to hydrogen as a means of decarbonising heat and industry”*.

Capitalism, dependent as it is on the constant and infinite expansion of the production of commodities, is being forced by the inescapable reality of climate change to move from denial to a (partial) recognition of the terrible price that humanity and the planet as a whole is beginning to have to pay. However, its enthusiasm for the mirage of ‘green growth’ is making it grab more and more desperately at technological straws – some of which, like green hydrogen, have the potential to actually play a valuable, if limited, role in combatting global heating.

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<https://redgreenlabour.org/2024/01/01/the-hydrogen-economy-yet-another-mirage/>

Interview with Ukrainian and Russian socialists

At the recent [International Committee of the Fourth International](#), held at the [IIRE in Amsterdam](#), two delegates from Ukraine and Russia attended. The interview below is with Vasylyna, a member of [Sotsialnyi Rukh/Соціальний Рух](#), and Mia, an activist in the [Russian Socialist Movement/Российское социалистическое движение](#), about the war and their organisations' activities.

How did you get involved in politics?

Vasylyna: My interest in political activism emerged during my studies in urban studies, where we often used Marxist theory to analyse different processes that affect our living spaces. Surrounded by lots of young progressive people from all over Europe at the university and united by similar struggles of being international students, we initiated a union for the students of our department, fighting for equal tuition fees for European and non-European students. I joined Sotsialnyi Rukh because theory alone is not enough, driven by an urge to be active on the ground. Facing devastating current challenges, Ukrainian society is extremely vulnerable but definitely more open to change. Obviously, things cannot go on in the same way as they did before. For instance, there is a lot more discussion on corruption, and journalists are uncovering examples at the highest levels of power, so it feels like things are starting to shift.

Mia: I became interested in politics during my school years. When I was 14 years old, the annexation of Crimea happened. This was a moment when I really started to dive into news

reports and listen to political commentators. However, I was almost unaware of differences on the political spectrum. The opposition field in Russia is predominantly liberal, so for many, the words “liberalism” and “democracy” are often equated. Like many people my age, I was anti-Putin, anti-conservative, pro-free elections, civil rights, and anti-corruption. I suppose my time spent at the university was important in this sense. I started reading a lot more about history and politics, and I was able to engage in political debates from a much more critical perspective. Since 2021, I have engaged in politics outside of the Student Council and university settings. I served as an election observer for the parliamentary and municipal elections of 2021 and started to participate in the activities of RSM. Soon after this, I became a full member.

What is Sotsialnyi Rukh’s position on the Zelensky government?

Vasylyna: The government’s stance is clear about fighting for the sovereignty of Ukraine, and this gets a lot of support from people. But we as an organisation are extremely critical of the political direction of the government, accompanied by neoliberal reforms and massive cuts to public spending. In Sotsialnyy Rukh, we are finding ways to organise around these issues. People stand united to defend the country, but this does not mean that Zelensky has unanimous support.

Unfortunately, oligarchy and foreign capital have a significant influence on our current president. The current government was not capable of transitioning from an economy based on profit to a war economy that would work for providing defence capacity and solving humanitarian problems. Seeking allies amongst international partners, mostly among the richest states that have their own imperialist interests (like the USA), could cause harm to the support of Ukraine and bring out confusion in the countries of the Global South. We do not believe that our government is capable of fixing mistakes. That’s why there is a strong urge for mass grassroots pressure

and political critique from a leftist perspective. The key priorities of the state should be based on the protection of people's interests, fostering social cohesion, and promoting global solidarity against oppression.

What campaigning work is the Revolutionary Socialist Movement doing?

Mia: Campaigning work is difficult for our comrades in Russia due to the repressive regime. We try to work within the law because we don't want to endanger activists. Our main goals now are to shift the oppositional political conversation to the left and provide practical support for people. For instance, we have been doing work with independent trade unions in Russia. There is a union for delivery workers, which we have been helping to organise and support. When the activists and independent trade union leaders are imprisoned, we organise help—financially and via media campaigns.

We are actively working within the "University Platform" that unites professors and students to defend their rights and freedoms. We try to build communities and provide a space to discuss politics to overcome the atomisation of Russian society. Even inside repressive regimes, there are still struggles and problems that are fought on the ground. When possible, we align with grassroots initiatives to defend people's rights against construction companies' lobbying and resist the destruction of nature. We are also prioritising the feminist platform as well as anti- and decolonial work within our movement; this is particularly important to us given the invasion of Ukraine. What is often overlooked is that while our government wages a colonial war against Ukraine, indigenous people in Russia are dying out. Indigenous populations often live in poor outlying areas of Russia's periphery, where people are mired in poverty and debt. Mobilisation occurs disproportionately in poor regions of the country, where people are pressured to join the army to pay off debts, often lack the ability to resist, and have fewer

sources of information than the rest of the population.

What about the war?

Vasylyna: We support the Ukrainians' right to resist the invasion and colonisation. Some Sotsialnyi Rukh members have joined the armed forces and are fighting the Russian army. There are not really other viable options in terms of separate fighting militias and units at the moment.

Some on the left say that the conflict is primarily a proxy conflict between imperialists; do you agree?

Vasylyna: We do not see this as a proxy war. It is, first and foremost, a people's war for national liberation. At the beginning of the full-scale invasion, people were self-organising, doing anything they could to resist the occupation, speaking to soldiers, and older women making homemade explosives. People from all walks of life—LGBT+ people and women, artists, workers, and academics—joined the army to fight for the Ukrainians' right to self-determination.

"We do not see this as a proxy war. It is, first and foremost, a people's war for national liberation."

Mia: Some on the left have this false pacifism, and they put an ideological lens on the war that obscures rather than clarifies, but actually obscures the situation for real people on the ground. Of course, the Ukrainians have the right to defend themselves; they are the main victims in this conflict. This label of 'proxy war' doesn't give any agency to the Ukrainians themselves. People calling for negotiations and a ceasefire need to be clear on what basis. The problem is, no one would dictate to Russia the price they would demand for peace. But some on the left want to dictate conditions to the Ukrainians and say they need to sacrifice their national sovereignty by accepting annexations. Why?

What is the strength of the far right in Ukraine?

Vasylyna: The far-right can still be a threat to some individuals and social movements, but in general, Ukrainian society stands against authoritarian and chauvinistic ideas, as those ideas are at the base of Russian imperialism. Moreover, the influence and visibility of far-right movements in Ukraine are less strong compared to Western societies, for instance, Germany. Currently, far-right activists are not represented in big politics, but we need to be prepared to resist far-right interests in the future. History shows that wars, unfortunately, shape the favourable base for spreading hateful ideologies. Nevertheless, Ukrainian society demonstrated that it's empowered by its diversity and not by cultivating ethnic nationalism and national isolation.

"Ukrainian society demonstrated that it's empowered by its diversity and not by cultivating ethnic nationalism and national isolation."

Will Ukraine win the war?

Vasylyna: Of course! It is the only way to liberate the country. We have to end the Russian invasion as a priority. We definitely need more arms because this is an actual fight, and these things matter.

How can the international workers movement and left help?

Vasylyna: We have the European Network of Solidarity with Ukraine, which meets weekly. There have been international visits by delegates from different countries. There was a good campaign to cancel Ukraine's debt and, recently, to free the Ukrainian human rights activist Maksym Butkevych, who was captured by Russian forces and tortured before being sentenced to 13 years in prison. Anything that people can do to help spread information about people like Butkevych and put pressure on Russia to release him would help. We would very

much like the international left to offer Ukraine progressive solutions that would allow us to implement a just reconstruction and ensure sustainable development. The people of Ukraine want to live in peace and decent social conditions, and for this, it is necessary to eliminate the influence of the oligarchy, transfer all economic resources to public ownership, and write off the foreign debt.

Mia: We urge comrades around the world, but especially in the Western world, where politics is more open and you can have more public discussions: We don't want the Russian regime to win; it will be a disaster in Ukraine and Russia. There has been a precedent for lifting sanctions from Russian oligarchs in Europe (for example, the head of "Alfa Bank," Mikhail Fridman). We claim that sanctions against Russian capitalists should be maintained, and the money should be directed towards the Ukrainian resistance, Russian civil society organisations, and helping reconstruct Ukraine after the war. We also call for international solidarity with political prisoners. Among them are leftists, anarchists, anti-fascists, and trade union organisers. We welcome direct actions to help us raise money to help those needing political asylum and those already imprisoned. Prosecuted activists often escape, but they end up fleeing to places like Kazakhstan and other countries under Russian influence, where they are detained and then face deportation back to Russia. At the same time, the visa regime is very restrictive, and the procedures take a very long time. Land borders with EU countries are effectively closed, and the simplified procedure for obtaining visas has been canceled. There is a need to support those needing political asylum—those who refuse to be sent to war and escape. It is necessary to demand that the European Commission and the European Parliament adopt a unified approach to providing international protection for Russian citizens who are at risk of persecution.

What was your view of the International Committee meeting?

Vasylyna: It was very important to come and hear the arguments from different organisations. There are certainly some contributions that my organisation would disagree with. But also, I am interested in discussing within SR how to develop our policies and ideas based on some of what I heard.

Mia: There were some positives, but also some negatives. On the positive, everyone is open to hearing other positions and wants to know more about the positions of the RSM and what is going on in Russia. But my criticism is that we merely exchange political opinions; the left spends so much time arguing over concepts like whether something is imperialist or not. But where is the practical solidarity? We need to do more to share what we are doing on the ground. It cannot just be ideological positions.

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<https://anticapitalistresistance.org/interview-with-ukrainian-and-russian-socialists/>

NOTE: The Fourth International is a worldwide organisation of revolutionary ecosocialists. Defending the self-organization of the exploited and oppressed, towards the abolition of capitalism and the building of ecosocialism, the Fourth International brings together organizations convinced that this is not possible without a root and branch, revolutionary, transformation of society. Read more here: <https://fourth.international/en/166>



The zionist destruction machine threatens Lebanon after Gaza

In this article, republished from the [Anti*Capitalist Resistance](#) website, [Gilbert Achcar](#) analyses the current situation in Israel's war on Gaza, predicting that Israel plans to shift to a "low intensity" campaign while preparing for a possible future massive attack on Lebanon. **This article was written before Israel's assassination of a senior Hamas leader in Beirut on 3 January 2024.**

Two weeks ago, we estimated, in light of the evidence available at the time, that Israel's occupation forces would stop their intensive campaign of heavy bombardment at the beginning of this new year, and shift to a "low-intensity war" whose goal would be to tighten control over most of the territory of the Gaza Strip fallen under its sway, eradicate all remaining resistance within it and destroy the network of tunnels that remain under its soil (see "[Whither Israel's War on Gaza?](#)", 20/12/2023). On Monday, the first day of this new year, the official spokesman for the occupation army announced the withdrawal of five brigades from Gaza, composed mostly of reserve soldiers, in what was interpreted by observers as a first step towards the shift to a "low-intensity war" as promised by Israel's rulers to their external supporters, the United States above all.

The truth is that, for both human and economic reasons, the Zionist state cannot carry on for long waging a war with the same intensity as the one it has fought since "Al-Aqsa Flood". This is because Israel is a relatively small country, with a

Jewish population of only a little more than seven million, of whom a million and a half are men of military service age (in addition to a million and a half women who have not been involved in the war yet). It cannot continue to mobilize approximately half a million reservists for a long period, as this constitutes a heavy human burden on its society and an even heavier burden on its economy.

Until the end of last year, that is, in less than three months, the war has cost approximately 20 billion dollars, according to what a former deputy governor of the Israeli Central Bank told the *Washington Post*, i.e. a cost approaching a quarter of a billion dollars per day, which is huge for the country's economy. The Zionist government estimates that the entire war, which Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu confirmed last Saturday would last at least a year, will cost it about 50 billion dollars (that is, approximately one tenth of Israel's GDP). What makes Netanyahu and his allies of the Zionist far right all the more determined to continue the war at a lower intensity throughout this new year is their bet on Donald Trump's victory in the US presidential election next autumn. They believe that Trump would give them a green light to complete the "Second Nakba" by permanently seizing the Gaza Strip and annexing it. As they rely on American funding to mitigate the impact of the war on their economy, they must reduce its costs so that they can carry it on during the next several months as they intend.

At the same time, however, the Zionist government is planning a second intensive bombing campaign that would start once the intensity of its bombing of Gaza is reduced. During the very first days of Israel's new offensive, Zionist "Defence" Minister, former Major General Yoav Gallant, a member of the Likud Party and a rival of Netanyahu, was reported to want Israel to attack Hezbollah in Lebanon in conjunction with its onslaught on Hamas in Gaza. Gallant is known to be an advocate of the Dahiya doctrine, applied for the first-time during

Israel's onslaught on Lebanon in 2006. This military strategy consists in responding to anyone who threatens Israel's security in such a sweeping and destructive way that it would constitute a powerful deterrent. As head of the Southern Command between 2005 and 2010, Gallant oversaw the application of that doctrine in the deadly three-week onslaught on Gaza that started at the end of 2008.

Last summer, the Zionist "Defence" Minister threatened to return Lebanon to the "stone age". This was after he inspected the Shebaa Farms area on the Lebanese border and saw a tent set up by Hezbollah there. He said at the time: "I warn Hezbollah and Nasrallah not to make mistakes. You have made mistakes in the past and paid a very high price. If, God forbid, escalation or confrontation happens here, we will return Lebanon to the Stone Age." He continued, repeating: "I warn Hezbollah and its leader: Do not make a mistake. We will not hesitate to use all our power and destroy every meter belonging to Hezbollah and Lebanon if we have to." He then added, "When it comes to Israel's security, we are all united." These last words were in response to the assertion by Hezbollah's leader that Israel has been weakened due to its political crisis.

Thus, the likelihood of a new massive aggression launched by the Zionist state against Lebanon has become very high indeed. The Israeli government is putting Hezbollah in a corner by demanding that it withdraw its military presence to north of the Litani River, some 10 km north of Lebanon's border, as compliance would cause the party to lose face while refusal to comply would make it bear responsibility for causing a new devastating aggression against Lebanon, the areas where the party is deployed in particular. Hezbollah's limited intervention in the wake of "Al-Aqsa Flood" has thus backfired, as the party missed the opportunity to force Israel to engage in an intensive war on two fronts whereas Israel is today threatening to launch an intensive bombardment of

Lebanon, singling it out after completing its intensive bombardment of Gaza.

Translated from the Arabic original published in Al-Quds al-Arabi <https://www.alquds.co.uk/?p=3282616> on 2 January 2024. This article was written before Israel's assassination of a senior Hamas leader in Beirut.

Source >> Gilbert Achcar blog [The Zionist destruction machine threatens Lebanon after Gaza | Gilbert Achcar / جابر الأشقر \(gilbert-achcar.net\)](https://www.alquds.co.uk/?p=3282616)

COP 28- what is at stake?

Alan Thornett writes:

COP28 (along with planet Earth) is faced with “an absolutely [gobsmackingly bananas](#) increase in the global temperature”

COP28 – the annual UN global summit on global warming – is taking place from November 30th until December 12 – under the auspices of UN Framework Convention on Climate Change that was launched in 1992 to protect the planet against “dangerous anthropogenic interference with the climate system”, which now takes place annually. It is the 28th UN climate change summit since 1992, and will take place in Dubai in the United Arab Emirates (UAE).

COP28, along with other recent such summits faces a deadly, and indeed existential, contradiction between the relentless acceleration of global warming i.e. of the average global surface temperature of the planet – and the inability of the COP process to bring it under control, or even hold it to a maximum increase of 1.5°C in line with the 2015 Paris

Agreement.

It became clear in August that 2023 would be of a different order of magnitude in terms of temperature when July turned out to be the world's hottest month ever recorded.

The UN Secretary General [António Guterres](#) – the most radical the UN has had on climate change – responded rightly by declaring that this meant that “the era of global warming had ended, and the era of global boiling has arrived”. It meant, he said, that: “Climate change is here, it is terrifying, and it is just the beginning. It is still possible to limit global temperature rise to 1.5°C (above pre-industrial levels), and avoid the very worst of climate change, he said, but only with dramatic, immediate climate action.”

The September figure, however, was a whole lot worse. It was a staggering 0.5°C above the previous such record. The Guardian's environmental editor [Damian Carrington](#) quoted climate scientist Zeke Hausfather who had tweeted that: “This month was, in my professional opinion as a climate scientist – absolutely gobsmackingly bananas. It beat the prior monthly temperature record by over 0.5°C, and was around 1.8°C warmer than preindustrial levels.” He noted that datasets from European and Japanese scientists confirmed the leap.

It's worth noting that the difference in the average global temperature between now and the depths of the last ice age when these islands were under a kilometre of ice is around 5.0°C.

In mid-November [Guterres](#) went further warning that. “Present trends are racing our planet down a dead-end 3C temperature rise. This is a failure of leadership, a betrayal of the vulnerable, and a massive missed opportunity. Renewables have never been cheaper or more accessible. We know it is still possible to make the 1.5 degree limit a reality. It requires tearing out the poisoned root of the climate crisis: fossil

fuels.”

He added: “Leaders must drastically up their game, now, with record ambition, record action, and record emissions reductions. No more greenwashing. No more foot-dragging.”

The UK’s sellout

One member state that has not upped their game – scandalously – is the UK under Sunak’s Tory government – which has gone in exactly the opposite direction. In order to exploit a reactionary backlash from car drivers against Labour in a recent by-election Sunak has delayed the ban on the sale of new petrol and diesel cars from 2030 to 2035 will deprioritise the transition to electric vehicles. He has also announced that a ban on the sale of fossil-fuel boilers from 2035 would be watered down and extra exemptions introduced.

Most significantly he has issued a new generation of oil and gas licences for the North Sea and given the go-ahead for a new oil and gas field. It is a monumental stab in the back for the whole COP decarbonisation process.

Sunak insists (ludicrously) that none of this will affect the ability of Britain can still reach his 2050 net zero target. The UN has strongly protested.

The venue

The venue of this COP is a major problem of course. Few countries could be less suitable for such a summit than the UEA. It is not only the 7th biggest oil producer in the world at 3,250,000 barrels a day. It also holds the 7th largest proven reserves of natural gas in the world at over 215 trillion cubic feet. It is also yet another host nation, following Sharm El-Sheikh, with an appalling history of human rights abuses and an economy based on fossil fuel exports, and the president of the COP will be Sultan Ahmed Al Jaber who is

the Minister of Industry and Advanced Technology of the UAE, and managing director and group CEO of the Abu Dhabi National Oil Company.

As a result of this, many campaigners will not travel to Dubai in person but will mount their protests at home or via the global day of action which has already been called for the last day of the summit which is December 12th. The problem has been compounded, however, by the astonishing revelation that the UEA has been using COP meetings to sell off oil and gas on the side. Guterres has denounced it as a serious breach of the standards of conduct expected of a COP president.

It would be a mistake, however, to allow the venue problem to dominate our response. It is difficult for the UN to exclude a member state from the presidency when they are seeking to take their 193 member states together towards net zero and when hosting a COP often has a positive effect of the host nation in terms of its own record.

The primary role of a COP summit in any case in pushing the member states to meet their commitment takes place between COP meeting rather than at them when the die has often been cast, also to plan actions and interventions for the following year. In the end the COP process has to be bigger than this since it is dealing with a global existential emergence with a short time line for its conclusion.

The COP conferences, however, urgently need democratising in order to give the climate movement a lot more space and to severely restrict corporate lobbying the access to it given to the petrochemical industry.

The aim of the climate movement should be to maximise mobilisations around every COP summit and where it is not possible at the venue it should be done at the international level. This is important both in order to mobilise the movement and also because it is the best opportunity we have

to put demands on the global elites at an international level.

Meanwhile Al Jaber, COP president on behalf of the UAE, has told the Guardian in an exclusive interview on the eve of the conference that he thought that the world could agree a “robust roadmap” of cuts in greenhouse gas emissions by 2030 that would meet scientific advice.

We shall see.

Key challenges in Dubai

The principal responsibility of each COP is to conduct a global stocktake of the carbon reduction targets—or “Nationally Determined Contributions”—to which each member state is pledged as a part of the so-called “ratcheting up process” adopted at COP21 in Paris in 2015. This requires each member state to set its own carbon reduction targets and then review and enhance them annually at implementation conferences such as COP27 and now COP28.

In this case every member state must meet the commitments it made at COP27 in in Sharm El-Sheikh and adopt new ones set at a stricter standard – which must be backed by a credible plan for implementation. The stocktake that took place last year at COP27 in Sharm El-Sheikh revealed a disastrous situation, and this could be even worse.

The loss and damage fund

The other massive issue that will rear its head again – and rightly so – is the matter of a so-called “loss and damage fund”.

This fund was agreed in principle in Sharm El-Sheikh after a long and heated debate. It would provide a mechanism by which the rich countries, that are most responsible for climate change, would be required to pay into a fund that could mitigate the impact of climate change on the poor countries,

who are the least responsible for climate change, and help them with a just transition to renewable energy. There was no agreement, however, as to how much money should be paid into it, who should pay it, or on what basis. The UN's International Panel on Climate Change (the IPCC) was, therefore, asked to prepare a recommendation, particularly on the size of the fund for the COP28 in Dubai.

The creation of such a fund had been blocked by the rich countries for over 30 years and was only forced onto the agenda this year after heavy pressure from the poor (or developing) countries themselves. Prior to COP27 Guterres had argued strongly for such an agreement, warning that unless there is what he called an "historic pact" between the rich and poor countries on this issue, the planet could already be doomed. In other words without a serious loss and damage fund to provide a socially and economic transition the UN will eventually, and inevitably, fail.

This issue has been given a substantial boost on the eve of the summit when 70 international figures led by Gordon Brown, and including former UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon, have sent a letter to the COP calling for the massive revenues of oil-producing states to be subject to a \$25bn levy to help pay for the impact of climate disasters on the world's [poorest and most vulnerable people](#).

Brown told the Guardian: "The deadlock on climate finance has to be broken if Cop28 is to succeed. After more than a decade of broken promises, a \$25bn oil and gas levy paid by the petrol states and proposed by the UAE as chair of Cop would kickstart finance for mitigation [reduction of greenhouse gas emissions] and adaptation in the global south".

Such a levy, he said, would shave off only a small fraction of the bonanza that oil-producing countries have made in recent years, but it would help to fill the "loss and damage" to poor countries afflicted by the impacts of the climate crisis.

The role of the UN

The state of the climate struggle today can be seen from the following harsh realities:

- the science remains irrefutable (though often understated by the scientific community)
- the time available to reach net zero is rapidly running out
- the limitations of the COP process become ever more apparent
- Anthropogenic global warming is accelerating at an unprecedented rate and dangerous tipping points are fast approaching – some have already arrived.
- The COP process has to be made to work because there is no alternative.

It is a pivotal moment for the UN since faced with such contradictions its entire carbon reduction project is falling apart leaving the global climate to spin out of control and cause more tipping points to trigger – which would be catastrophic for both the UN and the planet.

Many on the radical left argue that this failure was and is inevitable because the UN it is a capitalist institution, and as such is dedicated to the preservation of the fossil industry and prepared to use as much “greenwash” as necessary in order to do so and it is time for the left (however defined) to go it alone. There have been numerous proposals in recent years for the left to denounce the COP process as a road block and withdraw from it.

This would be a big mistake. The UN is, of course, a capitalist institution. It is comprised of 193 capitalist countries: how could it be otherwise. To its great credit, however, it recognised the danger of anthropogenic climate change as early as 1992 when the radical left still regarded the environment as a middle class diversion. Since then the

COP process it established has been a battleground between the majority who recognise the problem and are prepared to decarbonise at least to some extent, and those who simply defend their own self-interest or who reject the concept of anthropogenic global warming on ideological grounds – i.e. the climate change deniers.

In the event the UN – along with its subdivisions such as the IPCC – were not only successful in defeating the climate deniers – despite the massive backing they received from the fossil fuel producers – but in winning the scientific community over to the climate struggle, without which we would be nowhere today. It has also been instrumental, along with the intensification of the climate crisis its self – in transforming global awareness as to the dangers of climate change.

Today we are facing an existential climate emergency, which only the UN, or something with a comparable global reach and authority can successfully confront.

This is important since although the struggle against climate change must include individual responsibility, in the end it is only governmental action—and ultimately governments that are prepared to go on a war footing to do so—that can make the structural changes necessary to stop global warming in the few years that science is giving us to do it.

The role of the radical left

To the extent that the radical left in particular had or has a strategic approach by which to global warming and climate change it is the revolutionary overthrow of capitalism, though how clearly this has been thought through is not always clear. To be relevant to global warming, however, it would have to happen within this decade since nothing can be built on a dead planet.

The actual task we are faced with today, therefore, is not

whether global capitalism can be abolished within 10 years, but whether it can be forced to take action to halt global warming

as a part of a struggle for its eventual overturn and its replacement by an ecosocialism. If we are unable to build the kind of movement capable of forcing major change under capitalism, how are we going to build a movement capable of overturning it. It is what I would call a transitional approach.

It is not true – as some on the left imply – that capitalism cannot be forced to make major changes that are contrary to the logic of its existence. In fact it was already making concessions to this when it agreed under extreme pressure to support a maximum global temperature increase of 1.5°C in Paris and when it agreed to end the use of fossil fuels in Glasgow.

Capitalism would also be prepared, in my view – given the existential implications – involved to carry through decarbonisation its self rather than see societal collapse, since to do so would meet with massive resistance. It would do so completely in its self-interest and with extreme brutality. We cannot assume, in any case, that global warming will be halted incrementally – or indeed peacefully – before runaway climate chaos along with societal and ecological break downs and if so ultra-right and fascist forces will be waiting in the wings.

Mass movements will emerge spontaneously under such conditions, problem however, will be which class interests do they represent. Whether they are led by progressive forces (including the left) ultra-right populists with a reactionary agenda, that are already flexing their muscles around environmental issues.

A major task of the radical left today – as well as being

involved in every aspect of the struggle –implies conscious preparation for such an eventuality, which could already happen at any time.

Meanwhile, the most effective way to cut carbon emissions quickly and democratically is by making fossil fuels much more expensive than renewable energy, by means that are socially just, economically redistributive, and capable of commanding popular support – and in the two or three decades that remain to us.

The UN COP process remains a crucial forum in the struggle for such demands remains. It is the best forum through which the global climate movement can place demands on the global elites and the forum around which we can build the kind of mass movement that can force them to take effective action.

Key carbon reduction issues

- The global average surface temperature to below a 5°C increase
- Demand net zero by 2030
- All new fossil fuel investment must be stopped
- The polluters must be made to pay
- Global biodiversity must be defended
- There must be a rapid transition to renewables: including solar, on-shore and off-shore wind, tidal and hydro carried out on a 'war footing'. (In UK Labour must maintain its commitment to £28 billion a year on renewables)
- The 2030 deadline for selling fossil fuel cars must be maintained
- SUVs must be banned other than in specialised circumstances
- Adequate production facilities for EV batteries must be established
- There must be a major extension of public transport and fewer cars

- The national grid must be upgraded

There must be a massive programme of home (and building) insulation. All new homes must meet strict environmental standards

- LTNs and 15 minute cities must be introduced to cut carbon emission and clean up the air we breathe
- Decarbonise agriculture, ban deforestation, a big reduction in meat production and consumption. End the ploughing of fields.
- Stop the pollution of land and sea and rivers
- Protect wetlands
- Far better recycling and the detoxification of waste disposal
- No to nuclear energy

29 November 2023

Republished from Red-Green Labour:
<https://redgreenlabour.org/2023/11/29/cop-28-what-is-at-stake/>

#NowWeRise – 9 Dec Day of Action on Climate Justice 12.30pm Scottish Parliament Edinburgh

From the [Climate Justice Coalition](#):

Temperatures are rising. Corporate profits are rising. Now we're rising.

The hottest summer on record. Politicians backtracking on climate commitments. Continued corporate profiteering fuelling the climate and cost of living crises. **It's time for us to take action.**

As world leaders gather for the UN's climate negotiations at COP28, a climate summit presided over by an oil executive, **we're coming together on 9 December to demand climate justice.**

COP28 Day of Action for Scotland

Start: Saturday, December 09, 2023•12:30 PM

**Outside Scottish Parliament• Scottish Parliament,
Edinburgh, EH99 1SP**

Host Contact Info: info@climatefringe.org

**JOIN US
COP28 Global Day of Action
for Climate Justice**

**SCOTLAND
UNITED FOR ACTION**

**NOW
WE RISE**

12:30pm 9 December
Scottish Parliament
Edinburgh



**Temperatures and waters are rising.
Injustices are rising.
We are rising!**

At a time when the UK Government is rolling back on climate and nature policies, and the Scottish Government has delayed its vital new climate plan (which sets out the steps to achieve legally set targets), it's more important than ever for us to come together to show people in Scotland want the

urgent and fair climate action that they've been demanding for decades.

[Join us at the Scottish Parliament in Edinburgh on 9th December](#) to send a strong message to decision makers that we are united for action, to tackle the climate and nature crises, secure sustainable jobs, a fairer, greener, healthier society for everyone in Scotland and justice for those impacted by the climate crisis.

There will be inspiring speakers, the opportunity to send a message to the Scottish party leaders with your wishes for action on climate and nature in 2024, kids activities, and more!

[Join Us! – Click on this Link](#)

NOW WE RISE: JOIN US TO SHOW SCOTLAND IS UNITED FOR ACTION

In 2021 over 100,000 people took to the streets of Glasgow to tell world leaders at the COP26 climate talks they wanted action on the climate and nature emergencies.

Since then, despite record breaking temperatures and increasingly devastating climate impacts, we have seen a lack of progress on action to reduce emissions, protect nature, or make the biggest polluters pay for the damage they are causing.

Temperature and Waters are Rising

2023 will be the hottest year on record. As the world heats up, extreme weather events on every continent – from floods in Brechin to wildfires in Greece – are causing mass devastation, loss of life and livelihoods in communities around the world. The evidence is right in front of our eyes: our climate is

breaking down. And, if we're to have any hope of a liveable planet and tackling the climate crisis, we must deliver a just transition and dramatically and immediately reduce the use of fossil fuels.

Injustices are Rising

The cost of living crisis and climate crisis are driven by our reliance on dirty fossil fuels, and by the excessive emissions of the richest people. The climate crisis disproportionately affects ordinary people and communities in the global south, while those most responsible profit. In 2022, the five biggest oil and gas companies made record profits of over £150 billion. As corporations make billions, we struggle to make ends meet. Energy prices in Britain are still double what they were two years ago, soaring above wages and benefit levels and many thousands will be cold in their homes this winter.

Now We Rise!

People in Scotland from all walks of life are coming together to say we know the solutions, and we want our leaders to take robust and urgent action to implement these. We can replace the destructive fossil fuel economy with a real alternative. We can take advantage of cheap renewable energy, insulate homes, reduce energy waste and implement accessible and affordable public transport. We can create an economy that meets the needs of communities, creates secure and sustainable jobs and places the wellbeing of both people and nature at its centre.

We will stand with communities in the Global South who are suffering from the climate crisis which they did not create, and which does the greatest damage to countries already burdened by unjust debt. Rich nations must provide urgent climate finance and grants for loss and damage.

At a time when the UK Government is rolling back on climate and nature policies, and the Scottish Government will soon be publishing its new climate plan, it's more important than ever for us to come together to show people in Scotland want action.

[Join us at the Scottish Parliament in Edinburgh on 9th December](#) to send a strong message to decision makers that we are united for action, to tackle the climate and nature crises, secure sustainable jobs, a fairer, greener, healthier society for everyone in Scotland and justice for those impacted by the climate crisis.

For other actions taking place across the UK check this [interactive action map](#) by the Climate Justice Coalition.

Source: <https://climatefringe.org/cop28-scotland/>

Ukrainian Letter of Solidarity with Palestinian people

The following letter of solidarity has been published by the Ukrainian journal 'Commons'.

We, Ukrainian researchers, artists, political and labour activists, members of civil society stand in solidarity with the people of Palestine who for 75 years have been subjected and resisted Israeli military occupation, separation, [settler colonial violence](#), [ethnic cleansing](#), land [dispossession](#) and [apartheid](#). We write this letter as people to people. The dominant discourse on the governmental

level and even among solidarity groups that support the struggles of Ukrainians and Palestinians often creates separation. With this letter we reject these divisions, and affirm our solidarity with everyone who is oppressed and struggling for freedom.

As activists committed to freedom, human rights, democracy and social justice, and while fully acknowledging power differentials, we firmly condemn attacks on civilian populations – be they Israelis attacked by Hamas or Palestinians attacked by the Israeli occupation forces and armed settler gangs. Deliberate targeting of civilians is a war crime. Yet this is no justification for the [collective punishment](#) of Palestinian people, identifying all residents of Gaza with Hamas and [the indiscriminate use of the term “terrorism”](#) applied to the whole Palestinian resistance. Nor is this a justification of continuation of the ongoing occupation. Echoing multiple UN resolutions, we know that there will be no lasting peace without justice for the Palestinian people.

On October 7 we witnessed Hamas' violence against the civilians in Israel, an event that is now singled out by many to demonize and dehumanize Palestinian resistance altogether. Hamas, a reactionary islamist organization, needs to be seen in a wider historical context and decades of Israel encroaching on Palestinian land, long before this organization came to exist in the late 1980s. During the Nakba (“catastrophe”) of 1948, more than 700,000 Palestinians were brutally displaced from their homes, with [entire villages massacred and destroyed](#). Since its creation Israel has never stopped pursuing its [colonial expansion](#). The Palestinians were forced to exile, fragmented and administered under different regimes. Some of them are Israeli citizens affected by structural discrimination and racism. Those living in the occupied West Bank are subjected to apartheid under decades of Israel's military control. The

people of the Gaza Strip have suffered from the blockade imposed by Israel since 2006, which restricted movement of people and goods, resulting in growing poverty and deprivation.

Since the 7th of October and at the time of writing the death toll in the Gaza Strip is more than [8,500 people](#). [Women and children](#) have made up more than 62 percent of the fatalities, while more than [21,048](#) people have been injured. In recent days, Israel has bombed schools, residential areas, Greek Orthodox Church and several hospitals. Israel has also cut all water, electricity, and fuel supply in the Gaza Strip. There is a severe shortage of food and medicine, causing a [total collapse of a healthcare system](#).

Most of the Western and Israeli media justifies these deaths as mere collateral damage to fighting Hamas but is silent when it comes to Palestinian civilians targeted and killed in the Occupied West Bank. Since the beginning of 2023 alone, and before October 7, the death toll on the Palestinian side had already [reached 227](#). Since the 7 of October, [121](#) Palestinian civilians have been killed in the occupied West Bank. More than 10,000 [Palestinian political prisoners](#) are currently detained in Israeli prisons. Lasting peace and justice are only possible with the end of the ongoing occupation. Palestinians have the right to self-determination and resistance against Israeli's occupation, just like Ukrainians have [the right to resist Russian invasion](#).

Our solidarity comes from a place of anger at the injustice, and a place of deep pain of knowing the devastating impacts of occupation, shelling of civil infrastructure, and humanitarian blockade from experiences in our homeland. Parts of Ukraine have been occupied since 2014, and the international community failed to stop Russian aggression then, ignoring the imperial and colonial nature of the armed

violence, which consequently escalated on the 24th of February 2022. Civilians in Ukraine are shelled daily, in their homes, in hospitals, on bus stops, in queues for bread. As a result of the Russian occupation, thousands of people in Ukraine live without access to water, electricity or heating, and it is the most vulnerable groups that are mostly affected by the destruction of critical infrastructure. In the months of the siege and heavy bombardment of Mariupol there was no humanitarian corridor. Watching the Israeli targeting the civilian infrastructure in Gaza, the Israeli humanitarian blockade and occupation of land resonates especially painfully with us. From this place of pain of experience and solidarity, we call on our fellow Ukrainians globally and all the people to raise their voices in support of the Palestinian people and condemn the ongoing Israeli mass ethnic cleansing.

We reject the Ukrainian government [statements](#) that express unconditional support for Israel's military actions, and we consider [the calls to avoid civilian casualties by Ukraine's MFA](#) belated and insufficient. This position is a retreat from the support of Palestinian rights and condemnation of the Israeli occupation, which Ukraine has followed for decades, including [voting in the UN](#). Aware of the pragmatic geopolitical reasoning behind Ukraine's decision to echo Western allies, on whom we are dependent for our survival, we see the current support of Israel and dismissing Palestinian right to self-determination as contradictory to Ukraine's own commitment to human rights and fight for our land and freedom. We as Ukrainians should stand in solidarity not with the oppressors, but with those who experience and resist the oppression.

We strongly object to equating of Western military aid to Ukraine and Israel by some politicians. Ukraine doesn't occupy the territories of other people, instead, it fights against the Russian occupation, and therefore international

assistance serves a just cause and the protection of international law. Israel has occupied and annexed Palestinian and Syrian territories, and Western aid to it confirms an unjust order and demonstrates double standards in relation to international law.

We oppose the new wave of Islamophobia, such as the brutal [murder](#) of a Palestinian American 6-year old and assault on his family in Illinois, USA, and the equating of any criticism of Israel with anti-Semitism. At the same time, we also oppose holding all Jewish people all over the world accountable for the politics of the state of Israel and we condemn anti-Semitic violence, such as the [mob attack](#) on the airplane in Daghestan, Russia. We also reject the revival of the “war on terror” rhetoric used by the US and EU to justify war crimes and violations of international law that have undermined the international security system, caused countless deaths, and has been borrowed by other states, including Russia for the war in Chechnya and China for the Uyghur genocide. Now Israel is using it to carry out ethnic cleansing.

Call to Action

- We urge the implementation of the call to ceasefire, put forward by the [UN General Assembly resolution](#).
- We call on the Israeli government to immediately stop attacks on civilians, and provide humanitarian aid; we insist on an immediate and indefinite lifting of siege on Gaza and an urgent relief operation to restore civilian infrastructure. We also call on the Israeli government to put an end to the occupation and recognise the right of Palestinian displaced people to return to their lands.
- We call on the Ukrainian government to condemn the use of state sanctioned terror and humanitarian blockade against the Gazan civilian population and reaffirm the Palestinian people’s right to self-determination. We

also call on the Ukrainian government to condemn deliberate assaults on Palestinians in the occupied West Bank.

- We call on the international media to stop pitting Palestinians and Ukrainians against each other, where hierarchies of suffering perpetuate racist rhetoric and dehumanize those under attack.*

We have witnessed the world uniting in solidarity for the people of Ukraine and we call on everyone to do the same for the people of Palestine.

*For a full list of signatories, see the original article on the [web](https://commons.com.ua/en/ukrayinskij-list-solidarnosti/)
<https://commons.com.ua/en/ukrayinskij-list-solidarnosti/>*

Copies of the new English language edition of 'Commons' are available in the UK state for £10 each from Resistance Books, London – info@resistancebooks.org www.resistancebooks.org – and in Scotland from Ukraine Solidarity Campaign Scotland uscscotland@gmail.com.

Internationalism Beyond the Geopolitics of States and Principled Solidarity in “Complex” Situations: Kurdish and Palestinian Solidarity

The ongoing war in Gaza has overshadowed global awareness of the situation not just in Ukraine but in Kurdistan too. Under

cover of the Gaza invasion by Israel, Turkey's President Erdogan has used the opportunity to attack the Kurdish liberated region in north and east Syria. There are complex interrelationships of international solidarity movements that are explored in the following article published in October 2023 from a US-based academic, which raises important issues about internationalism that is framed within the confines of the nation-state. ecosocialist.scot is publishing this article as part of a contribution to discussion on the issue of international solidarity and principled internationalism in Scotland.

By : Ozlem Goner

On 4 October Turkey started yet another series of attacks into the Kurdish-majority region of Rojava (North and East Syria) and [destroyed](#) 80% of the civilian infrastructure, including fifty schools and two hospitals. Dozens have died so far, and millions have been left without electricity and water. [Turkey's excuse](#) this time was a bombing undertaken by two members of the Workers' Party of Kurdistan (PKK) against the General Security Forces of the Turkish state in Ankara, which injured two security officials. Turkey has long claimed that the People's Protection Units in Rojava (YPG) is the same organization as the PKK and claimed [without proof](#) that the actual attackers have come from this region. As I am writing this, Turkey continues to wipe out the region with its airstrikes and the world once remains silent again.

Two days after the re-escalation of Turkey's ongoing attacks, the world was shaken by the killing of over a thousand Israeli citizens by Hamas and other organizations that have joined forces with Hamas despite their ideological and political differences from the former. Israel, like Turkey, produced a lot of [fake news](#) and used the attacks as an excuse to wipe down the entire Gaza strip, an open-air prison, created in the

first place by Israeli settler colonialism. The attacks targeting Israeli citizens are a symptom of ongoing colonial violence, which has left colonized Palestine without any other means of self-defense. Instead of rethinking the context of the Hamas attack, Israel, assisted by Western politicians and the media, embarked on a full-scale genocidal project of further dehumanizing Palestinians through openly racist discourse and calls for torture.

The distancing of segments of Kurdish activists from Palestinian solidarity through a critique of Hamas at this moment is a symptom of a particular form of internationalism that is centered around states, an internationalism that seeks purity through politically correct actions from the colonized without due attention to the ongoing conditions of colonization and oppression.

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One such autocratic leader is the President of Turkey, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, who has condemned Israel's violence against Palestine, and has been playing the peacemaker role promoted even by progressive networks like [Democracy Now](#), which gave extensive coverage of Erdoğan's speech on Palestine, ignoring completely that the same Erdoğan has been wiping down Rojava at the very same time. Turkey's hypocrisy, and the fact that some progressive circles have cherished this double-faced "peace-maker," have frustrated Kurdish activists, some of whom have distanced themselves from Palestinian solidarity at this crucial moment. For example, the progressive all women's Kurdish news outlet [Jinnews](#) published an article with the unfortunate title of "Are peoples confined to choosing either Palestine or Israel?" Although this article and many other Kurdish progressive venues framed their distancing as having to do with Hamas and rightly argued that Palestine is much larger than Hamas, one should not forget that framing this particular context around a critique of Hamas has legitimized ongoing settler colonial violence as it enters a new stage of complete genocidal annihilation.

I suggest that the distancing of segments of Kurdish activists from Palestinian solidarity through a critique of Hamas at this moment is a symptom of a particular form of internationalism that is centered around states, an

internationalism that seeks purity through politically correct actions from the colonized without due attention to the ongoing conditions of colonization and oppression. This type of internationalism has been prevalent among many progressive circles. I will focus here on Kurdish solidarity with Palestine, and US progressives' solidarity with broader Kurdistan, especially with Rojava, which is currently being wiped out by the Turkish state.

Problems with Geopolitical Internationalism

Certain segments of the Kurdish movement have rightly problematized Hamas from a geopolitical angle. Hamas has historically been close to Turkey. Khaled Mashal, former Chairman of the Hamas Political Bureau, once celebrated Turkey's settler colonialism and ethnic cleansing in Afrin of North and East Syria, [saying](#) "Turkey's success, especially in Afrin, sets a serious example. Hopefully, we will all be blessed with the victories of the Islamic Ummah in many parts of the world, as in Afrin." Moreover, around 14,000 people in Rojava died fighting against the Islamic State backed by Turkey, which makes Kurdish populations rightly wary of other religious fundamentalist organizations. Similarly, Hamas is rhetorically, if not materially, supported not only by Turkey but also by the Islamic Regime of Iran, which, like Turkey, has been notoriously oppressive against the Kurdish populations and organizations, as the ongoing [Jina uprisings](#) have revealed. Finally, the Turkish state has even placed some Palestinian refugees in the region of Afrin as part of its population exchange campaigns to rid the area of its indigenous Kurdish populations, an act of ethnic cleansing. These realities on the ground create difficult emotions, which result in some segments of the Kurdish political movement distancing themselves from Palestinian solidarity.

I argue that even though it is easy to understand the feelings that lead to this distancing, it is politically damning to base organizational solidarity politics around feelings. Crucially, these are feelings of geopolitical internationalism centered around nation-states, where progressives relate to countries and groups based on how their “own” or “oppressor” (evil) states *feel* about a given conflict. For example, a dissident from Turkey feels the need to distance themselves from all states and groups that Turkey provides support to. This dynamic is especially prevalent in solidarity politics in the United States. Large segments of progressives in the US approach internationalism as necessitating solidarity with countries and groups the US seemingly opposes, and denying solidarity to countries and groups the US seemingly supports. Even though this stance might have proved useful, especially given historical and ongoing US imperial violence, it is based on a priori geopolitical demarcations, as well as a frequent valorization of other imperial and colonial states and dictators just because they seem to be in opposition to the United States. Although this stance *feels* like internationalism at first, especially given the violent imperial role of the United States throughout the globe, it actually prevents an analysis of the material realities of oppression and colonization on the ground and hinders the development of potential alliances with oppressed populations and dissident organizations in places where the United States seems to be in support.

As an alternative, internationalism from the ground is based on a material analysis of relations of colonialism and oppression; it advocates for standing in solidarity with the colonized and the oppressed in all contexts and for developing alliances with actual grassroots organizations. If, for instance, one focuses on networks of global capitalism, then one sees that geopolitical demarcations and instrumental uses of solidarity by state actors are often a façade. For example, behind Erdoğan’s rhetoric of solidarity, there are deep and

ongoing business and military connections between Turkey and Israel. During the UN General Assembly of September 2023, Erdoğan [reported](#) that the two countries plan to raise their trade volume from \$9.5 billion to a minimum of \$15 billion and even to develop some shared ministries, to increase cooperation in energy, tourism, and technology. Even the Islamic Republic of Iran has historically [worked with Israel](#), purchasing much of the weaponry used during the Iran-Iraq War from a country they otherwise call the “evil.”

Similarly, despite the fact that the United States has worked with Kurdish-majority security forces in North and East Syria to prevent the regrowth of ISIS activity, it has long [supported](#) Turkey’s war against Kurdistan with material means such as military aid, sharing of intelligence, and the sale of weapons, including the war planes being used in broader Kurdistan at this moment. And the alliance with Kurdish security in the region cannot even come close to the depth of capitalist networks developed between Turkey and the United States since World War II. Hence, much of the emotional geopolitical stance, whether by certain dissidents in Turkey and Iran distancing themselves from Palestine, or by progressives in the US distancing themselves from the Kurdish-majority region of North and East Syria, is not based on the actual material relationships between their oppressor states and other regions, countries, and groups.

Once we move beyond geopolitical internationalism and focus instead on material relationships of global capitalism between state actors, as well as on regional relationships of colonialism and oppression, internationalist solidarity with peoples and political organizations on the ground becomes much less “complicated.” This form of internationalism does not operate at the level of states, but from the ground created through solidarity networks with grassroots organizations. To achieve this form of internationalism, we need to be critical of expectations of purity from the oppressed, be it in a

liberal sense of victimhood that “condemns” all “violent” action, or in a more progressive sense of political correctness, which demands a purity of political motivations and alliances without an attention to the simple needs of survival.

The Conundrum of Purity and Internationalism from the (Messy) Ground

The first form of purity discourse is a liberal one that expects only “victimhood” from the colonized and the oppressed. Any action of self-defense is easily “condemned,” without an attention to the ongoing structural violence of colonialism and the agency of the oppressed to self-defend, with whatever methods available to them. Even those who are more conscientious of political agency, and aware of the limited availability of means of self-defense, sometimes fall into this liberal trap. From the site of any so-called “violent” action emerges a false discourse of “two sides,” a condemnation of violence from “both sides,” which not only obscures the structural and systematic reality of colonial violence, but also the fact that the colonized have very limited methods of self-defense available to them. In the case of Palestine, it is because the Palestinian opposition does not have a violent military force with airplanes and tanks to defend themselves against Israeli settler colonialism that they resort to actions like the killing of civilians. Somehow, the latter appears to be “more brutal” than decades of settler colonial violence at the hands of a gigantic military force funded by multiple states. This is not a defense of Hamas or its actions, but a call to realize that Hamas and the particular actions it undertakes are a product of Israeli settler colonialism, not vice versa.

Those who are aware of the problems with this false discourse

of “two sides,” quickly separate Hamas from the Palestinian people and condemn the former, while showing some nominal solidarity with the latter. Of course, it would be a mistake to reduce Palestinian movements, let alone Palestinian people, to Hamas and its actions. The Israeli state was involved in the [creation of Hamas](#) and Israeli and Western media have used such reductionist discourses equating Hamas and Palestine to legitimize Israel’s settler-colonialism in Gaza and the rest of Palestine for decades now. However, one should not forget that many other organizations in Palestine acknowledge the latest action as an act of self-defense, and that a “condemnation” of Hamas in this particular context, as well as analyses based on the so-called “violence by two sides,” legitimizes the genocidal violence Israel uses on Palestine. These depictions feed into a [false liberal notion of “two sides”](#) that renders the colonial reality invisible and frames colonial violence as a “conflict.” Although the Palestinian opposition is much larger than Hamas, and support for Hamas is limited among the Palestinian people, these discussions should not be relevant to our solidarity with Palestine against Israeli settler colonialism.

A second form of purity discourse, prevalent among more progressive circles is an expectation of political purity in the alliances formed by the geopolitical framework explained above. For example, in order to be in complete solidarity with Palestine at this moment, some Kurds might expect the Palestinian opposition to avoid alliances with Turkey. Similarly, large segments of progressives in the United States, such as the DSA International, distanced themselves from the revolution in Rojava and have remained mostly silent to Turkey’s ongoing genocide and femicide in the region due to the United States’ tactical military involvement in the region against the Islamic State.

In simplest terms, it is crucial to understand that the politics on the ground is messy given ongoing colonization and

the very lack of internationalist solidarity itself. The colonized have a right to self-defend, to survive by whatever means available to them. And when international solidarity is not available to stop the actions of colonizer states, the colonized have a right to procure the means of self-defense from whomever makes it available to them. Those who believe in anti-colonial internationalism need to stand with the colonized and not make blanket condemnations of the pragmatic relationships they need to form for survival.

Moreover, it is not the responsibility of the colonized, but of those groups and organizations in relatively more privileged positions, to look for ways to procure and sustain the means of self-defense that would afford the colonized other options than sitting at the devil's table. An internationalism from the ground requires that we study the material context deeply to understand the relationship of coloniality and oppression, and that we side with the colonized and the oppressed irrespective of the purity of their actions and the political alliances they form to survive. All the while, we can develop actual internationalist alliances from the ground so that our movements can sustain each other and we can break free of relationships with and dependencies on oppressive states.

Kurds and Palestinians in this particular context have suffered various forms of colonial violence at the hands of Turkey and Israel respectively, and it is our alliance, together with all the other colonized and oppressed populations of the Middle East and beyond, that can bring justice and peace. From learning to self-defend together, to invaluable moments of solidarity, such as [Leyla Halid's](#) visit to [Leyla Güven](#), a hunger-striking Kurdish political activist kept hostage in Turkish colonial prisons, our history is full of lessons in solidarity against the same global system of capitalist and colonialist oppression. At this moment when Rojava and Palestine are going through ethnic cleansing, it is

more urgent than ever to find a principled anti-colonial internationalism from the ground.

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original article

Fight the Racist Campaign Against Palestine Solidarity by Heckle Editors

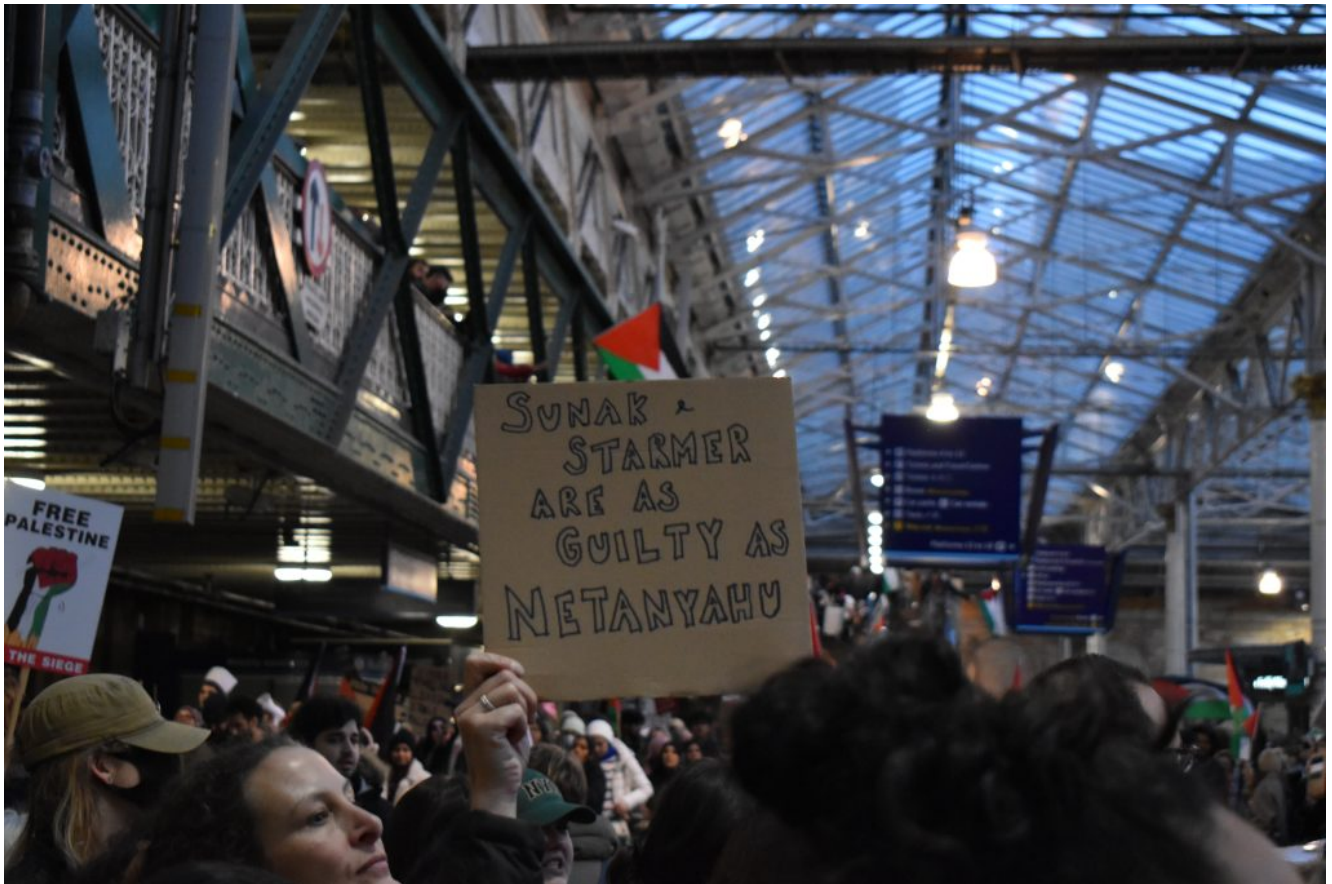
Suella Braverman's smearing of the huge and diverse Palestine solidarity movement as "hate marchers" bringing violence to the streets of cities like London and Edinburgh is not merely, as some have suggested, a provocative preamble to her future Conservative leadership campaign – it is yet another example of a wider turn to authoritarianism in the UK and other European states in order to forcibly suppress democratic and progressive challenges from below.

It is significant and welcome that those organising marches and rallies for Palestine in towns and cities north and south of the border have so far refused to be cowed. They have

maintained their determination not only in defiance of the Westminster government and virtually all of the mainstream media, but also frivolous arrests and violent threats from police and far-right networks.

The sheer size of these demonstrations over the past month, across these islands, Europe and the world, has already succeeded in greatly amplifying the voice of the occupied and blockaded Palestinian people and robbing the extremist Israeli government of the moral authority it claims in its military campaign against Gaza. We should recognise this enormous achievement.

Still, it is clear that these massive mobilisations alone will not be enough to stop the bombs falling on Gaza and the tanks rolling in, much as millions taking to the streets just over two decades ago could not stop the criminal Iraq War. This is why large parts of the renewed movement have embraced radical tactics including civil disobedience – as seen in train station occupations, university student walk-outs and trade union boycotts – as well as direct action targeting arms manufacturers and other institutions complicit in Israeli apartheid and genocide. These bold actions are justified and must continue. The Palestinian call for [boycott, divestment and sanctions](#) also remains extremely relevant (even if [regularly misrepresented](#)).



That this movement is so large, broad, increasingly militant and willing to break the law to prevent a greater injustice is a powerful combination. This is why there has been such a sharp state response from western governments who have, for 75 years, ranged from sponsors to allies of Israeli settler-colonialism for their own economic and geopolitical advantage. This is another expression of the same anti-democratic impulse which has seen, for example, the criminalisation of the climate justice movement. The blocking of a Scottish independence referendum by the UK Supreme Court is also, in fact, part of this campaign against popular sovereignty.

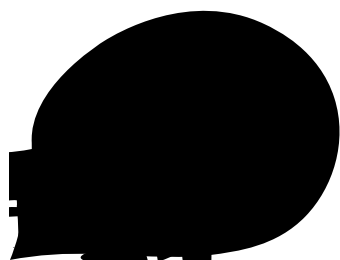
The suppression of Palestine solidarity, however, has a unique racialised character. Across Europe, ostensibly liberal and right-wing governments alike have smeared millions of Palestine supporters as 'Islamists' to justify harsh restrictions on immigration, weaponising citizenship against protesters. The UK is far from an outlier in this regard; a looming threat is a likely expansion of the [racist Prevent programme](#). Building strong community networks to protect our

neighbours from all forms of racism, including Islamophobia and antisemitism, will be a crucial challenge in coming months.

Overcoming all of these obstacles necessitates unity and bravery. We saw an extraordinary example of this last week when the Ukrainian left journal *Commons* published its [statement of solidarity](#) with Palestinians, rejecting those – including the Ukrainian government – who have counterposed solidarity between one of these peoples and the other. We will need many more principled initiatives like this, that forge links between all those asserting the power of people against the power of states, to eventually win a democratic, peaceful and free world.]

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**Republican
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Main photo: Edinburgh Gaza demo 11 November 2023, ecosocialist.scot, other photos and graphics, Heckle and Republican Socialist Platform

In solidarity with people's struggles against unbridled imperialism, for the liberation of the peoples and saving the environment

Statement by the International Committee of the [Fourth International](#) adopted on 25 October 2023

1. The contradictions of global capitalism continue to bring forth brutal wars and occupation. Threatened by economic and political crisis, capitalist governments, bearers of racist, patriarchal and imperial ideologies, construct external and internal enemies, provoking wars and continuing oppression. Such conflicts are part of the global logic of neo-liberal capitalism, the logic of intense economic and political competition, of widening inequalities and of the chaos it brings at every level. The wars we are facing are linked to the global crisis of capitalism and the resulting headlong rush into conflict between rival imperialist powers.

2. Since 24 February 2022, with the full-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine, aiming at the total subjugation of Ukraine, Russian imperialism led by Putin has passed a qualitative milestone in its war against the peoples, against all those who oppose its authoritarian and “Great-Russian” colonial project. Through their resistance, the Ukrainian people succeeded in containing the invasion, but Putin’s war means a prolonged war, bringing death, the destruction of towns and infrastructures, the displacement of populations, ecocide and crimes of all kinds by the invading army.

3. The Israeli state has transformed Gaza into a new and massive ghetto. Since 8 October 2023, using the attacks by Hamas as a pretext, the Israeli state has been raining down fire on the Gaza Strip while totally cutting off the Palestinians living there from outside resources, and increasing violence in the West Bank as well. Israeli colonialism, today led by Netanyahu and his extreme right-wing coalition, has reached a new qualitative stage in its project aimed at annihilating and expelling the Palestinian people from their territory. This project is at the heart of Israeli colonialism, it is a project of extreme violence that is actively supported by the governments of the United States and the European Union.

4. The new assault by the Israeli state on the Palestinian people has called forth protest in large parts of the world. Western powers and large parts of mainstream media call the new Israeli assault a “war against terrorism” and a response to the attack by Hamas and its allies on 7 October. During this attack, which broke through the physical wall of colonial repression and surprised the army of occupation, Hamas also committed unacceptable murders of civilians. We resolutely reject such crimes as acts that are contrary to our emancipatory project. But unlike those who use “double standards”, we, like the Israeli left, can see how such violence comes from a context of extreme oppression.

5. The Russian invasion of Ukraine and the Israeli occupation of Palestine are different in many respects, but in both cases the Fourth International is guided by the principle of support for the right to self-determination of peoples. We reject any form of campism that favours one imperialist power over another or that would reduce revolutionary politics to geopolitical calculations. Instead, we base ourselves on solidarity with the peoples and their struggles, even if today the people are led by bourgeois and/or reactionary forces. The ruling classes refuse to recognize the right of peoples to self-determination and attempt to repress any resistance. But this repression is facing determined resistance. We support the struggle of the Ukrainian people and that of the Russian and Belarusian opposition to defeat Putin's criminal regime and obtain the withdrawal of Russian troops as the only way to achieve a just and lasting peace. Equally, we support the resistance of the Palestinian people and recognize that only the end of Israeli colonialism can bring an end to the violence.

6. Situations of war are developing in different parts of the world where oppressive powers deny the rights of peoples and national minorities. For example, the recent military offensive by the Azerbaijani regime resulted in the expulsion of more than 100,000 Armenians from Nagorno-Karabakh. This offensive was carried out in collaboration with Erdogan's Turkish regime, which continues to wage a war of its own against the Kurds in Turkey and Syria while constantly muzzling any progressive opposition in Turkey. Elsewhere, Kashmir continues to be the victim of colonial oppression by India and Pakistan. Saudi Arabia has waged an atrocious war in Yemen over the last few years, with the support of Western arms, French arms in particular.

7. In cynical fashion, the regimes of Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Iran and others pretend to be friends of the Palestinian people. They attempt to instrumentalize the global

sympathy for the Palestinian cause to legitimize their own repressive regimes while refusing to give real meaningful support to the self-determination of the Palestinian people. Equally hypocritical are the Western governments that mouth noble rhetoric about democracy and self-determination in regard to Ukraine but simultaneously persist in their cooperation with and support for Israeli colonialism, ignoring all its violations of international law. Meanwhile, the Chinese government claims leadership over “the global south” while supporting oppressive regimes such as the murderous dictatorship in Myanmar.

8. US imperialism, still the leading imperialism in the world, has seized on the Russian war against Ukraine as an opportunity to strengthen itself. Part of this is its attempt instrumentalize Ukraine in its inter-imperialist rivalry with Russia. NATO has used the opportunity to enlarge itself and NATO member-states are using the Russian invasion as a pretext for massive increases of their military budgets. We demand the immediate dissolution of NATO and CSTO. Such military blocs of imperialist states are the enemies of social and national emancipation.

9. The French state has waged its own so-called “war against terrorism” in the African Sahel, a war which has not solved any problems. This French war has provoked an anti-imperialist response among the peoples of Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger, a response which has been used by military adventurers to seize power through coups d'état that offer no prospect of a progressive alternative. In Sudan, the military putschists are waging a war against their own peoples who are challenging their power.

10. This world of militarism and wars, of the use of weapons banned by international conventions, of the denial of fundamental rights, particularly those of women, and massacres of civilians; this world of refugees pushed around the global and dominant classes refusing to tackle the climate crisis,

this world seems to be losing all sense. Sadly, this is not new: previous decades have seen wars in Iraq, Afghanistan, Chechnya, Syria and elsewhere. But the situation seems even more difficult today: a catastrophic logic of a “clash of civilizations” is being implemented by both so-called “Western” governments as well as those of Putin and Xi Jiping. This logic provides a stepping stone for the racist and sexist far-right, which is on the rise everywhere. At a time when the climate emergency has us by the throat, precious resources are squandered in wars of aggression and occupation.

11. And yet we are witnessing a massive worldwide aspiration for dignity and the defence of basic rights, for democratic, social and environmental justice, and for protecting the environment. People’s movements against imperialist and colonial domination, feminist movements, movements for LGBTIQ and minority rights, environmental movements, movements for social rights. In the face of current wars, we urgently need to take the offensive again through mass movements. Peace can only be just and lasting if it puts an end to oppression, occupation and militarism. This means rejecting any logic of sharing zones of influence between military blocs, neither NATO nor CSTO! Peace can only be just and lasting if it is anti-imperialist; if it is democratic, respects the rights of all and allocates the means necessary for ecological solutions. What is urgently needed is the mobilization of all energies, intelligence and means on a global scale. We need an ecosocialist transition to satisfy the fundamental needs of people everywhere!

12. In the face of the barbarity of war, we need to mobilize in concrete solidarity from below, with peoples fighting for their rights, in complete independence from governments, global or regional powers and reactionary political forces. We insist on the universality of principles such as the right of self-determination and the right to resist, whether in Ukraine, in Palestine or elsewhere. We support resistance

against oligarchs and capitalists wherever they operate and have no illusions in reactionary and right-wing leaderships. We support the fight against the ultra-liberal agenda of the Zelensky government, and against its alignment with US imperialism. We condemn the reactionary world-view of Hamas and reject its criminal tactics. We do not forget how the repression of progressive forces favoured religious fundamentalist forces such as Hamas.

13. Today we must do everything we can to mobilize a massive worldwide movement in solidarity with the Palestinian people, together with their allies in Israel. The Palestinian people are isolated and occupied. They stand alone, with almost no material support from outside. This makes our solidarity all the more necessary. We must prevent the expulsion of people, the “ethnic cleansing” of the Palestinian people by the Israeli state and a second “Nakba”, we demand an immediate end to the bombing and blockade in Gaza, a ceasefire, and humanitarian aid. We demand the release of prisoners on all sides. We stand in solidarity with Palestinian civil society and support its call to strengthen the Boycott Disinvestment Sanctions (BDS) movement.

14. Our goal is a political solution that puts an end to colonization and guarantees the right of return of those expelled and equal rights of people of all origins on the land. Mobilizations in solidarity with Palestine are facing major obstacles such as rhetoric aimed at isolating the mobilizations and the forces building them, and in other countries the physical repression of demonstrations and other expressions of solidarity. Despite such repression, the Palestine solidarity movement continues and, by overcoming such obstacles, the movements also fight for democracy in their own countries.

15. We know that Hamas or other religious fundamentalist forces will not be allies in the search for a progressive Palestinian solution. The idea that the Palestinian people can

achieve their national emancipation through a military defeat of the Israeli state, a state with overwhelming military superiority, is an illusion. In a Middle Eastern context of a mosaic of peoples and minorities, peace is possible only through the democratic emancipation of all.

The solution to the current worldwide crises can only come through mass international mobilization of the working people against imperialist occupation, for the right of peoples to self-determination, against the restriction of democratic freedoms, and for concrete solidarity, including humanitarian solidarity.

It is the role of the organizations of the workers' movement and and popular movements to mobilize a broad section of the working class and the oppressed to contribute to these internationalist mobilizations, build concrete links with organizations of the oppressed and change the global balance of power.

End the Israeli attacks against the Palestinian people, ceasefire now!

Russian troops out of Ukraine!

Dissolve NATO and CSTO!

Against all forms of imperialism, international solidarity!

Originally published at
<https://fourth.international/en/510/asia/548>

Photo: Demonstration in Liège (Belgium). © Fourth International

Turkey is trying to bomb Rojava out of existence

Sarah Glynn of Scottish Solidarity with Kurdistan writes for Bella Caledonia

'Turkey even announced their intention to commit their latest war crime in advance. On Wednesday, the Turkish Foreign Minister, Hakan Fidan, declared that all the region's infrastructure was a legitimate target. According to international law, essential infrastructure is never a legitimate target.' Sarah Glynn reports for Bella on the unfolding campaign to destroy the Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria.

That little click. I check WhatsApp. 'Just now drone attacks next to my house – was bloody scary'. Only two hours earlier my friend had been sending me photographs of his village near Kobanê. Now Turkey's latest assault had caught up with him too.

Since Thursday morning, Turkey has accelerated their campaign to destroy the Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria. This is the region that combines predominantly-Kurdish Rojava and the adjacent majority-Arab lands that Kurdish forces liberated from ISIS. It covers around about 30% of Syria and provides home to some five million people. Thwarted, by the United States and Russia, from carrying out another invasion, Turkey is attempting to destroy the Autonomous Administration by making the life of its people impossible.

Constructing and running a new society is slow and difficult work, especially when your land has been ravaged by ISIS and your neighbours blockade your borders. But destroying a society's security and means of subsistence is simple. Bomb

the power stations and substations so millions are left without electricity and there is no power for hospitals, for water pumps, for bakeries, and for the myriad other things that we take for granted. Bomb the gas bottling plant that everyone relies on for the fuel to cook their food and to heat their homes in the winter. Bomb the oil fields that not only provide vital fuel but are also the main source of revenue to support the services of daily life. Bomb grain silos, just filled with this year's harvest. Bomb factories to decimate an economy already struggling to get off its feet. Bomb hospitals and homes so people know that nowhere and no one is safe. Turkey is doing all of these things.



Qamishlo residents queue to donate blood for the wounded

A pre-announced war crime

This is illegal, of course, under international law. Targeting

civilians and civilian infrastructure is regarded as a war crime. But Turkey has been committing war crimes for a long time without any comeback. International opprobrium depends on who you are and your political leverage, not on what you do. Turkey bombed the region's vital infrastructure a year ago too, though not as thoroughly as now. Since the beginning of 2021, they have cut the flow of water in the Euphrates, and, since their 2019 invasion, their mercenaries have repeatedly shut down the pumping station that supplies water to Hasaka. They have performed targeted assassinations of key Administration figures, and shelled villages to drive away their inhabitants. They have committed the biggest war crime of all in carrying out unprovoked invasions, and they have empowered and supported groups that have performed the most gratuitous and brutal atrocities.

Turkey even announced their intention to commit their latest war crime in advance. On Wednesday, the Turkish Foreign Minister, Hakan Fidan, declared that all the region's infrastructure was a legitimate target. According to international law, essential infrastructure is never a legitimate target.



Covid hospital, Derik

A convenient pretext

So, what was Turkey's excuse and what was their reason? Two different questions with different answers.

If you were to believe Fidan, this is a legitimate response to the action last Sunday by two members of the PKK, who carried out a suicide attack on the entrance to the police headquarters attached to the Interior Ministry in Ankara, wounding two policemen. Fidan claims, on behalf of the Turkish Government, that the PKK men came through North and East Syria, and that there is no distinction between the PKK and the Peoples Defence Units (YPG), the Syrian Kurdish forces that are now part of the Syrian Democratic Forces, or SDF. Turkey's attack is thus presented as pre-emptive defence in the fight against terrorism, for which, as the United States

has demonstrated, almost anything is permissible. Fidan actually referred to 'YPG infrastructure' as though the armed forces and civilian society were one and the same.

Every step of Fidan's argument is problematic. The Turkish Government has produced no evidence that the men came through Syria, and their presence there has been denied by both the SDF and the PKK. It is no secret that the Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria is inspired by the ideas of PKK leader, Abdullah Öcalan, and the YPG includes fighters who have previously fought for the PKK – including the man who now commands the SDF – but the YPG and PKK are separate organisations. The YPG operates inside Syria and has never threatened Turkey. Turkey likes to quote article 51 of the UN charter, which describes the right to self-defence. There has been extensive debate over whether this includes pre-emptive action, but even where this is deemed acceptable, [customary law demands](#) that for an action to be regarded as self-defence, it must be necessary, without other alternatives, and proportional. Turkey's pulverisation of North and East Syria does not pass this test, and is very far from proportional.

A useful pretext

It is clear that Turkey has been looking for an excuse for this aggression, and that if the PKK had not attacked, they would have used something else – or even created an incident themselves. Fidan is notorious for having been [caught on tape](#) in 2014 (when he was head of Turkey's National Intelligence Organisation) proposing a missile strike on Turkey to make up a case for war. [A year ago](#), Turkey justified similar, though less intensive, attacks on North and East Syria by blaming the YPG for a bomb attack in Istanbul that appears to have been linked to militant Islamists – certainly not the YPG or PKK. Turkey's aggression would still have happened sometime without the PKK attack, and cannot be

blamed on the PKK – though some will try and do so, which can only benefit Turkey.

The PKK's attack has also been used to justify the round-up and detention of around 250 largely-Kurdish activists within Turkey itself, including many members of the pro-Kurdish leftist Peoples' Democratic Party, the HDP. There is no reason to assume that any of them had anything to do with the attack. This is simply a bigger version of what has been happening every week, when Kurdish activists are detained for absurd and petty reasons under Turkey's endlessly elastic terrorism act.

Turkey's war on the Kurds

And what of the real reasons behind Turkey's violence? The answer to this question begins 100 years ago when ethnic nationalism was made a doctrine of the new Turkish republic. Kurds were expected to turn themselves into Turks and forget about their own culture, which was harshly suppressed, and generations of Turks have been indoctrinated with anti-Kurdish rhetoric. For four decades now, the PKK, led by Abdullah Öcalan, has fought a war against the Turkish state. They succeeded in replacing the Kurds' internalised oppression with a proud Kurdish consciousness, but not in winning external freedom. Many times during this period, the PKK has declared a unilateral ceasefire and attempted to negotiate a peace settlement, and sometimes there have been talks, but the Turkish authorities have not proved ready to allow the Kurds a dignified existence. Since the 1990s, there have also been pro-Kurdish political parties in the Turkish parliament, but their MPs and activists face harassment and imprisonment, while [successive parties have been banned and closed down](#). The most recent peace talks took place between 2013 and 2015, when there was a real sense of hope in the air. But President Erdoğan saw that this was winning support for the HDP rather than for himself and his party, and that, at the same time, Kurds across the border were beating back ISIS and

strengthening their autonomous control over northern Syria. He repudiated the initial agreement in order to pursue a military 'solution' to the Kurdish Question, which he has been doing with increasing vengeance. A century of ethnic nationalism has made Kurd bashing a central plank of Turkish populism, and the hopes raised by the main opposition party for a gentler politics did not even last into the second round of the presidential election. Rallying against the Kurds has become a substitute for addressing Turkey's severe economic and social problems.

Erdoğan has always viewed the existence of an autonomous region in Kurdish Syria as a threat, and he will not rest until it is eliminated. It has never been a physical threat, but does indeed pose a political threat to the status quo by providing an example of a multicultural feminist democracy inspired by Öcalan's ideas. While ostensibly supporting the coalition against ISIS, Turkey has given ISIS assistance – not least in enabling the passage of thousands of foreign fighters – in the hope that they will put an end to regional, and especially Kurdish, autonomy. And Turkey has twice invaded the region with the help of brutal Islamist militias, to whom they have given control over the occupied lands. Despite US and Russian negotiated ceasefires, Turkey has not stopped their low-level war of attrition against the Autonomous Administration, and if the US and Russia had not refused to move out of the way, Turkey would have carried out another land invasion.

Russia is in Syria to support the Syrian Government in the civil war. They don't want to see more land occupied by Turkey, but are happy for Turkey to weaken the Autonomous Administration, which they want to force back under President Assad's centralised control. America initially intervened in Syria by supporting opposition groups who they hoped would bring about regime change – the same violent groups that are still supported by Turkey. But when these proved unreliable

partners, and when ISIS threatened to create a centre of anti-Western violence, the US moved to support the YPG (and women's YPJ) which was the only force providing effective resistance to ISIS.

America has always supported the Turkish Government against the PKK, but American troops are now also in a military partnership with the SDF (which includes the YPG). Turkey is determined to break that partnership and to persuade America that the YPG and PKK are one and the same, which is another reason for them insisting that the PKK men came from Syria.

However, that US-SDF partnership is limited to the fight against ISIS, which still retains many sleeper cells. America will not help the SDF defend themselves against Turkey, which is a NATO 'ally'. Nor will they allow them the anti-aircraft weapons they need to defend themselves, even though the insecurity created by Turkey's attacks is a gift to ISIS recruiters.

Last week, for the first time, the US brought down a Turkish drone. Of course, that particular drone was seen as threatening an American base, and the incident was followed by top-level phone diplomacy between the US and Turkey. This sent a message that the US was not going to move out of the way, as Turkey had demanded, but all Turkey's other drones and military aircraft were left free to destroy the life and lives of the people of North and East Syria. There have been protests against lack of action by the US, which is supposed to be a guarantor of Turkey's ceasefire.

Neo-Ottoman dreams

Erdoğan feels no need to hide his plans. Shortly before Turkey's 2019 invasion, he held up a map of Syria at the United Nations General Assembly that showed a 30km deep strip all along the Turkish border, over which Turkey demanded control. This strip included the main Kurdish areas as well

as some of Syria's most fertile land. Erdoğan called it a 'safe zone', claiming it was necessary to prevent the YPG from attacking across the border. In fact, the YPG has never shown any intention of attacking Turkey, and the areas Turkey captured in 2019 have become some of the most dangerous places on earth. Kurds and other minorities have learnt to flee rather than try and survive under Turkish occupation. In a deliberate policy of demographic change, they have been replaced by families of Islamist militias and by refugees from other parts of Syria forcibly deported from Turkey.

When Turkey's modern borders were agreed in the Treaty of Lausanne, 100 years ago this year, the Turkish delegation based their negotiations on a document entitled the National Pact, drawn up in 1919-20, which claimed for Turkey all those areas with an 'Ottoman Moslem majority'. This included the predominantly Kurdish regions that the treaty subsequently awarded to Iraq and Syria. There was no separate Kurdish delegation at the Lausanne negotiations, and it was only after the Turkish republic was founded that its leaders [made horribly clear](#) that this was solely a Turkish project and not a joint Turkish-Kurdish one. For Erdoğan, the National Pact is still on the table, and his irredentist dreams for the 'Turkish Century' also inform his desire to control the belt of land south of the Turkish border.



Electricity station, Qamishlo

A future in ruins

After three days of bombardment with drones and warplanes, accompanied by intense shelling of border areas, the devastation Turkey has caused is cataclysmic. Places that have been working hard to recover from the damage caused by ISIS have seen all their hard work destroyed and more. Rebuilding will be difficult and slow, and always under the shadow of a possible repeat attack. The damage to the Suwayda gas plant alone has been estimated at over \$50 million, and essential parts are difficult to get under boycott.

There have been at least seventeen people killed and many others wounded, and the psychological toll of these never-ending attacks is impossible to measure.

The determination and resistance that defeated ISIS remains

strong, but if the administration is prevented from being able to meet people's basic needs, dissatisfaction may grow among those less committed to their democratic and feminist project, especially in more tribal areas such as Deir ez-Zor. This is, of course, part of Turkey's plan.

When I spoke to my friend in Kobanê on Sunday morning all was quiet. Unlike in Qamishlo, they still had power, though only in late afternoon and evening as water levels have become so low that the turbines can't function fully. People in Kobanê have become used to drone attacks. Their biggest fear is another invasion and being displaced again, as at the time of ISIS. No one can start new projects: they can't even plan for the next day. There is a sense that the future is out of their hands, and only God will protect them.

As I finish writing this on Sunday night, Turkey's bombardment continues along the whole border region, and calls are going out from the hospitals for people to donate blood for the wounded.

[Sarah Glynn](#)

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Main image: Kobane Friday 6 October 2023



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On Hamas's October Counter-Offensive

Gilbert Achcar

The counter-offensive launched by Hamas against Israel on 7 October 2023, a day after the 50th anniversary of another Arab surprise attack on Israel—the October 1973 War, is a much more spectacular feat than the latter. Whereas fifty years ago, the two Arab states of Egypt and Syria launched a conventional war to attempt to recover the territories that Israel had seized from them six years earlier in the June 1967 War, the new counter-offensive launched by Hamas evokes the boldness of the biblical David in his fight against the giant Goliath. Combining rudimentary air, sea, and land means—the equivalent of David's sling—Hamas's fighters executed an amazing and highly daring offensive all along the border zone between the Gaza strip and the Israeli state.

In the same way as Israel's arrogant self-confidence in the face of its Arab neighbours was shattered in 1973, the

security and impunity that it has been taking for granted in dealing with the Palestinian people and combatting Palestinian guerrillas have been severely and irreversibly impaired. From that angle, Hamas's October counter-offensive is to the Israeli population and state a powerful reminder of their vulnerability and of the fact that there can be no security without peace and no peace without justice.

Whatever one may think of Hamas's decision to launch such a massive operation against the Israeli state, thus inevitably unleashing the Israeli government's massive murderous retaliation and inciting it to attempt to wipe off Hamas and its allies from the Gaza Strip at a huge cost for civilians, the fact remains that this counter-offensive has already and undoubtedly dealt a heavy blow to the unbearable haughtiness of the Israeli racist far-right government and their belief that Israel could ever reach a "normal" state of coexistence with its regional environment while persecuting the Palestinian people and inflicting upon them a protracted Nakba of territorial dispossession, ethnic cleansing and apartheid.

