

Stop killing prisoners with COVID-19!

written by Struggle - La Lucha
December 18, 2020



Tarik James Haskins



Brother Shep

Winter weather didn't stop people from protesting the coronavirus plague that's being allowed to sweep through U.S. prisons. Dozens gathered in front of New York City's main post office on 8th Avenue on Dec. 15. Other rallies were held in Philadelphia and Pittsburgh.

Prisoners are some of those most vulnerable to COVID-19. Over 200,000 of those locked up — one-out-of-ten inmates — have caught the virus. In an outbreak at California's San Quentin prison, [3,200 inmates fell ill](#) and 28 died.

At the New York rally, former political prisoner and Black Panther Tarik James Haskins described the dangerous prison conditions:

"I spent 17 years in various prisons. Consequently, I know prison superstructures provide highly favorable breeding grounds for contacting COVID-19.

"In most prisons four or more cells share the same vent shaft. When a prisoner in one cell lights up a smoke, all the other prisoners connected to his vent smell his

smoke.

“Moreover, those prisoners not housed in cell blocks are housed in dormitories. Their beds are not six feet apart. Both living arrangements provide ideal breeding grounds for contracting COVID-19.”

Governors procrastinate as prisoners die

Brother Shep — Sadiki Olugbala — of the Universal Zulu Nation chaired the rally. When he was 19 years old, Shep joined the Black Panther Party.

Relatives of prisoners talked of their imprisoned loved ones being refused adequate medical care. A granddaughter of Mutulu Shakur described how the 70-year-old political prisoner has been diagnosed with bone cancer. Yet prison authorities delayed giving him a cat scan.

Baba Zayid Muhammad tore into the governors of New York, New Jersey and Pennsylvania. The three Democratic officials have delayed freeing prisoners despite the dire health conditions that Tarik Haskins described.

Following the rally, people marched through Manhattan’s Penn Station with signs. A final rally was held across from Macy’s biggest department store.

SLL photos: Stephen Millies



Trump seeks war on Iran to save U.S. fracking industry

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Blood and oil and Trump and Biden, part 1

The Trump regime sees war with Iran as its salvation. They're using his last legal weeks in office to provoke one. The racist state of Israel is their advance guard and agent provocateur. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is a partner in the crime.

It's not about Iran's peaceful nuclear energy program. Or Trump's ego and legal woes. It's a last-ditch effort to bail out the fracking billionaires who own Trump and the Republican Party, and prevent the collapse of the U.S. fossil fuel industry.

Fracking — the hydraulic fracturing of oil and gas from shale rock — is the cornerstone of Trump's fantasy of "U.S. energy dominance." He tells his followers

it's a recipe for peace. But in fact the fracking industry needs endless war to survive. And the idea of "U.S. energy dominance" is genocidal and insane.

Blood and fracking

The "shale revolution" that once enchanted bankers and investors was a product of the energy-price boom caused by the 2003 Iraq War. It was an artificial bubble, sustained for over a decade by bloody wars and cruel sanctions.

It has now burst. Hundreds of billions of dollars have been lost. Mountains of debt cannot be repaid. The Trump regime is trying desperately to reinflate it.

The shale debacle turned many on Wall Street against Trump. But he retains a base among those capitalists whose fortunes depend on fracking.

Those fortunes are collapsing with the price of oil, and Trump's political fortune with them. The fracking barons are desperate for subsidies, tax breaks and an end to environmental regulation.

They are also desperate for an oil war. Not a war to "get oil" — contrary to popular belief, the U.S. has never, ever gone to war for that purpose. Rather, a war to restrict supply and drive up prices, profits and rates of return. That's what Washington's 30-year war in the "Middle East" (Western Asia and North Africa) is all about.

Stealing Palestine's gas

Also involved is the fate of Secretary of State Mike Pompeo's pet East Mediterranean Pipeline Project, a U.S.-Israeli scheme to bring stolen Palestinian gas to Europe. Its investors dream of challenging Russia for the European energy market.

The racist state of Israel has always been Washington's hit man in the region — a highly paid one. Washington props Israel up with an endless stream of arms and dollars. Within that relationship, the Republican Party and Netanyahu's Likud Party have a special alliance.

Their ties grew stronger in 2010, when Texas-based Noble Energy began drilling for gas in the stolen waters off the coast of Palestine. Noble built close links with the Trump campaign in 2016. In October 2020, oil giant Chevron acquired Noble for \$5 billion. It also assumed the company's \$8 billion debt. [Chevron has now replaced ExxonMobil](#) (XOM) as the largest U.S. oil monopoly.

On Oct. 20, the racist Israeli regime and the United Arab Emirates signed a deal to transport UAE oil to Europe via occupied Palestine. The oil would travel through the Eilat-Ashkelon Pipeline, built to bring Iran's U.S.-owned oil to Europe in the Shah's time. There is now talk of a direct pipeline from Saudi-occupied Arabia to the Mediterranean across stolen Palestinian land.

U.S. & Israel: partners for war

On Nov. 27, in a brazen terrorist attack, an Israeli death squad murdered Dr. Mohsen Fakrizadeh, director of Iran's Center for Defensive Innovation and Research. They ambushed him on his way to visit his family. Dr. Fakrizadeh helped Iran produce its own medical equipment, including a COVID-19 test kit. Trump retweeted an Israeli post praising his murder.

A week before Dr. Fakrizadeh's murder, Trump's Secretary of State Pompeo met Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu in Jerusalem. Bahrain's Foreign Minister Abdullatif Al Zayani joined them there. As Pompeo arrived in occupied Palestine, Israel's made-in-the-USA air force attacked Damascus International Airport in Syria.

War criminal Elliot Abrams, Trump's "special representative" on Iran and Venezuela,

met Netanyahu on Nov. 9. Abrams, who served under Ronald Reagan and both Bushes, has a long record of involvement with covert operations and death squads. He was pardoned by George H.W. Bush for lying to Congress about U.S. crimes in Central America.

On Nov. 21, the U.S. Air Force dispatched B-52 bombers to the Arabian/Persian Gulf. They flew over Israeli-occupied Palestine before landing in Qatar. Pompeo was in Qatar that day.

On Nov. 23, Pompeo and Netanyahu were in Saudi-occupied Arabia for a secret meeting with Crown Prince Mohamed Bin Salman. As they met, Yemeni Resistance missiles hit a Saudi ARAMCO oil storage site in Jeddah.

The Saudis deny this meeting happened. Reports say the Saudi prince is [reluctant to risk war](#) with Iran. Like the U.S. ruling class, the House of Saud is riven with factions.

On Nov. 30, the U.S. aircraft carrier Nimitz and its strike group of guided-missile cruisers and destroyers entered the Arab/Persian Gulf off the coast of Iran.

On Dec. 1, Israeli media reported a drone attack on Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps soldiers at the Iraq-Syria border. The IRGC is helping both countries fight U.S.- and Saudi-funded terrorists. It also claimed the assassination of an Iranian official in oil-rich Ahwaz province.

On Dec. 2, Pompeo was back in Riyadh, this time with Trump's son-in-law and adviser Jared Kushner and a "team." Kushner has built a real estate empire with Saudi and Israeli cash.

Kushner also went to Qatar to meet Prince Hamid Khalifa and bring him into the anti-Iran alliance. The ruling-class faction behind Trump wants to build an international alliance that outlasts his presidency.

On Dec. 10, U.S. B-52 bombers based in Louisiana flew another run over the Arab/Persian Gulf off the coast of Iran. Saudi, Bahraini and Qatari warplanes — made in the USA — flew with them.

Murder in Iraq and Yemen

The Trump regime has worked desperately to provoke war with Iran. Last Jan. 3, 2020, Trump ordered the assassination of Iranian Gen. Qassem Soleimani in Baghdad. Iraqi commander Abu Mahdi Al Mohandas was also murdered in the U.S. drone strike. The two had led the fight against ISIS and al-Qaida in Iraq and Syria.

Gen. Soleimani was in Iraq to meet Saudi representatives about reducing tensions. On Sept. 22, Trump bragged about the assassinations in a hate filled rant to the United Nations General Assembly.

Following the assassinations, on Jan. 10, Iraq's parliament voted that U.S. troops should leave the country. The Trump regime refused.

It has also escalated the war in Yemen. In March, U.S. Marines invaded the Yemeni island of Socotra. They came to back up UAE forces in the genocidal war against Yemen. Israeli troops joined them there.

Every 10 minutes, a Yemeni child dies from the brutal blockade that the U.S., Saudi Arabia and the UAE have imposed on that impoverished land.

In 2019, Trump vetoed bills restricting U.S. involvement in that war and ending U.S. arms sales to Saudi Arabia.

On Dec. 11, Steve Mnuchin's Treasury Department [put sanctions on five Yemeni officials](#). The White House says it will add Yemen's Ansarullah government — the "Houthis" — to the State Department terror list. Aid organizations say that that will make it harder to bring humanitarian aid to the war-ravaged country.

On Dec. 9, Iran sanctioned U.S. Ambassador to Yemen Christopher Henzel for his role in the humanitarian catastrophe there.

Trump's 'peace deals' are war moves

War with Iran is the object of Trump's vaunted ["Abraham Accords."](#) That's what he calls the "peace deal" he "brokered" between Bahrain, the United Arab Emirates and the Israeli occupation regime in Palestine.

Bahrain is over 1,200 miles from Palestine. The UAE is more than 1,600 miles away. Neither state has ever been at war with Israel. Bahrain is, however, only 480 miles over open water from Iran. The UAE is just over 600 miles away. That's 20 and 30 minutes respectively as the F-35 stealth fighter flies.

The U.S. has already gifted Israel two squadrons of F-35s. On Dec. 9, the U.S. