Fund drive for the Congress of the Fourth International

The Fourth International is organizing its world congress in February 2025. This will be an opportunity for around 200 delegates from all over the world to meet and exchange views.

We note that the world is particularly complicated to grasp at the moment, with the multiple crises that capitalism is experiencing, combining economic, social, political and ecological crises, the rise of the far right, and so on. Comparing the situations in different countries, as we are doing by exchanging texts and organizing discussions in all the countries before we meet for the congress, is extremely useful for better analysis and action.

To meet these challenges, we are discussing a new Manifesto for the Fourth International based on our ecosocialist orientation and outlining the world we want to build. We will also discuss the state of the world as it is around our international resolution with two specific focuses on Palestine and Ukraine, our activity in the social movements of the exoploited and oppressed where we build class struggle forces, and of course strengthening our own International.

Organizing a congress costs a lot of money, because we have to have a residential centre where the delegates are housed, a full team of interpreters and secretariat, and subsidize comrades from the Global South – from Asia, Africa, Latin America – for their transport tickets, which have become much more expensive since the covid pandemic.

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Trump’s Second Term – Now is the Time for a Global Fightback – Statement from Anti Capitalist Resistance

The following statement on the US Presidential Elections has been issued by the comrades of Anti*Capitalist Resistance and has been reproduced as a contribution to how we should respond to the Trump victory here in Scotland. For further information about Anti*Capitalist Resistance visit their website at https://anticapitalistresistance.org/

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Donald Trump won a second US presidency on 6 November 2024.

The Republican Party is now in almost total control of US establishment politics as they also made gains in the Senate, giving them control of the entire legislature, the presidency and the Supreme Court. It is a victory for the US Plutocrats and Oligarchs, Elon Musk, Jeff Bezos, the crypto-fanatics and west-coast Tech Bros. Trumpism is part of the global counter-revolutionary wave we see with far-right populists, authoritarians, semi-fascists and libertarians taking power in countries around the world. What we are seeing is a process of a general shift to the far-right caused by neoliberalism and the collapse in the post-war liberal consensus that it has brought about. Trumpism is the same trend that produced Modi in India, Duterte in the Philippines, Meloni in Italy and so on.

But this victory, in particular, is a disaster for billions around the planet. The power of US imperialism to act or not act is still a decisive factor in global politics.

A second Trump presidency will be as chaotic and vile as the first. Only now his key intellectual backers will be much clearer on what they want to get out of it. Project 2025 is a blueprint for an authoritarian USA; it includes the proposals to sack thousands of government employees and place the rest of the US government bureaucracy under central presidential control. Elimination of the Department of Education to allow state-level control of curricula. It involves Rolling back transgender healthcare and social rights, making trans existence almost untenable in some states. It means the elimination of federal protections for gender equality, sexual orientation and reproductive rights. It will almost certainly prevent abortion pills from being sent through the post, which is the number one way people get abortions in the USA. We will see the mainstreaming of “conversations” about disenfranchising women. It also involves slashing funding for renewable energy research and development, increasing energy production and scrapping targets for carbon reduction.

Whether Trump's promise to be a dictator on day one and use the military against political opponents was hot air for electioneering or not is unknown. But that he ran such a reactionary campaign and got such a decisive vote reveals something about the growth of far-right populist ideas. We know that both he and his Vice President JD Vance recently endorsed a book called *Unhumans*, a manifesto for the mass murder of left-wing activists along the lines of Pinochet in Chile. This reveals the fascist kernel of neoliberal politics, which has come full circle.

This defeat largely rests on the wretched politics and failed strategy of the Democrats. It is clear that the Democrats are not even a dented shield against the growth of the far right; they actively feed the problem. They were business as usual in a period of anxiety and division.

They ran a campaign against a populist who was appealing to 'the common people' by instead focusing on the virtue of the establishment – constantly repeating that Trump was a felon as if there are not millions of felons in the USA in a corrupt and unfair judicial system who might see in him a persecuted martyr. The Democrats' fixation on the law courts to undermine him before the election failed utterly and added to his populist credentials. They preferred a campaign from the centre, focusing on celebrity endorsement, winning over middle ground Republicans, and parading with Liz Cheney. They appealed to the belief that the US is a country of equal opportunity and post-racism when it palpably isn't.

Trump and his supporters see through this. They know it is a lie. They prefer bullish, macho posturing, might makes right, freedom from consequence. The Democrats focussed in the last few weeks on labelling Trump a fascist – the response from his supporters was either a shrug or to embrace the fact that he wound up the liberals so much. Trump is a cypher for all the most selfish and reactionary views in US society, but the Democrats were no alternative. His movement crystallised a

view of the USA that rejects equality and embraces domination. His movement is not foreign to the US body politics; it is rooted in it.

The global counter-revolutionary wave is largely a reaction to the gains of the post-war era – the advances made by women, Black people, the LGBTQIA+ community and others. Trump appealed especially to white people and young men, to Christian nationalist far right and tech bro supporters of Elon Musk. He also picked up votes from the Arab American community that turned on the Democrats for their funding of Israel's genocide in Gaza (although Trump will pursue the same policy). But he also drew support from a significant number of Black people (meaning people of colour) and women, those who reject the liberal establishment and want to resolve the contradictions of American society by embracing its supremacist values. Some of the US Black population also backs mass deportations of recently arrived immigrants if it drives down prices and improves wages (as Trump claims). That is the point of populism; it combines contradictions and appeals to different people in different ways while claiming to provide simple answers to complex questions and denying meaningful change.

There will be considerable contradictions in his populist programme. Trump promised a carbon fossil fuel bonanza to drive down energy bill costs and tackle inflation, but he also wants tariffs on imports to strengthen US industry, which will drive up prices. He seems unlikely to deliver better living standards and more jobs for US citizens, especially with massive public sector cuts. But we also have to be wary of assuming that people primarily vote on economic grounds – the modern political landscape is far more complicated and riven by ideological divisions rather than simple financial calculations.

His indication that he will withdraw support from Ukraine and 'end the war there' almost certainly means that Russia's

imperial annexation will be allowed to proceed. What this means for the broader region as Putin continues his expansionist project remains to be seen. Certainly, the emergence of a more multipolar world will propel us closer to a third world war at some stage. For the Palestinians, it also means more slaughter and defeat, Trump has been clear with Netanyahu that the far right leadership of Israel can “do whatever they need to do” to win.

The need for continued resistance goes without question. There will be many people feeling hopeless or full of despair right now, and that is exactly what the far right and fascists want. They take sadistic pleasure in the defeats they inflict on the ‘woke’ and on the left. But politics is determined by struggles for power and counter-power, building mass coalitions of resistance, identifying the weak points in the enemy’s side and mobilising forces to shatter their strength.

ACR is in total solidarity with those in the USA who reject this authoritarian turn and want to fight for a better world. We know the next few years will be difficult, but our movement has faced difficult times before. We know things will get worse before they get better. But we also know that we can argue for a world beyond capitalism, imperialism, and militarism, based on a society that provides for everyone and is sustainable with the environment. Runaway global warming is already with us, as is the worldwide strengthening of the far right; the two are linked. And politics does not end at the ballot box – that is another lie the Democrats relied on. Power comes from our organisation and resilience. We fight for a revolutionary change. Our role is to be part of the international fightback to change the world, to reclaim the future and build a better society for everyone!

Publishing a New Collection of Writings by Daniel Bensaïd

In 2009 the IIRE (1) published the collection *Strategies of Resistance + 'Who are the Trotskyists'*. In 2025, fifteen years after the passing of our comrade, we want to publish a new, significantly augmented edition, collecting essays on history, politics and strategy.
Donations can be made **here**.

'Who are the Trotskyists?' (2002) is a historical text on the evolution of the Trotskyist movement. Rather than strive for academic comprehensiveness, in this essay, partly informed by his personal experiences, Bensaïd puts forward what he considers the elements of continuing relevance in Trotskyism. 'Theses of Resistance' (2004) is an ambitious attempt to confront the theoretical challenges facing Marxism in the so-called 'postmodern' age. Written a few years later, 'Myths and Legends of Domination' (2008) critically engages with writers like Herbert Marcuse and Michel Foucault to interrogate the historical shift that took place with the victorious 'new spirit of the free-market counter-reform' since the seventies.
In these and other texts, Bensaïd puts forward an interpretation of Marxism as a thought without guarantees, one that refuses ideas of historical inevitability to instead focus on the decisive role of social struggles and political decisions. A red thread running through these essays is the dialectic between the identities that can form the beginning of resistance and universal emancipation as the revolutionary horizon of social struggle. Crackling with insight, erudition and wit, Bensaïd's writings are valuable legacy for revolutionaries. We need your help to pass it on.
To contribute to the costs of translation and production, the IIRE is raising 5000 euros. People who donated 60 euros or more will receive a book of the book once it is published. We are aiming for publication in autumn 2025.
Table of contents
included in original edition:
Who are the Trotskyists?

Theses of Resistance
The Mole and the Locomotive
Hegemony and United Front
Thirty Years After: A Critical Introduction the Marxism of Ernest Mandel
Stalinism and Bolshevism
New texts:
Stalinism against communism: on The Black Book of Communism
Myths and Legends of Domination
Marxism against Totalitarianism
What it means to be Marxist
Marxist notes on Jewish emancipation
A fragment on Fanon
Marx's Paris Turn
Commune, State and Revolution
The powers of communism
Donations can be made through the **crowdfunding appeal**. Please share the link to help us reach our goal!

Notes:
(1) The International Institute for Research and Education (IIRE) provides activists and scholars worldwide with opportunities for research and education in three locations: Amsterdam, Islamabad and Manila. Read more

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Documents of the Fourth International

Manifesto of Revolutionary Marxism in the Age of Capitalist Ecological and Social Destruction

International Situation; Social Movements; Role & Tasks; Minority Texts

Texts submitted for discussion at the 18th World Congress of the Fourth International by the International Committee of the Fourth International

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Fatal Flaws in UK-Mauritius "Joint Statement" on planned Treaty on Chagos

The "Joint Statement" that Pravind Jugnauth and Keir Starmer have concocted is obviously riddled with fatal flaws for Mauritius' future. It is dangerous on all the main issues: decolonization, closing the USA's military base, the elementary right to free movement over all the land and sea for all Mauritians including Chagossians, and thus the right to return for Chagossians. It is even a blow to Mauritian sovereignty, itself. So, the Treaty must be opposed. LALIT now puts the following issue on the agenda for the general elections: Full sovereignty to be exercised democratically over Chagos, and a date for base closure and clean-up! No to militarism! No to prolonged occupation or colonization!

In fact, taken as a whole, the 3 October Joint Statement is one big booby-trap for Mauritius. It prolongs colonization of the Republic of Mauritius, it denies the right to free movement by all Mauritians, it denies the free right of return, it prolongs military occupation and even puts base closure and thus peace outside of Mauritius' democratic control in our own land, it puts sovereignty up for bilateral negotiation outside the established norms of international law. So, it must be opposed. The victory of the historic ICJ judgment of 2019 would be shattered by such a Treaty. It is a

blatant move by the UK-USA imperialists to steal a good part of Mauritius.

Perfidious Albion is at it again. Doing America's dirty work. And another fawning Mauritian leader is at it again, too, this time as leader of an independent State, while being egged on, it seems, by the Modi Government. And we deplore the inability of the Mauritian opposition to oppose the military occupation head-on as the prolonged colonization it is.

The Exact Wording

The Agreement purports to be the result of bilateral negotiation, yet the two signatories make a point of stating in the document, that they also have "the full support and assistance of our close partners, the United States of America and the Republic of India." Now we know the real reason India's Foreign Minister Jaishankar was here in July for a lightning visit that seemed, at the time, to be for reasons vague and ephemeral. The real reason was obviously to get Mauritius to agree to this Joint Statement. India is presumably getting its share in terms of American arms sales, use of Diego Garcia base for its navy, and cover for its secret Agalega base.

It is pitiful when big empires begin to collapse. Their moral core rots publicly. Every decision they take is the wrong one. Let us explain. The USA and UK are supposedly the closest geopolitical allies in the world. Yet circumstances pit them against each other over Diego. The UK-USA were so isolated at the UN General assembly that they only got three countries to vote with them, once Maldives withdrew its vote: Israel, Hungary and Australia's previous right-wing government.

At the same time, Britain and the USA sound either half-witted or mad when they stand up and shriek in support of Ukraine's right not to be occupied by Russia. The exposure of the USA's genocide alongside Israel against the militarily occupied

Palestine is also a source of mutual blaming – especially when at the ICJ the very same issues are cross-referenced in the Mauritius' case against the UK for its colonization and military occupation and the Palestinian case (put in by Nicaragua) against Israel for the very same thing. So, the UK is in a corner, and the USA can't get it out of the corner. And they have difficulty coming to any consensus.

And, even on what seem small things, they fall out. Yes, the USA recently went ahead and denied a British judge access to Diego Garcia when she had to be there to judge a British Indian Ocean Territories (BIOT) Supreme Court case about 64 refugees being held illegally there. So, the UK state was cornered on this human rights issue that exposed its continued colonization and military occupation of Mauritius. Now, "Great" Britain's judiciary does not take kindly to this kind of thing. It is not up to Royal standards of a United "Kingdom", so to speak. So, the "special relationship" starts to fall apart. The UK Brexit vote was thoroughly tampered with by the USA's right-wing politicians like Trump's advisor Steve Bannon, and so US interference and Brexit have bankrupted the UK. As it is, the UK, like the rest of Europe, is suffering from a refugee crisis provoked by the USA. It is American wars that cause people to flee from bombed out societies and ruined infrastructure in Iraq, Afghanistan, Syria and also from Libya where nearly 2 million non-Libyan Africans worked. And this has led to a political crisis, in the UK. This crisis caused the Conservative Government to set up a far-fetched and illegal scheme in Rwanda to "out-source" the UK's refugee problem to another country.

The UK and USA rightly anticipated there would be a huge immigration crisis around the BIOT and the military base on Diego – just as there is on Lampedusa in Sicily and on Spain's Canary Islands, and in particular when the USA is busy sparking war against China via Taiwan. The 64 Sri Lankans were merely the early-warning signal of a "flood", to use the

right-wing language, of refugees. So, in reality the American base is threatened not by China or Russia, as the UK and USA pretend it is, but by 64 poor Sri Lankans, some of them children, shipwrecked there. It shows how every bit of protest against the imperialists, when their empires start to topple, counts. And it also shows what the UK-USA empire has come to. The Rwanda scheme – already billed to cost British VAT-payers some 4 billion pounds – was shut down by the new Labour Government for being against international law. But, the UK judiciary still had to deal with the 64 Sri Lankans without transferring them to Britain. This became the last straw.

So, dire circumstances lead to dire actions, like the UK trying to both "give" (to quote the international press) and "keep" its sovereignty over the place the USA, in fact, controls! It is this confusion that has produced this flawed "Joint Statement".

Here are the flaws of the Joint Statement, concentrating on paragraph 3:

While the Joint Statement says at paragraph 3 that "Mauritius is sovereign over Chagos, including Diego Garcia," we must remember that its first paragraph described the document as being about not "sovereignty" itself but about "the exercise of sovereignty". The wording implies there are two different things: Who "is sovereign"? The document says Mauritius is. But who has "the exercise of sovereignty"? Are they one and the same? The two expressions seem, at first view, to mean the same thing. But in the Joint Statement they definitely do not. In any case, this kind of formulation is so bizarre, especially coming from the perfidious Albion, that it ought to set off alarm bells in our heads.

Here is the first problem: the meat of the third paragraph reads, "the United Kingdom will be authorised to exercise with respect to Diego Garcia the sovereign rights … of Mauritius required to ensure the continued operation of the [US

military] base". Let us deal with this in grammatical terms. In black and white, it says "the UK will be authorised to exercise … the sovereign rights … of Mauritius". So, Mauritius is sovereign, as the document has already said, but the UK is authorised to exercise this Mauritian sovereignty! What is this?

So, here we see the perfidy of the words "exercise of sovereignty" that we mentioned from the first paragraph, which declares what the Joint Statement is about: it is about the exercise of sovereignty, not about sovereignty. Yes, believe it or not, Mauritius is not "sovereign over Chagos, including Diego Garcia" as promised earlier in paragraph three, because the UK will be authorised to exercise the sovereign rights of Mauritius, and this is what the Joint Statement is about. No less.

And, to mask all this perfidy, the formulation is intentionally clumsy in another way. Not only is this authorization for the UK to exercise Mauritius' sovereign rights supposed to be only "with respect to Diego Garcia" (pretending to spare the other outer Chagos islands, and leave them to Mauritius' sovereignty) but also, added on afterwards to include we suppose literally "anything anywhere" concerning those sovereign rights "required to ensure the continued operation of the base". This means it may be "with respect to Diego Garcia" or it may also include anything "required to ensure the continued operation of the base".

We know that the USA has always objected to Mauritius controlling not only Diego Garcia, but any of the other islands. But now, in respect to Diego Garcia, any form of sovereignty that is "required to ensure the continued operation of the base" will be exercised by the UK. Of course, what exactly this means will be decided later by … none other than the USA. Just like the USA decided to kick the British judge out of BIOT. So Mauritius has what is left of sovereignty when Britain has exercised any sovereignty

“required to ensure the continued operation of the base”, and the USA will decide on the meaning of the bland “with respect to Diego Garcia” en temps et lieu.

Other oddities in this paragraph must now also be looked at. Where it says, “the UK will be authorised to exercise … sovereign rights …”, after the word “rights”, there are the two words “and authorities”. This, we can only guess, is to ensure all the “rights” Mauritius has, as well as all the “authorities” it has, meaning all the powers it has, “powers” flowing from sovereignty, will be authorised to be exercised by the UK.

The next oddity is the frank, “For an initial period of 99 years.” Let’s deal with the word “initial”, it means that what Britain means is that its exercise of sovereignty will last for “ONE CENTURY”, but that is only to begin with. This formulation is a synonym for “forever” – unless we are talking geological time, and the first lap lasts, as it is, “… well into the next century”.

The third oddity is ensuring that Mauritius, the weak partner, will agree with the strong partner, the UK to submit to the exigencies of the really big masked partner, the USA. Read this paragraph hidden in the middle of paragraph 3: “At the same time, both our countries are committed to the need, and will agree in the treaty, to ensure the long-term, secure and effective operation of the existing base on Diego Garcia which plays a vital role in regional and global security.” Decisions about what will ensure the “secure and effective operation of the existing base” will be made presumably by the USA.

The blood money in exchange for the war machine on our land

There are two paragraphs mainly about money. They are vague and humiliating for Mauritius. “The treaty will address wrongs

of the past", the Joint Statement says. How? An apology for stealing the land? An apology for hounding out the Mauritians living there on that Mauritian land? Or are they talking about money? Who knows?

And it goes on "and demonstrate the commitment of both parties to support the welfare of Chagossians. Mauritius will now be free to implement a programme of resettlement on the islands of the Chagos Archipelago, other than Diego Garcia, and the UK will capitalise a new trust fund, as well as separately provide other support, for the benefit of Chagossians." No mention of free movement for anyone. No mention of all the ordinary aspects of sovereignty. Can Mauritius build ports or an airstrip? Or will this affect the "secure and effective operation of the existing base"? The wording is absurd.

"It will also herald a new era of economic, security and environmental partnership between our two nations. To enable this partnership the UK will provide a package of financial support to Mauritius. This will include an indexed annual payment for the duration of the agreement and the establishment of a transformational infrastructure partnership, underpinned by UK grant funding, to deliver strategic projects generating meaningful change for ordinary Mauritians and boosting economic development across the country." This is the bribe. This is the blood money. This is what aims to draw the Mauritian people into moral degradation by agreement to it!

Then the Joint Statement goes on, "More broadly, the UK and Mauritius will cooperate on environmental protection, maritime security, combating illegal fishing, irregular migration and drug and people trafficking within the Chagos Archipelago, with the shared objective of securing and protecting one of the world's most important marine environments. This will include the establishment of a Mauritian Marine Protected Area." This is Mauritius will "cooperate" with the UK to do all this, including a "Mauritian" MPA, as opposed to Mauritius

doing all this independently and in a sovereign way.

Conclusion

Let us end with a simple quote from the Mauritian Constitution. Section 1 reads “Mauritius shall be a sovereign democratic state”

and Section 111 reads,

“Mauritius includes:

“(a) The islands of Mauritius, Rodrigues, Agalega, Cargados Carajos, Tromelin, and the Chagos Archipelago, including Diego Garcia and any other island comprised in the State of Mauritius;

“(b) the territorial sea and the air space above the territorial sea and the islands mentioned in section (a);

“(c) the continental shelf; …”

LATIT, Wednesday 9 October 2024

https://www.lalitmauritius.org/

Reposted from International Viewpoint

Strategic Reflections on the Escalation of Israeli

Intimidation in Lebanon

Not even an hour had passed after I wrote my article of a week ago (“Lebanon and the Israeli Strategy of Intimidation”, 17/9/2024) when the Israeli intelligence agencies launched a mass terror operation in Lebanon by blowing up individual communication devices in two successive waves over two days, killing more than 40 people and wounding more than 3,500. These two waves of mass terrorism were followed by an escalation in the exchange of shells across the border, between Hezbollah and the Israeli Aggression Forces (aka IDF), preluding to the intense violent bombardment that poured down on Monday on southern Lebanon and other areas where Hezbollah is present, killing nearly 500 people and wounding more than 1,600. The bombardment is still ongoing as these lines are written.

The question that imposed itself on everyone, starting with those targeted in Lebanon, is whether this sudden escalation in what we called the “Israeli strategy of intimidation” is paving the way for a full-scale aggression against Lebanon that would include indiscriminate heavy bombing of all areas where Hezbollah is present, including the densely populated southern suburb of Beirut, with the aim of making it “look like Gaza” in the words of one of Benjamin Netanyahu’s close associates. It is indeed feared that the Zionist state will carry out a brutal aggression on parts of Lebanon, similar to the aggression that targeted the entire Gaza Strip, in line with what one of the overseers of the Israeli aggression on Lebanon in 2006 called the “Dahiya doctrine” (a reference to the southern suburb of Beirut, the Arabic word *dahiya* meaning “suburb”). This doctrine aims at achieving deterrence against anyone who has the intention of confronting Israel, by threatening to inflict a high level of violence on areas inhabited by the civilian population to which those who nurture that intention belong, like what happened to the

southern suburb of Beirut in 2006, which is the main area where Hezbollah's popular base is concentrated.

It is a fact that the 2006 aggression that followed an operation carried out by Hezbollah fighters across the southern Lebanese border against Israeli soldiers, killing eight of them and capturing two, had a deterrent effect, which was acknowledged by the Hezbollah's Secretary-General Hassan Nasrallah in declaring his regret, when he famously said on television in the aftermath of that war: "If I had known for one percent that this abduction operation would lead to a war of this magnitude, we certainly would not have done it for humanitarian, moral, military, social, security and political reasons."

What the Western media, which are quick to condemn war crimes when they are committed by the West's enemies, such as the Russian regime in Ukraine, do not say, is that the "Dahiya doctrine" is not an instance of military genius and a doctrine worthy of being taught in the military colleges of civilized countries, but rather a blatant violation of the laws of war, which consist in the practice of war crimes on a large scale, up to a genocidal level in Gaza, through an explicit intent to target civilians in order to deter combatants. It is, in other words, a terrorist strategy formulated by a terrorist state par excellence, which constitutes a stark confirmation that state terrorism is much more dangerous than the terrorism of non-state groups, as it applies the same logic, i.e. the killing of civilians for a political purpose, but with immeasurably greater potential for lethality and destruction.

Hezbollah learned two lessons from the 33-Day War in 2006. The first translates in that it has since then taken into account what it sees as a red line that, if crossed, would give the Zionist state a new pretext to attack Lebanese civilians. In order to ward off its popular base in the first place, Hezbollah did not carry out any bold operation like the one that sparked the 2006 war – or the one carried out by Hamas

about a year ago, igniting the war to destroy Gaza and exterminate its people. The second lesson led Hezbollah to acquire a huge arsenal of missiles that established a counter-deterrent by threatening civilian areas inside the Zionist state, thus achieving what is called in the vocabulary of nuclear deterrence a “balance of terror”.

This equation is what explains Hezbollah’s initiative of starting a limited war of attrition with the Zionist state the day after Operation “Al-Aqsa Flood”, in response to Hamas’s call for it to join what it had initiated. That call came in a message from the military leader of the Islamic movement in the Gaza Strip, Muhammad al-Deif, broadcast at the start of the operation: “Oh our brothers in the Islamic resistance, in Lebanon, Iran, Yemen, Iraq and Syria, this is the day when your resistance will merge with your people in Palestine so that this terrible occupier will understand that the time in which it rampages and assassinates scholars and leaders has ended. The time of plundering your wealth has ended. The almost daily bombing in Syria and Iraq has ended. The time of dividing the nation and scattering its forces in internal conflicts has ended. The time has come for all Arab and Islamic forces to unite to sweep this occupation from our holy sites and our land.”

However, Hezbollah was smarter than to be overcome by euphoria to the point of believing that the day of victory over Israel and liberation of Palestine had come. It decided therefore to enter the battle as a supporter rather than a full participant, a decision that translated into the limited war of attrition. The party wanted to express its solidarity with the people of Gaza, but without exposing its popular base to a fate similar to that of the residents of the Strip. However, this calculation is now backfiring on Hezbollah, as the Zionist aggression army, having finished its intensive large-scale operations in Gaza, is now focusing on its northern front, launching what we called the “strategy of

intimidation", which is a gradual escalation in attacks with a threat to shift to implementing the "Dahiya doctrine".

This Israeli behaviour demonstrates the effectiveness of Hezbollah's counter-deterrence, as the Zionist government is forced to be cautious about igniting a full-scale war that it knows will be costly to Israeli society, even if the cost to Hezbollah's base will be much higher given the great superiority of Israeli military capabilities. The Zionist government hence resorted first to escalation through "asymmetric warfare", a term that usually describes the actions of an irregular force against a regular army. Here, it is the Zionist state that is dealing a devious and painful blow to Hezbollah and its civilian milieu by blowing up communications devices. This was followed by an escalation of conventional war that began on Monday, constituting a dangerous escalation of pressure on Hezbollah to force it to surrender and accept the conditions set by Washington with the approval of the Zionist government, the most important of which is the withdrawal of the party's forces to north of the Litani River.

Confronted with this escalating pressure, the party finds itself trapped in mutual, but unequal, deterrence. It does not possess the capabilities of waging "asymmetric warfare" deep inside Israel and cannot strike there in a way that would cause hundreds of deaths, like what the Zionist army inflicted on Lebanon on Monday, for fear that the response would be overwhelming, knowing that Israel is fully capable of responding at a much higher level. The Zionist government is wholly aware of the conditions of the equation. While it wishes to dismantle Hezbollah's deterrent capacity, it cannot initiate a comprehensive war without ensuring full US participation in it, similar to Washington's participation in the war on Gaza during several months, the most deadly and destructive months, to the point of countering all calls for a ceasefire. The Zionist government needs such full US

complicity in the event of launching a full-scale aggression on Lebanon, the political conditions of which have not yet been met. It is working to achieve them, however, and may well issue a warning with a limited deadline to Hezbollah for that purpose, as we mentioned a week ago.

From all of this, it appears that Netanyahu has begun to fear that his friend Donald Trump might well fail in the upcoming US presidential elections in about a month and a half. It seems that he therefore decided to escalate matters, taking advantage of the last months of presence of his other friend, the "proud Irish-American Zionist" Joe Biden, in the White House. The question now is: will Biden pressure Netanyahu firmly enough to prevent a war that is likely to negatively affect the campaign of his party's candidate, Kamala Harris, or will he once again go along with his friend's criminal endeavour, even if accompanied by an expression of regret and resentment meant to deflect the blame in his and his Secretary of State Blinken's usual hypocritical way?

Gilbert Achcar

Translated from the Arabic original published by Al-Quds al-Arabi on 24 September 2024 and posted at https://gilbert-achcar.net/strategic-reflections-on-lebanon

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Portugal: Deadly forest fires

Seven people have died and 118 have been injured in the fires that have been raging since September 15 in the north and centre of the country. In just three days, 2024 has become the year with the fourth-largest area burned in the last decade.

Seven people have died and 118 have been injured in the fires

that have been raging since September 15 in the north and centre of the country. In just three days, 2024 has become the year with the fourth-largest area burned in the last decade.

Between Sunday and late Tuesday afternoon, more than 71,000 hectares burned in Portugal, compared to 22,500 hectares previously, including the 5,000 hectares of the Madeira fires. In just three days, what was supposed to be a quiet year in terms of burned areas has become the fourth-worst year of the last decade. The figures are published by *Público* , but the newspaper warns that they are based on satellite images and therefore may be excessive. But even if we do not take into account 15 per cent of the burned area, this year's figures are only exceeded by those of 2016, 2017 and 2022.

In the north and centre of the country, the fires have spread due to weather conditions considered to be the most severe, particularly the easterly wind with strong gusts. On Wednesday, the National Emergency and Civil Protection Authority (INEM) counted five deaths and 118 injured , including ten in serious condition, stressing that the number of deaths was transmitted to it by the INEM and does not include the two civilians who died of a sudden illness. The maximum risk of fire affected 50 municipalities on Wednesday and the government decided to extend the state of alert until Thursday.

More than 100 active fires

On Wednesday morning, there were more than 100 active fires, with restarts and wind changes during the night, which made the situation in Águeda "uncontrollable" and approached urban centres. The firefighters who fought the Albergaria a-Velha fire , which has entered the resolution phase, are also fighting these fires. During the night, the Castro Daire fire progressed towards Arouca , reaching the Paiva footbridges and confining several villages, after people with reduced mobility

had been evacuated. In Covilhã, the night was spent fighting a fire in a pine forest area in Gibraltar that had escaped the Serra da Estrela fire two years ago.

Very complicated traffic

Several fires are also raging in the Porto district and some villages have evacuated their inhabitants . In Mangualde and São Pedro do Sul, it is reported that homes and businesses have been destroyed by fire. By late morning, Civil Protection reported 142 fires, 58 of which were in the final stages, with more than 5,500 agents on the ground, accompanied by 1,700 land resources and 37 air resources.

At the same time, the government reported that rail traffic on the Douro line between Marco de Canaveses and Régua and on the Vouga line had been interrupted, with several trains suspended. The A43 motorway between Gondomar and the A41 and the A41 between Medas and Aguiar de Sousa were also closed on Wednesday morning, as was the A25 between Albergaria and Reigoso (Viseu), as well as several national roads.

Bloco de Esquerda

Monday 27th September 2024

Republished from International Viewpoint: https://internationalviewpoint.org/spip.php?article8682

Bloco de Esquerda is a radical left political party in Portugal formed in 2000 as a coalition of the formerly Maoist UDP; Politica XX1, a current that had left the Communist Party; and the PSR, Portuguese section of the Fourth International. Today it is a recognised political party with elected representatives in the national and European parliaments.

On-Line Event: Ecosocialism or Extinction? An Introduction to Ecosocialism

Building Internationalism from Below in a Multi-Polar World – afternoon school 27 April 2024 Glasgow

A day conference organised by the [Republican Socialist Platform](#) on 2pm-5pm , Saturday 27th April 2024, [Renfield Centre, 260 Bath Street, Glasgow G2 4JP](#)

Building Internationalism from Below in a Multi-Polar World.

Book here: https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/building-internationalism-from-below-in-a-multipolar-world-tickets-858894254837

Please note this event was rescheduled from 23 March due to speaker illness

Hear from Prof Gilbert Achcar, author of 'The New Cold War',

and speakers from the Palestinian, Kurdish and Ukrainian solidarity movements.

The **Republican Socialist Platform** invites friends to discuss 'Building Internationalism from Below in a Multipolar World' in Glasgow on **Saturday 27th April 2024, 2pm-5pm**.

Our main speaker is **Professor Gilbert Achcar**, professor of development studies and international relations at the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS), University of London.

His many books, published in a total of 15 languages, include:

- *The Clash of Barbarisms: The Making of the New World Disorder* (2002, 2006);
- *Perilous Power: The Middle East and U.S. Foreign Policy*, co-authored with Noam Chomsky (2007, 2008);
- *The Arabs and the Holocaust: The Arab-Israeli War of Narratives* (2010);
- *Marxism, Orientalism, Cosmopolitanism* (2013);
- *The People Want: A Radical Exploration of the Arab Uprising* (2013); and
- *Morbid Symptoms: Relapse in the Arab Uprising* (2016).

Most recently, Professor Achcar is the author of *The New Cold War: The US, Russia and China – From Kosovo to Ukraine*, which was published in 2023.

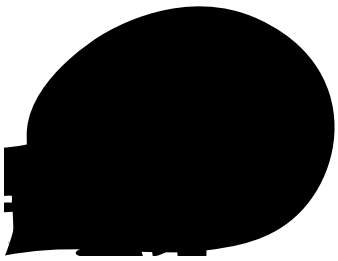
On the day, we will also be joined by speakers from the Palestinian, Kurdish and Ukrainian solidarity movements to provide an update on the current state of these struggles and what we can do to support them.

This event is free to attend, but we welcome donations to help us cover the costs of arranging speakers and the venue.

This public event will be governed by the RSP's comradely conduct and care policy.

To join the Republican Socialist Platform, visit: https://join.republicansocialists.scot/

Heckle is an 0nline Scottish publication overseen by a seven-person editorial board elected by members of the Republican Socialist Platform.



Anti-Fascists Demand Freedom for Zaragoza Six

Jennifer Debs writes for Heckle.Scot about the campaign to free anti-fascist activists in the Spanish state.

If the Scottish independence movement has a sense of internationalism, then events in that blob of disgruntled

nations called ‘Spain’ tend to loom largest in our minds. *Heckle* readers are aware, I’m sure, of how the cause of Catalunya is eagerly identified with the cause of Scotland – one need only attend any independence march to see that evidenced in the Catalan colours among the mass of flags. In a way, this is a kind of Scottish modification of the traditional “philo-hispanism” of the left, our movement’s continuing identification with the history of the Spanish Republic, the international brigades, workers’ power in Barcelona, and the long clandestine struggle against Franco and his regime.

Even so, for all our sympathy with the brave crowds who confronted the Guardia Civil during the 2017 Catalan referendum, our support for persecuted pro-independence politicians, and our disgust at the zombie Francoism of the Spanish government, there are some urgent causes from the peninsula that could do with greater awareness among Scottish workers. Take the case of the Zaragoza Six, a group of anti-fascist activists arrested and imprisoned on trumped-up charges after a protest against the far-right Vox party in 2019.

Just for taking to the streets to oppose the rising threat of fascism in the Spanish state, the Zaragoza Six are facing prison sentences. Theirs has been a years-long battle for freedom since the initial arrests, a story of trials, verdicts, appeals, and yet more trials, with three of the group now having entered prison as of April 16th, and one more set to enter prison on April 24th. These four comrades will each be serving a sentence of four years and nine months, and that on top of heavy fines.

As anti-fascists facing punishment, the cause of the Z6 demands the enthusiastic support of the Scottish left. Not only have we witnessed fascist political organisations making a comeback in the anti-refugee protests at Erskine, but far-right public order and culture war politics lead the way in

the Conservative Party, with the government taking aim at refugees, climate protesters, striking workers, Palestine activists and transgender people. The danger is in the streets, but also in the halls of government. The Spanish context, with the role played by both Vox and by state repression, therefore warrants our close attention – our national situations are two facets of a wider phenomenon.



In order to find out more, I reached out to the Z6 campaign to see if I could interview anyone and bring their story to an audience over here. They were happy to speak to *Heckle*, and so Javitxu Aijon, one of the Six, got in touch with me to speak over a video call. My discussion with Javitxu took place when he was still free, but I am sad to say that as you are reading this now, he is behind bars.

I began by asking Javitxu who the Zaragoza Six are, and about their case. Essentially, Javitxu said, they are just six people who were arrested following a demonstration against a meeting of the far-right Vox party at Zaragoza's auditorium on 17th January 2019. Just one month prior to the demo, Vox had entered the Andalusian parliament, "so there was a popular impression of the rise of the far right, and the danger of

that- machismo, racism, xenophobia," Javitxu explained. "In that protest there were a lot of people who weren't in formal political movements," he continued, including himself among their number. Javtixu said he had previously been in the Podemos party in 2018, and had left-wing views, but that he wasn't really organised at that point. In all, 200 young anti-fascists protested against Vox on the 17th, facing violent attacks from the police in the process.

After the demonstration was over, six young people, four adults and two minors, all of them under 24 years of age, were arrested at random in the surrounding area. The police made their choices based on the look of their targets' clothing – indeed, one of the six did not even attend the anti-Vox protest. Four of the six, Javitxu alongside them, were detained when police entered a bar close to the site of the demonstration. In Javitxu's case, he simply saw a minor being arrested in the bar, and when he tried to point this out to the police officer and tell him to be careful, he was grabbed and detained too. He asked the officers why he was being arrested, but didn't get much of a response: "Their only answer was that I was in the protest, so maybe I had done something." This was an arrest on pure suspicion, on assumed guilt.

And the crimes for which this haphazard bunch of arrestees, one of whom wasn't even present at a protest, stood accused? Public disorder, and assaulting a police officer. These were the charges on which the Z6 faced trial in the Provincial Court of Zaragoza, with a sentence of six years in prison for the four adults, one year of probation for the two minors, and a fine of €11,000 being handed down in January 2021. This conviction was, however, based on the sole evidence of the testimony of the police officers, with witnesses and evidence that could prove the innocence of the Z6 being ignored. Crucially, security footage caught by University of Zaragoza CCTV cameras shows the violence at the protest, but the

footage does not show any of the Z6 involved in fights with the police at any point. However, this footage was not admitted as evidence by the judge.

Following the initial judgment, the sentence was then increased by the High Court of Justice of Aragon to seven years for the four adults in October 2021. Javitxu explained that a sentence of this length for anti-fascist activism is unheard of; typically, arrested anti-fascists receive sentences of two or three years. The Z6 appealed this decision to the supreme court, and the appeal process dragged on with no decision until this year, when the supreme court finally decided on the aforementioned sentence of four years and nine months, plus fines. Even if the jail-time has been reduced, the fact that innocent anti-fascists are being imprisoned at all is a tremendous blow to the left, and a victory for both the far right and the repressive apparatus of the state.

“Francoism never went away. There is no real democracy in Spain.”

Beyond the police narrative of events, I wanted to get Javitxu’s perspective on the reasons for the arrests and the sentences, and to discuss the significance of the criminalisation of his and his co-defendants’ political activity. In Javitxu’s opinion, “they want us in jail because we have a problem with police hierarchy and far-right movements. They are linked.” Indeed, Javitxu contends that the police are very close to far-right movements in the Spanish state. Furthermore, he feels that the Z6 have been hit with such heavy jail-time specifically to send a message to other protest movements. Javitxu pointed out that the protest in 2019 was the first anti-fascist protest he had seen in Zaragoza with new people who weren’t just part of the pre-existing movements of the left, fresh people who saw a danger

in far-right ideas – and of course, fresh layers of society taking part in protests is dangerous to the status quo, dangerous to the capitalist state. Adding to this, Javitxu outlined a repressive wave in motion throughout the Spanish state in recent years, with the arrest of the Catalan rapper Pablo Hasel for criticism of the monarchy serving as a prime example.

Javitxu dates this repressive wave from late 2017 and the state backlash against Catalan independence referendum. He argues that the Spanish government is afraid of the number of people who took to the streets to fight for Catalan independence, and that it wants to try and clamp down on future mass movements. In the context of this, abnormally harsh sentences for protesters opposing the far right appear as a weapon for dispersing and defusing a protest movement before it can cohere. Indeed, when I spoke of the courts as a capitalist class weapon, Javitxu agreed with me. "Francoism never went away. There is no real democracy in Spain."



The situation now is bleak. This means that the question of how the movement fights back against the convictions is crucial, so I naturally wanted to know what Javitxu thought about the issue. His answer was keeping up pressure, continuing the fight: "If you want to stop the repressive machine in, for example, the housing movement, and the bank

are going to throw you out of your house, then there must be a movement to avoid the eviction. So if you want to end the repression of this movement, you need to stop more evictions. If you want to stop the repression of the workers' movement, you need to strike more, protest more."

For Javitxu, there is no solid border between the struggle in the courts and in the streets – indeed, for him the question of liberty is a political one, which requires an organised response. "I think if you want to fight back against repression, you need more of a political movement." He pointed to the example of the Z6 solidarity campaign so far, which has gathered the support of the political parties, trade unions and movements of the left, as well as musicians and actors, and which has continued to protest and agitate for a total amnesty.

Of course, with the dire turn events have taken, the need for a political support campaign has only deepened, as has the necessity of internationalising the campaign and getting support from workers' and popular movements across the world. If pressure can be brought to bear on the Spanish government on multiple fronts, it will be to the benefit of the Z6.

The question of the movement's response naturally entails another: What next for the anti-fascist movement in the Spanish state? Javitxu felt that the main problem of anti-fascism currently is that "there are not enough people involved. The anti-fascist movement needs to do more to influence popular opinion." He also pointed out a problem with how the anti-fascist movement has traditionally operated: "I think there are people that still think the far right are just skinhead Nazis who are in the streets with knives and so on. It's really different, the way the far right are organising themselves right now. There are Nazis with a skinhead aesthetic, but they are not the majority of the far-right movement right now. They are not the imminent danger. Vox for example, I think there is a difference in how they do

politics.”

Javitxu pointed out that while Vox might hate groups like LGBT people and immigrants, the party is much more careful in how it expresses its ideas about these groups. It does not call for violence openly in the way a neo-Nazi gang would, but rather Vox seeks to influence and sway public opinion, to bring in parts of the traditional conservative voter base. In Javitxu’s view, the anti-fascist movement needs to find a way to combat this more “official” form of fascism. This dilemma is reminiscent of our own situation here in Scotland and the wider UK, where our anti-fascists may be able to outnumber and kick the fascists out of towns and cities on a good day, but where far-right ideas spur government policy regardless and receive silence, or even approval, from the Labour Party.

I ended our call by asking what the Scottish workers’ movement can do to support the Z6. Javitxu felt that the best way for people in Scotland to support the Z6 is, first and foremost, to spread the word: “It’s really important at the moment for this to be known about.” The campaign for an amnesty for the prisoners will be continuing, so Scottish workers need to keep up to date and show solidarity where they can. If you can bring up the cause of the Z6 in your trade union and organisational branch meetings and encourage them to contact the campaign and get involved, then please do so. And of course, there is currently a fundraiser to cover both the fines and the legal costs of the Z6 case. Please donate if you can, and spread it in your groups and networks.

Javitxu also wanted to underline to my readers that “if they know someone who is in some kind of trial, not to let him or her fight this alone. The most important support they can give to any victim of repression is emotional support.” We have cases here in Scotland that are in need of this kind of comradeship, like the Starmer Two, a pair of Palestine protesters arrested for demonstrating against Keir Starmer in December last year. Comrades bearing the brunt of police

repression could always use a friend and a helping hand.

When we raise the call of freedom for the Zaragoza Six, the old struggles live anew in our words. We remember the names of friends and martyrs, class war prisoners old and new: John Maclean, Nicola Sacco, Bartolomeo Vanzetti, George Jackson, Angela Davis, Abdullah Öcalan. We remember the love, hope, rage and solidarity that fired, and fires, hearts in streets all across the world in cause of their liberty. And we fondly recall the words of the great American socialist Eugene Debs, another victim of capitalist persecution, who said: “While there is a lower class I am of it, while there is a criminal class I am of it, while there is a soul in prison I am not free.”

As for Javitxu himself, he remains defiant. Throughout our conversation he was adamant that he will continue to participate in anti-repression movements, and that his experience with the courts has only made him firmer in his resolve. He wants to show others what the judicial system does to people, and to express himself to others who are facing repression from the state.

“I had passed from a lot of states of depression because of this. I think that these are thoughts that are normal. After the second trial, I really wanted to abandon social movements, to go away, to disappear. And it’s this that they want. They want us to surrender, give up, and not to fight for a better world, a better situation for our comrades, friends, family. I think if someone is living this kind of thing, like trials for fighting for a better world, maybe, maybe, they are on the right side of history. I did nothing wrong, my conscience is peaceful. For now, I have no problems. If I go to jail, it will be years to study politics, to form myself, to be a better militant for the movement, to change this shit, this judicial system, this political system.”

All that remains to be said is that Javitxu Aijon and the

Zaragoza Six are comrades in need. They deserve our support and assistance.

For them, for all political prisoners – tenacity, courage and fury!

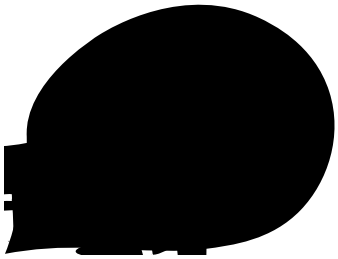
Free the Zaragoza Six!

You can keep in touch with the Z6 campaign at these links:

- Fundraiser campaign for the Z6.
- Campaign email address: contacto@libertad6dezaragoza.info
- The campaign's website has a manifesto with a section for signatures from supporters at the bottom of the page.

Originally published at: https://heckle.scot/2024/04/anti-fascists-demand-freedom-for-zaragoza-six/

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Photos from Heckle.Scot

Kurdistan: Scottish activist interviewed on Turkey's local elections

From a polling station in the Şirnak mountains – an interview with Hazel, an election observer from Scotland for the 31 March local elections in Turkey.

Sarah Glynn talks to one of two Scottish women who came to observe the elections at the invitation of the DEM Party *[Peoples' Equality and Democracy Party – see note 1]*. Hazel describes the militarisation of the region and the psychological pressure on voters. She witnessed the mass voting by soldiers brought in from outside the region, and saw the anger and worry in Şirnak (Şirnex) after their election was stolen by imported votes. And she emphasises the power of Kurdish resistance.

Hazel was observing the election at the invitation of the DEM Party, and was sent to village polling stations in the Şirnak (Şirnex) mountains. She describes a heavily militarised region, and militarised police and armoured vehicles outside the polling stations. Despite having become accustomed to the constant military presence, voters described feelings of intimidation and psychological pressure on account of the people outside the polling stations, who included families of AKP members.

Hazel saw a military helicopter that they were informed had brought soldiers to vote, and witnessed a long line of soldiers in civilian dress waiting to cast their ballots. But the observers were restricted in where they could go, and in inspecting voter lists.

She contrasted the victory celebrations in Diyarbakir (Amed) with the anger and worry in Şirnak – at the stolen election due to the votes of thousands of soldiers brought from outside, and at the prospect of the coming years of AKP control. And she described the immediate post-election repression and arrests in Şirnak.

Hazel attended protest statements in Amed, following the government's refusal to recognise the elected mayor of Van, and observed the importance of the presence of the Saturday Mothers.

She finished by trying to convey the sense of powerful resistance that she could feel in the Kurdish region and that she was reluctant to leave behind.

Below is the full transcript of the interview:

Şırnak mountians

Dembaş. This is Sarah Glynn for Media News

, and I'm talking today with Hazel, who is one of two women who came from Scotla

nd to observe the elections at the invitation of the DEM Party, and is just now in

the airport on her way back to the UK.

So, Hazel, obviously a lot has happened since the actual election itself, but you were there to observe the election, so I think we should start with that. And I wondered, for the benefit of people who've not been to a Turkish election, if you could just describe – well, describe where you went, where you were – but also what the polling station is like, who's allowed in, what sort of privacy you get for voting, what sort of security there is to protect the ballots themselves, and whether there's pressure on the voters from people outside.

Yeah, so I've also been to the general election last year, which was a little bit different to this year's municipal elections, and I think it's also a little bit regional. So, all over Kurdistan region, also Turkey, it's generally in schools that people go to vote, and there are certain laws pertaining to the schools. So, for example, police shouldn't have weapons with them if they're actually inside the polling booth, like the room that people are voting in. And last year,

there was a proper booth inside the polling stations that did afford people a bit more privacy, but I didn't personally see that at this one, but we were in quite a remote village in Şîrnak province, and it was called Beytüşşebap in Turkish, or Ilkê in Kurdish. And yeah, there wasn't actually really any privacy, to be honest, in the rooms, but people will make their vote, and there's a sort of desk that people from each party – so DEM Party, AK Party, CHP – they all also sit in the room as well, and they're kind of responsible for overseeing the process. So, there's a bit of a collective management of the day, and there's quite a lot of people from each political party there as well, and also outside the schools, and I'm sure we'll get into this more later. It does depend on the region, so what we saw in Ilkê or Beytüşşebap is, there's the Jandarma outside the schools, which is like militarised police, and there's also plainclothes police, and also uniformed, but there's the militarised and armored vehicles outside.

So, did you get a sense that there was pressure on voters?

So, this is what we asked people, actually, who were there, and they did tell us that they did feel quite a bit of pressure, and I think that also, one thing to keep in mind is that, actually, there's a normalisation of the militarisation of the region, because there's checkpoints, there's military checkpoints when you move inside or outside of the cities in Kurdistan region. You can see the Jandarma (Gendarmerie), or the military – there's military bases all over the place, inside cities, etc. So, I think that there is a desensitisation, actually, as well; but of course, it does also create the psychological pressure, and for example, there was big families from the AK Party outside in the school grounds that we saw ourselves, and it was like an extended family. And people were also telling us this is also a type of psychological pressure, and they also felt intimidated. And it was also reported that – not where we were, but at another

location – that some of the police did have weapons with them inside the schools, as well.

And anyway, they're allowed weapons just outside the schools.

Yes, they're allowed weapons outside of the schools, including the military vehicles themselves, which were literally parked right outside the gates, literally right opposite the entrance to the schools, multiple ones, actually. And also, one thing that we saw too is a military helicopter actually landing directly next to the school, which we were told was bringing soldiers in from Şirnak, like central, the actual city. And then, you know, we were in quite a remote area up the mountains, and we went to the first school, and then we went to two others, and then we were told, oh, go back to the first school, because now a lot of soldiers have just come. And you know, in the region, it's occupied militarily, so there are soldiers around, but people know who are the local soldiers. You know, there's not thousands and thousands of soldiers in each place, usually. And when we went back to the first school, there was this long line of soldiers in plain clothes who were waiting to vote, and it was a very, very tense atmosphere, and we basically were quite abruptly asked to leave.

They wouldn't actually let us be present inside the polling station on that occasion. And yeah, we saw the helicopter, because it wasn't there when we first arrived, and then when we went to the schools, and then it had arrived, and then it left when we were there.

And were people able to see the voters' lists there? Were all these soldiers' names on the voters' lists?

So, one of our friends who was with us – one of our colleagues who was with us, who was also doing the observations, she has a press card, she's a journalist, she was allowed to look, but we were not allowed, and we were barred from looking at the

lists. But there is many, many areas that people have had more access to the lists, and Şirnak is one of them, Şirnak Central, that has shown hundreds and hundreds of male names who – and no women at some addresses at all – but just hundreds and hundreds of male names, which aren't normal military bases. And what we were told is that this is basically soldiers coming from outside, who have been sent here by the state, and they are using other people's addresses to be able – because you know it's municipal, so you have to have like a specific local registered address to be able to vote in that district. And yeah, there's been like a lot of this military people coming and voting.

Over 6,000 in Şirnak, I think.

I know at the general election there was a lot of concern about guarding the ballot boxes, and then there were also problems about changes made when the votes were transferred onto the final system. Were either of those issues this time around, or not?

Yeah, so this was definitely a thing last time. There was really clear evidence, for example, of votes getting transferred from DEM Party to MHP last time – well it was Yeşil Sol (Green Left) Party last year, but to MHP – and then they even ended up being transferred back in the appeals process at points, but I haven't heard of that myself this time. But also, it's one of those things that, you know, I think it's really hard sometimes to catch the ways that manipulation happens. And there's been really widespread observation amongst the independent observers about this practice with the soldiers, and this is something that – it's in specific areas, it doesn't happen in every single area, obviously – but it's, yeah, it's very difficult to appeal this process. And it didn't really seem like the ballot box issue was something that was really focused on this year, but they were already aware of the extra people signing up in the municipalities this time, so that has been the main focus this

year.

I heard calls for guarding the ballot boxes, but I didn't hear of any actual concerns, I think.

I haven't heard of any myself.

And what immediately afterwards, as the results started coming in – I mean, before things started happening in Van – what was the general view of the elections from the DEM Party, because I think you were with people in the party after the elections as well.

Yeah, so I mean, I was in two different places – in Şirnak at first, and then I went back to Amed. And it was really different in both places, because, you know, in Şirnak, people were really hurting, because AK Party, for the central area, was elected again. And people were pretty furious, and also worried. People are really worried about their future, and they're very angry, because they feel it's a very, very undemocratic process. And straight afterwards, on the same day as the elections, there was an attack on the party office by the police, and they arrested at least a dozen people, I think two dozen people – so two of the responsibles in DEM Party, and then also quite a few youth as well. And when we were leaving the next day, we heard that the DEM Party members had been released, but a lot of the local young people were still being detained. And this is just like a kind of – I think that that's very symbolic, actually, because straight away, there's repression. And I mean – you just mentioned Van already, but even when there is a secure vote for the DEM Party, it doesn't mean that repression doesn't come. But when people don't have control of their own municipality, and that really affects, you know, funding, that affects education, that affects all of these different things. It affects also, you know, state propaganda. It affects state control, it affects state access to the border – for example, going south and east, and Şirnak is a really strategic location for the state's war policies.

All of these things are affected in people's everyday lives. And somebody – not a DEM Party member, but just like a local person – was saying to me – he was saying, I'm really worried about my child's future. She's only three years old, but again, and again, and again, this keeps happening. I don't know what I can do. And then for DEM Party, people were really exhausted, but they were just busy the entire time. They were saying, we're going to appeal this, we're not going to stand for this, you know, they have cheated the system. And there was this feeling of loss.

But there wasn't much, I've seen in Western media. There's been a lot of dialogue around – oh, CHP, they've done so well; oh, this is such a win for democracy, because AKP have done really badly in this election. But people don't talk about the Kurdistan region, and don't see that AK Party can't even – they can't even keep hold of their own seats in the West. But still, they try and coup them, basically, from the Kurdish regions, for their war policies, and for political reasons.

But when I went back to Amed – so I didn't see it myself, because we're in Şirnak, but I did see a lot of videos that showed there was a big celebration. People were really happy, but there was this focus on the other regions, it wasn't cut off. I think the first day, people were dancing in the streets, big, big celebrations, but by the time we got back, people were just really focused on Şirnak, and then also the other regions where AKP had sent soldiers, or just where they'd also just done well, you know. And then, also what happened in Van after. So, yesterday, all day, there was just announcements, protests. The people in DEM Party were incredibly busy, I have to say, from morning until evening, just full-on organising: visiting the family of the martyr, the shaheed [the DEM Party election official who was killed in a polling station dispute]; organising announcements, where police also repressed people, and two people were arrested from that – nothing like what we've seen in the further east

regions, where people have been really being attacked viciously by the police, and, you know, there's a bigger answer, I think, there – but still, people were then focused on that…

It's not clear what's going to happen now. I was asking people. I was saying, do you think that… will come again, is this going to be the policy of the state this time, because it happened so much last municipal election. And people's answer was just, we just don't know. We just don't know what's going to happen. It's just very unclear.

Which is frightening in itself, of course, the not knowing. So, I don't know when you had to leave that area. Were you able to see any of the protests about what was happening in Van?

In Amed. Yeah.

Reactions to the removal of the mayor, of the elected mayor in Van – were you able to see any of the reactions to that?

Yeah, in Amed, I went to a couple of the announcements and protests, and the thing is, like, even just an announcement, which is what it actually was – or announcement is maybe not quite the right translation, but a kind of, like a statement against what happened – like, even these things, when they're made publicly, are very, very, criminalised by the police. So, maybe in Western Europe you could make a statement saying, oh, the state did this, and it wasn't good, blah, blah. But, in Bakur [North Kurdistan/southeast Turkey] you're surrounded by armed police, armoured vehicles. Lots of people already have criminal cases or have spent a significant time in prison, and these are the kind of things that can certainly get people arrested again and sent to prison. So, there's quite high stakes, even with just standing up and denouncing …

And there was one protest outside one of the legal centres, and that was made by DEM Party members, and two of the MPs, so

one person was Abbas Şahin, and then also Pınar as well. They're both MPs in Amed region. And then also, directly after that, there was another announcement in a park in Amed, and that was by the Democracy Platform, which is particularly, like a labour platform.

And there were people from other parties or from…


Vigil for forced disappearances

Yeah, I mean, in general, the people who attended, it wasn't only DEM Party members who were there. It's just people in the community, basically, people who agree with the fact that what happened in Van was extremely undemocratic and unfair, and it didn't reflect the will of the people. And the second event, I'm not sure, I would need to find out exactly which groups it was present, actually, and yeah, but there was, like, a kind of mix of people from, like, various groups, and also non-affiliated people as well. Not everyone was specifically a member of a specific organisation who was present. There was, oh, and the Saturday Mothers as well, the mothers of the martyrs, and also of the missing

people who had disappeared in the 90s. So, when everyone was going to this court in the first announcement, the first denunciation, some people tried to enter. And they weren't allowed, of course, they weren't allowed to go in, but there was this big crowd of people, maybe a couple hundred people, and the mothers who, you know, they were walking as a group, and they have the white veils on their head, they're very, very distinctive. And they're really, really, really strong embodiments of the principles of the struggle there, and what people sacrificed, and what people continue to do as well, despite such a deep and painful struggle. They tried to get in, and when they first came, everyone started clapping and applauding, and people were chanting. It was really, really beautiful to see how people reacted to their presence as part of that struggle, and part of the wider statement.

And they were also at the second denunciation as well, which was in the park. They didn't speak at it, but there was – yeah, like I said, it was kind of a mix of people present, and – just one second, I'm just gonna check something… I had a thing where I wrote down the chants that people were making, but I'm just struggling to find it…

You were looking for the chants that were said at these demonstrations, so do give us some examples.

Yeah, so, well, one chant that people were chanting is, long live the resistance of Van, so, "Biji Berxwedana Wanê", and also, "Resistance is Life", and also, "Kurdistan will become a grave for fascism", and, yeah, I thought it was just a very – like, every time somebody would make a speech, the young people in the crowd would start leading the chants. Yeah, that was all.

So, is there anything else you want to add before I let you go and catch your plane?

It's really hard to – I thought there is something that I want to add, but it's really hard to put into words. And I feel really, like I really wish that I wasn't leaving now, because the different layers of society that say, and one of the other chants, the translation in English is, "we will win by resisting". I think that that is just such a present spirit and energy, and that is something that is really beautiful and inspiring; and yeah, I'm sure that people really will resist. And if it really is the case that the mayor has, again, been

reappointed, I think that that really just shows like that chant, that we will win by resisting, is completely true. And whatever happens now, because I think that the democratic process is completely – it's not respected in Kurdistan region especially. And I think that we need to stop invisiblising the politics there, when we talk about Turkey as a whole, and the democratic process in Turkey as a whole, and, you know, not see CHP as this kind of – oh great, everything's answered now, blah, blah, blah. I think that, yeah, the struggle is really alive, and we also need to find ways to support it, that's all.

Thank you, and bring that spirit of struggle back to Scotland with you. Thanks very much.

Thank you for having me.

Sarah Glynn is an activist from Scottish Solidarity with Kurdistan who writes for Medya News.

For a full report of the local election results and the successful resistance movement to the annulment and subsequent reinstatement of the successful DEM candidate in the municipality of Van, see Sarah Glynn's article 'Resistance Works!' https://medyanews.net/resistance-works-a-weekly-news-review/

Interview originally published by Medya News: https://medyanews.net/from-a-polling-station-in-the-sirnak-mountains-an-interview-with-hazel-an-election-observer-from-scotland/

Note by Ecosocialist.scot: [1] ***DEM Party – Peoples' Equality***

and Democracy Party *is a pro-Kurdish political party in the Turkish state. It is the legal successor of the Green Left Party (Yesil Sol) and with the Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP) handing over its work to this party in 2023, it has become the latest iteration of Kurdish interests in Turkey. It won 10 provinces and 2.6 million votes (5.7%), the fourth highest vote in the elections of 31 March.*

Photo: DEM Party Election Rally, Medya News

Rising Clyde Episode 18: Scotland's Circular Economy Bill

The latest issue of Rising Clyde, the Scottish climate justice show hosted by Iain Bruce is now available on YouTube thanks to Independence Live.

The Show looks at the Circular Economy Bill now under discussion in the Scottish Parliament at Holyrood. Iain talks to the Scottish Government's Circular Economy Minister, Lorna Slater, MSP for the Scottish Green Party, as well as Kim Pratt of Friends of the Earth Scotland (FOES) and Franciele Sobierai of Edinburgh & Lothians Regional Equality Council (ELREC).

Rising Clyde Show – the Scottish climate justice show.

Rising Clyde examines the key issues and the big challenges facing the struggle for climate justice in Scotland. After the surprisingly big and hugely diverse protests in Glasgow during COP26, how can the breadth of that movement be held together, how can we build on its energy?



- After the suspension of Cambo, can the movement stop any more new oil or gas projects in the North Sea?
- How can we wind down the whole oil and gas industry in Scotland in this decade, while ensuring no layoffs and decent new jobs for all those affected?
- Was the Scotwind auction a major step on the transition to renewable energy, or a sell-off of the family silver?
- How can an independent Scotland tolerate one of the most unequal and damaging systems of land ownership on the planet

For half an hour on the first Monday of each month, we'll be talking to activists and experts about these and many other issues that will shape this country's future.

The host of Rising Clyde, **Iain Bruce**, is a journalist, film maker and writer living in Glasgow. Iain has worked for many years in Latin America. He has worked at the BBC and Al Jazeera, and was head of news at teleSUR. He has written books about radical politics in Brazil and Venezuela. During COP26, he was the producer and co-presenter of Inside Outside, a

daily video briefing for the COP26 Coalition.

Playlist…. To see previous episodes, start the video below, then click on the top right icon.

https://youtu.be/0qK7olrAtvk?list=PLxc3IWpJ3vJZLQg9hFjnGWvvfSHdIrnxG

Main picture: Friends of the Earth Scotland/Government-wide Programme for a Circular Economy, Netherlands, 2016

Portugal Election – Far Right Surges

First results

Party	% 2024	% 2022	% 2019
PS (Socialist Party)	28.6 77	41.68 120 seats	36.4
AD (Democratic Alliance: ,PSD/CDS/PPM Centre Right)	29.49 79	27.8 77 seats	27.8
Chega (Enough:neo-fascist)	18.06 48	7.15 12 seats	1.3
Initiativa Liberal (pro business)	5.08 8	4.98 8 seats	1.3
Bloco Esquerda (radical left)	4.46 5	4.46 5 seats	9.5
CDU (PCP:Communist) +green front)	3.3 4	4.39 6 seats	6.3
CDS (right-wing)	n/a in AD	1.61	4.2
PAN (animal rights)	1.93 1	1.53 1 seat	3.3
Livre (Free, green pro-EC)	3.26 4	1.28 I seat	1.1

Chega *[Enough!]*, the far-right party led by ex-TV football pundit Andre Ventura, was the big winner of the night, increasing its votes by over ten points but quadrupling its seats to 48. It now competes as the third major party, way ahead of the rest of the field. The biggest loser is the PS *[Socialist Party]* which led the last two governments; it lost 13% of its vote and 43 seats. On the other hand, due mostly to the rise of Chega, the mainstream right of centre alliance, the AD (Democratic Alliance), which had been the main parliamentary opposition, only edged up by barely two points, with just two more seats. Even this small advantage could be altered once the overseas votes are counted. The pro-business, neo-liberal IL (Liberal Initiative) held on to its 8 seats.

To the left of the PS Livre (Free) a pro-European Greenish party nearly tripled its vote and went from one to four seats. The radical left Bloco Esquerda held on to exactly its last score and keeps its 5 MPs. However the PCP (Communist) lost a percentage point and two seats.

Government

Soon after the first projections, when the AD advantage was bigger, the PS representative accepted that the AD should form the government and they would go into opposition. The margin is wafer-thin although the previous governing party has clearly lost the most support. It is likely that the President will ask the AD to try and form a government.

Luis Montenegro has ruled out a government coalition with Chega even though the numbers are there. He has said that “no means no”, and has dubbed Ventura’s views as “xenophobic, racist, populist and excessively demagogic.” Probably the neo-liberal IL would join an AD government but their seats do not take the AD past 116 required. A lot depends on the PS sticking to its early position, already signposted in the campaign, that it would allow a minority AD government to be established. In that eventuality PS abstentions would mean AD would not require Chega votes to form a government. Given the final figures the PS could demand some political concessions or red lines from an AD government and perhaps anticipate new elections at some point. Certainly if the PS were not to be accommodating then the AD could change its position on an alliance with Chega.



Andre Ventura Photo: Esquerda net

The Right

Chega, with a fifth of the seats, now has a substantial political and material basis for further growth. Ventura has consistently says he wants to form a government with the AD. Unlike in Italy there was no pre-election coalition between his party and the AD. Ventura repeatedly declares he is not neo-fascist or far right. He originally was an activist in the PSD, the main party of the AD. His main campaign slogan was to "*Clean up Portugal*." He railed against the two party caste that has ruled Portugal for 50 years since the end of the dictatorship.

The Costa government fell because of corruption in his leadership group. It has been prevalent for many years. I remember going on a tennis holiday in the Algarve and discovered that the huge hotel and golf complex development there had involved bribes and kickbacks for politicians. So a campaign centred on kicking out the corrupt caste has proved effective.

Ventura outlined a whole raft of new laws and actions to weed out corruption – seizing assets, defining a new crime of illicit enrichment. AD failed to capitalise on the PS government failure to deal with low wages, declining health

services and soaring housing cross because it was seen as a co-manager of a corrupt system. The previous right-led government had carried out hard austerity policies. Chega appears to have taken votes from both the AD and the PS.

The other part of Ventura's clean-up is his racist offensive against immigrants and the Roma community. He proposes restricting immigration and creating a new crime of illegal residence. Over recent decades Portugal has gone from a country of net emigration to net immigration. Around 13% of the population come from migrant backgrounds. 70% of the population identify as White.

Chega also defends what it calls the traditional family and attacks women and LBGTQ+ rights.

If you combine this reality with the problems of inequality and austerity and the inadequate response of any governments to deal with these issues then you can see how Chega is able to blame migrants for the cost of living crisis or lack of housing. Chega's big advance has taken place under the second PS government which has not continued some of the progressive policies it enacted during his first government when the radical left parties, the Bloco and the PCP had enabled its formation on condition it carried out such a programme.

Today being excluded from government could provide the conditions for Chega to further grow. An AD government permitted to govern by the PS would provide further confirmation of its claim that the two party system is a stitch up against the people. If there were to be a more formal programmatic agreement that could create an even greater opening. The AD might still want Chega votes to pass legislation if the PS opposes specific laws. Ventura has said he has contacts with PSD people and one tactic will be to step up pressure on their MPs to be more open to an agreement with Chega. We are seeing this scenario of far right parties pulling mainstream right parties to more extreme positions or

working to create internal splits elsewhere in Europe.

Chega has important financial supporters. During the campaign the Civic Front exposed how it relied more on unnamed private backers than the official state funds for political parties. The Chega surge is part of the general rise of the far right or neo fascists in Europe and globally. This “creeping fascism” is pulling the mainstream right-of-centre parties to more extreme policies too. Already, leaders of Vox, the Spanish state neo-fascists and other far right leaders in Europe are sending in their congratulations to Ventura.

Bloco

The Bloco campaign focussed on putting forward radical measures on wages, health and housing as well as defending migrants, women and LGBTQ+ rights and calling on solidarity with Palestine. Unlike the PCP it has managed to maintain its electoral support and five seats. It also campaigned to stop the rise of Chega and a right wing government by proposing a new left wing agreement similar to the first Costa government. where it would give limited external support without taking ministerial posts. Clearly the failure to increase its support and the PS defeat meant this option is off the table. In this respect, the left as a whole has been pushed back in these elections.

In her first reaction to the results, Bloco leader Joana Mortágua, who was re-elected in Setúbal, said that they “confirm a shift to the right”, as a result of a “negative assessment, which we share, of how a PS government with an absolute majority delivered.” As for the Bloco’s result, by keeping the parliamentary group and increasing the vote compared to 2022, “it’s a sign that there’s confidence in the Bloco for whatever the political situation: whether it’s to form a majority or to be a determined and fierce opposition to the right.”

Livre (Free) a pro-European party with green credentials was the winner among the left-of-centre parties, tripling its vote and going from one to four MPs. Perhaps it is one reason why the Bloco did not succeed in significantly increasing its vote. It wins votes in the big urban areas and among similar demographics as the Bloco.

Austerity

Portugal remains one of the poorest and unequal countries in Europe, it is 24th in the Social Justice index in the EU. It has the world's fourth highest number of citizens over 65 years, 21.8% of the population. Recent governments have not protected the living standards of senior citizens. Rental costs have soared for ordinary people. One factor is the uncontrolled promotion of tourism means an explosion of Airbnb lets in cities like Lisbon and Porto which increases rental values. The gains of a national health service set up after the revolution 50 years ago have been very much eroded.

Now that even the social liberal left are out of power, defending social gains and the living standards of working people will need increased mobilisations in the workplaces and communities. increased polarisation and instability could increase rather than decrease with these election results.

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*Dave Kellaway is on the Editorial Board of Anti*Capitalist Resistance, a member of Socialist Resistance, and Hackney and Stoke Newington Labour Party, a contributor to International Viewpoint and Europe Solidaire Sans Frontieres.*

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Bloco promises to be “the most combative opposition to the right”

In her election night statement, Mariana Mortágua emphasized that despite the turn to the right in the electoral results, the Bloco managed to resist, maintaining its mandates and with more votes than in 2022.
The Left Bloc coordinator’s reaction to the results of the legislative elections came at a time when “the parliamentary situation is still not entirely clear”, given the close result between the PS and PSD that could be altered by the emigration votes.

Mariana Mortágua said that the shift to the right resulting from this Sunday’s elections “is a reflection of the failure of two years of disastrous politics by the PS’s absolute majority”.

LEGISLATIVE ELECTIONS RESULT IN A SHIFT TO THE RIGHT

But despite this shift, she emphasized that “the Bloc resisted and increased its votes by around 30,000. It stood firm in these elections, we kept all our seats”. And it is with this strength that “we will be part of any solution that removes the right from government,” she continued.

In this election, the Bloc re-elected two MPs in Lisbon (Mariana Mortágua and Fabian Figueiredo) and Porto (Marisa Matias and José Soeiro) and re-elected Joana Mortágua in Setúbal.

“I want the people of the left to know that they will have in the Bloc the most combative opposition to the right,” said the Bloc coordinator, promising to contribute to “building an alternative to the left to defend our people”.

11 March 2024

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*Translated by **International Viewpoint** from **Esquerda Net**->https://www.esquerda.net/artigo/bloco-promete-fazer-oposicao-mais-combativa-direita/90138].*

Main photo: https://www.bloco.org/

We can never forget Palestine

The latest post on MedyaNew by Sarah Glynn, Scottish Kurdish rights activist, talking on the relevance of Gaza to the Kurdish struggle and video on Twitter/X.

Sarah Glynn, herself an anti-Zionist Jew, discusses the relevance of Gaza to the Kurdish struggle. She states that the Palestinians of Gaza are undergoing a genocide. Israel's attack on Gaza will have a major international impact, as well as a direct effect on the power balance in the Middle East, Glynn says. Both Palestinians and Kurds suffer oppression under occupation, and the oppressors attempt to undermine a historic solidarity between the

oppressed, the columnist warns, while celebrating the success of the Kurdish Freedom Movement as a model of peaceful coexistence in the fractured multi-ethnic region.

Sarah Glynn

> *@sarahrglynn | Social scientist Sarah Glynn links the Palestinian cause and the Kurdish movement, in terms of occupation, oppression and resistance.#Palestine | #Occupation | #Genocide*
>
> *https://t.co/0eHRGxSApz pic.twitter.com/jTc3WnMbeN*
>
> *— MedyaNews (@1MedyaNews) March 11, 2024*

There is little that can be said about Palestine that has not already been said. There are no words left to describe the horror of the images daily streamed from Gaza, the brutality of the Israeli government that is inflicting this horror, and the depraved callousness of the international politicians who are enabling it. We are living through an epoch-changing moment, but I want to talk here about its specific relevance to the Kurds and the Kurdish struggle, and why no Kurd can ever forget Palestine. Some of these reasons are universal ones, others are specifically Kurdish.

The first reason is a simple one. The Palestinians of Gaza are undergoing a genocide, and nothing can ever justify that – not morally, and not legally either. This genocide is being committed brazenly in the full view of the whole world and with the complicity of international governments; only the biggest of mass mobilisations can stop it.

Second, the impact of what is happening in Palestine will be

of huge global importance. It raises vital questions about the nature and feasibility of international law, and feeds into the changing balance of world power. The repeated exposure of Western, and especially American, hypocrisy will have international implications.

Third, more specifically, Israel's attack on Gaza is having a direct effect on the balance of forces in the Middle East. What is happening in Palestine impacts every part of Kurdistan. In North and East Syria, Kurds fighting ISIS have a tactical alliance with the United States (an uncomfortable position to be in) and both have come under fire from pro-Iranian militias under the banner of the Axis of Resistance. In Turkey, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan is trying to present himself as the leading defender of the Palestinians (even while still trading with Israel and enabling the passage of over 40% of Israel's oil supplies that come from Azerbaijan). In Iraq, America's support for Israel is putting US forces under increasing pressure to leave the country. And in Iran, the regime is using Gaza to strengthen their position on the international stage, and to present themselves as on the right side of history. All this is in addition to the serious danger of the fighting spreading to other parts of the Middle East.

Fourth, both Palestinians and Kurds suffer oppression from occupying powers, and they have historically show solidarity with each other's struggles. Turkey and Israel share a similar colonial and ruthless approach to the main 'other' ethnic group over which they attempt to maintain control. Both deny basic rights and freedoms, including the right of self-determination. Both are quick to brand any-and-all resistance as 'terrorism', and to use this to justify brutal suppression. Both have no qualms about extending their classification of terrorists to include a whole population, and subjecting that population to collective punishment, including the destruction of homes and displacement of long-established communities.

Both carry out aggressive invasions under the pretence of defence. Statements put out by Presidents Erdoğan and Netanyahu are almost interchangeable, if you just swap "Kurds" with "Palestinians".

Historically, there was strong mutual support between the PKK and leftist groups in the PLO. The Palestinians helped train the PKK guerrillas, and thirteen PKK guerrillas died fighting against the Israeli occupation of Lebanon. Connections have been kept up by the Kurdish Freedom Movement more generally. Leyla Khaled of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) is a supporter of the pro-Kurdish leftist People's Democratic Party (HDP, now the DEM Party), and draws parallels between the Palestinian and Kurdish struggles and between the oppressions that both peoples face. At the HDP's 2018 congress, she condemned Turkey's invasion of Afrîn, and the following year she visited hunger-striking MP, Leyla Güven, and supported the hunger strikers' call for an end to the isolation of Abdullah Öcalan.

At the same time, and this is my fifth point, there is pressure to destroy Kurdish-Palestinian solidarity – a destruction that would only benefit the oppressors. While Erdoğan pretends to be a friend of the Palestinians, Zionists pretend to be friends of the Kurds.

Zionists also portray everything that is happening now as being a response to the 7 October attack by Hamas, rather than the reality which is that it is part of a 75-year history of Zionist settler colonialism, 56 years of Israeli occupation of Gaza and the West Bank, and sixteen years of Israel's blockade that turned Gaza into a vast concentration camp. Then – led by Netanyahu – they are insisting that Hamas is equivalent to ISIS – which they are not.

Hamas came to control Gaza because Israel refused to work honestly with the older secular Palestinian organisations, reneging on every agreement that the Palestinians conceded to.

They undermined the PLO and destroyed their credibility, and at the same time, they encouraged the growth of Hamas as a way to implement their own policy of "divide and rule". (Abdullah Öcalan warned that Turkey was attempting to create similar destructive divisions among the Kurds through promotion of the far-right Kurdish Islamist group, HÜDA-PAR.)

Hamas is an Islamist organisation: they don't support the idea of the separation of religion and politics, but believe that all of life, including politics, should be informed by religion and in conformity with religious law. In addition, and this is a separate issue, they condone attacks on Israeli civilians as a method of struggle. However, no one can genuinely compare life in Gaza with life under ISIS. By contrast, legitimate comparisons can be and are made between life in Israel/Palestine and life under South African apartheid, or even life in 1930s Germany. And Netanyahu's Zionism builds its support through a brutal distortion of Judaism that is being used to justify the murder of Palestinian children.

As cannot be repeated too often, opposing genocide is a fundamental human duty, and does not imply support for Hamas. We should be seriously worried about the growth of politics dictated by religion – any religion – though the extent of Palestinian support for this is unknown and currently unknowable. And, irrespective of the contested details of what happened on 7 October, we must also condemn all attacks that target civilians, which cross a fundamental ethical red line. But we won't draw people away from Hamas by keeping silent on the cause of Palestinian freedom – and even Palestinian survival – because we don't like Hamas' ideology and methods.

And lastly, and this time positively, with its emphasis on peaceful coexistence through bottom-up democracy, the Kurdish Freedom Movement can provide a model for a different way of understanding and organising society in this fractured multi-ethnic region. Outsiders cannot specify how others choose to

organise their lives, but, as people look for a way out of this nightmare, they can be encouraged and emboldened by an example that has come out of Middle East society and has taken root where it might not have been thought possible.

Informed by Öcalan's philosophy, the Democratic Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria (of the region known as Rojava) promotes a bottom-up democracy where decisions are made as close to where people live as possible, where women's rights are actively supported and patriarchal relations discouraged, and where care is taken to involve all ethnic groups in organisation at all levels.

The administration recognises differences in culture and the importance of different cultures, and it enables people from those different cultures to work together. This week, in majority-Arab Raqqa – the city that ISIS made their capital – women are loudly and publicly celebrating international women's day. The focus on coexistence contrasts with the ethnic nationalism promoted by nation states, which Öcalan argues are an intrinsically oppressive form of organisation.

I am not a Kurd and cannot presume to speak for the Kurdish community. I speak only as a social scientist, and as a Jew who has long recognised Zionism as a colonial and racist project, and protested against it – as many Jews have done since Zionism was invented at the end of the nineteenth century. Rather than ending the scourge of antisemitism, Zionism has fuelled new oppressions, and now this unimaginable horror.

Experience and reading have taught me that struggles against oppression in different places are strengthened by mutual support, while absence of support strengthens the oppressors. And that every time one oppressive nation gets away with impunity it encourages other oppressors.

I have also noted that the Kurdistan Communities Union – the

umbrella body that includes the PKK and all the groups that follow Öcalan's philosophy – has expressed solidarity with the Palestinian struggle while condemning the methods of Hamas, and that there have been clear statements from the DEM Party (formerly the HDP) calling for real support for the Palestinian people in place of Erdoğan's hypocrisy.

As they both point out, the Kurdish movement, inspired by Öcalan, has a unique contribution to make to any future resolution of Middle East Politics, through a model of different communities working together. The movement has attempted to put Öcalan's ideas into practice in North and East Syria, and sees this as an example for the whole of Syria, for the Middle East, and beyond. But it is an example that risks being lost and forgotten in the ongoing power struggles.

*Sarah Glynn is a writer and activist – check her website and follow her on Twitter.

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https://medyanews.net/we-can-never-forget-palestine/