No less unbearable is the precipitation with which Western governments (and a Ukrainian government that ought to know better about the legitimate fight against foreign occupation) have expressed their solidarity with Israel, very much in contrast with their muted reactions to Israel's brutal onslaughts on the Palestinian population. The Israeli flag was projected on Berlin's Brandenburg Gate on the evening of 7 October in a contemptible display of fawning over the state of Israel, the usual hallmark of German misoriented redemption-seeking for Nazi crimes against European Jews by endorsing Israel's crimes against the Palestinians. This becomes even worse at a time when Israel's government is composed of the whole gamut of Jewish far-right forces, including people whom a prominent Israeli Holocaust historian did not hesitate to aptly [describe in Haaretz as neo-Nazis](#)!

No less contemptible are the attempts at "analysing" Hamas's

offensive as an Iranian plot to derail the ongoing US-fostered rapprochement between the Saudi kingdom and the Israeli state. Even if it were true that Tehran wishes to derail that rapprochement instead of using it to enhance its own claim of monopoly over anti-Zionism, a very disputable hypothesis indeed, this denial of Palestinian agency by way of conspiracy theory is the exact equivalent of every oppressive government's reaction to popular revolt. It postulates that there are no sufficient grounds for the oppressed people to revolt against their oppression and that any such move is necessarily inspired by the invisible hand of some foreign government.

Anyone familiar with what the Palestinian people has been enduring for decades, and aware of the kind of open air prison that the Gaza Strip has become, ever since it was occupied in 1967 and then evacuated by Israeli troops in 2005—an open air prison that is periodically the target of a murderous Israeli “turkey shoot”—can easily understand that the only reason why such quasi-desperate act of bravery as Hamas's latest operation does not actually happen more frequently is the huge military disproportion between the Palestinian David and the Israeli Goliath. Gaza's latest counter-offensive brings indeed to mind the 1943 [Warsaw Ghetto Uprising](#).

There can be no doubt that this new chapter will end with a terrible cost for the Palestinians in general, the Gazans in particular, and Hamas specifically—much higher than the cost endured by the Israelis, as has unfailingly been the case in every round of fighting between Israel and the Palestinians. And whereas it is not difficult to understand the “enough-is-enough” logic behind Hamas's counter-offensive, it is much more doubtful that it will help advance the Palestinian cause beyond the blow to Israel's self-confidence mentioned above. This would have been achieved at a hugely disproportionate cost for the Palestinians.

The very idea that such an operation, however spectacular it

was, could achieve “victory” can only stem from the religious type of magical thinking that is characteristic of a fundamentalist movement like Hamas. The distribution by its information service of a video showing the movement’s leadership praying to thank God on the morning of 7 October is a good illustration of this thinking. Unfortunately, no magic can alter the fact of Israel’s massive military superiority: the result of Israel’s new ongoing war against Gaza is certainly going to be devastating.

The 9/11 attacks on New York and Washington dealt the United States’ arrogance a spectacular blow. Eventually, they tremendously enhanced George W. Bush’s popularity and enabled him to launch 18 months later the occupation of Iraq that he ambitioned. Likewise, Hamas’s October counter-offensive has already succeeded in reunifying a previously deeply divided Israeli society and polity, and it will allow Benjamin Netanyahu to implement his wildest plans to inflict massive terror on the Palestinians to precipitate their forced displacement.

On the other hand, if Hamas’s leadership had been betting on Lebanon’s Hezbollah—and Iran behind it—to join the war at a level that would really put Israel in jeopardy, this bet would be very risky indeed. For not only it is far from certain that Hezbollah would take the high risk of massively entering a new war with Israel, but such a situation, if it were to happen, would inevitably bring Israel to resort unrestrainedly to its massive destructive power (which includes nuclear weapons), thus bringing about a catastrophe of historic magnitude.

Against an oppressor that is far superior in military means, the only truly efficient way of struggle for the Palestinian people is by choosing the terrain on which they can circumvent that superiority. The peak in Palestinian’s struggle effectiveness was reached in the year 1988 during the First Intifada, in which the Palestinians deliberately avoided the use of violent means. This led to a deep moral crisis in

Israel's society and polity, including its armed forces, and was a key factor in leading the Israeli Rabin-Peres leadership to negotiate the 1993 Oslo Accords with Yasir Arafat—however flawed these accords were, due to the Palestinian leader's indulging in wishful thinking.

The Palestinian struggle must rely primarily on mass political action against Israel's oppression, occupation, and settler-colonial expansion. The new underground armed resistance organised by young Palestinians in Jenin or Nablus can be an efficient adjuvant to the people's mass movement, provided it is predicated on the latter's priority and conceived in such a way as to incentivise it. The regional support that the Palestinian people should rely upon is not that of tyrannical governments like that of Iran, but that of the peoples fighting against these oppressive regimes. Herein lies the true potential prospect for Palestinian liberation, which needs to be combined with the emancipation of Israeli society itself from the logic of Zionism that has inexorably produced its polity's ever-expanding drift to the far right.

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About Gilbert Achcar

Gilbert Achcar grew up in Lebanon. He is currently Professor of Development Studies and International Relations at the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) in London. His most recent books are *The New Cold War: The US, Russia and China – From Kosovo to Ukraine* (2023), *Morbid Symptoms: Relapse in the Arab Uprising* (2016) and *The People Want: A Radical Exploration of the Arab Uprising* (2013). Other books include *The Clash of Barbarisms* (2nd expanded edition 2006); dialogues with Noam Chomsky on the Middle East in *Perilous Power: The Middle East and U.S. Foreign Policy* (2nd edition 2008); and *The Arabs and the Holocaust: The Arab-Israeli War of Narratives* (2010). He is a member of Anti*Capitalist

The UK's suicidal Rosebank decision – Scotland needs a stronger response

Rishi Sunak's scandalous decision to go ahead with the exploitation of the Rosebank oil and gas field, alongside Keir Starmer's cringe-worthy non-response – 'yes, we're opposed but no, we won't do anything about it' – has left the Scottish government and the SNP with an open goal. Unfortunately, Humza Yousaf and his Net Zero and Just Transition minister, Mairi McAllan, are being so careful not to blast the ball over the bar, they seem reluctant to kick it at all.

The desire seems to be there, sort of. After weeks of edging himself off the fence on the issue, the First Minister did say this was the wrong decision. Mairi McAllan said the same. The Scottish government's Energy Secretary, Neil Gray, said, rather tamely, that the SNP administration was "disappointed" while pointing out, correctly, that Rosebank would not contribute to 'energy security', as most of the oil produced would be sold abroad. In fact, Equinor, the Norwegian state oil company that has been given the go-ahead to exploit Rosebank, was more forceful in its dismissal of the bogus argument about energy security used by the Tory government in London and the oil lobby in Scotland. It said if the UK wanted any of the oil it plans to extract from Rosebank, it would have to buy it on the open world market.

The sound of opposition from SNP ministers is a lot weaker than that coming from Caroline Lucas, still the only Green MP

in Westminster, who called it “morally obscene” and “a climate crime”, or from the Scottish Green Party, the SNP’s partner in the Scottish government, whose spokesman, Mark Ruskell, called it an “utter catastrophe” that showed “total contempt for our environment and future generations”.

The day after the announcement, Mairi McAllan told the BBC’s Good Morning Scotland that the Scottish government had had “long-standing concerns” about Rosebank and had been “calling for a very strict climate compatibility test, an evidence-led test, to be applied”. When quizzed on what evidence was needed, she said there were a series of things that needed to be evaluated: firstly, whether it was in line with both Scotland and the UK’s climate commitments, including to the Paris Agreement and its goal of keeping global warming within 1.5 degrees Celsius; but also to things like energy security and the rights of workers in the northeast of Scotland.

We may agree these are vital concerns (although what exactly was meant by energy security could be controversial). However, insisting on them now seems pointless, unless it is just a rhetorical device to avoid saying clearly that no oil or gas should be extracted from Rosebank, or any other new field in the North Sea or elsewhere. We already know because we have been told, endlessly, by the scientists of the UN’s IPCC, by the International Energy Agency, and by Antonio Guterres himself, not to mention the climate justice movement across the world and thousands of representatives and experts from the Global South, that staying within the 1.5 limit is simply incompatible with any new oil or coal extraction, and that we also have to phase out, rapidly, the wells and mines that are currently operating.

Most recently and conclusively, we have also been told by the very oil company responsible (as we mentioned before) that Rosebank and any other new North Sea fossil fuel production will contribute more or less zero to any kind of energy security. And although there are many, justified fears among

workers in the northeast, oil workers themselves have told researchers that they want to be involved in a just transition away from fossil fuels. Some of them have begun to push for that themselves and to design what it might look like, through the important Our Power campaign.

The SNP government's problem is that it feels unable, or unwilling, to confront the oil lobbies or its right wing. It's unclear if the suspension of the right-wing, anti-Green, anti-woke MSP, Fergus Ewing, might signal a small shift in this respect. But the roots of such reluctance run deeper. They flow from the party's history and its character – as a nationalist party caught between its genuine, social democratic desire to build a fairer, more decent country, that seeks to combat poverty and exclusion at home and deal decently with migrants, the Global South and the planet, and its refusal to challenge or even query the iron laws of the market economy. The latter is cemented by its yearning to become a junior outpost of the supposedly progressive, European capitalist class.

This has been accentuated since the bruising leadership campaign at the beginning of the year, when Kate Forbes' explicitly right-wing, business-first, climate-light campaign came within a whisper of beating Humza Yousaf as bearer of the legacy of former First Minister, Nicola Sturgeon.

The police investigation into the party's accounts a few weeks later, with the formal questioning of Sturgeon's husband and then herself, drove the process further. Whatever the reality, if any, behind the case, it was certainly used to try to discredit the SNP as a whole and to push the new Yousaf administration to the right.

Ironically, the central target of that campaign, Nicola Sturgeon herself, has come out more strongly against the Rosebank go-ahead than her proteges. She tweeted her agreement with Caroline Lucas calling the approval an act of

environmental vandalism, and saying risks slowing the green transition that oil and gas workers need to happen at pace.

The fact is that a sizeable majority of people in Scotland want their government to take urgent action to combat climate change. And despite its constrained powers under devolution, there is a lot it can do too. Taking a clear, unequivocal stand against Rosebank and any other new fossil fuel projects in the North Sea would be a start. It would be one way of marking a clear difference with the pusillanimous position of Starmer's Labour leadership and might even help win the crucial Rutherglen election.

More strategically, that stance against any new oil and gas needs to be clearly stated in the Scottish government's long-overdue response to the public consultation on its seriously inadequate Draft Energy Strategy and Just Transition Plan, and built into its new Climate Change Plan, due to be published in November.

It should look at how it can use its existing powers – in areas like planning, transport, and health – to wage a guerrilla campaign against the implementation of new fossil fuel extraction.

And it could put in serious doubt the long-term viability of investments like those of Equinor, if it promised that any government of an independent Scotland would make a priority of nationalising and closing down Rosebank and any other new fields, without compensation.

Such bold action may seem unlikely, unless there is some serious pressure pushing in this direction.

We could all take courage from the historic success of the *Yes to Yasuni* campaign in Ecuador, led by environmentalists and the powerful Indigenous movement, which persuaded nearly 60% of the population to vote in August in favour of mandating their government to leave the oil in the soil beneath the

mega-diverse Amazonian rainforest.

Iain Bruce

28 September, 2023

Photo: Steve Eason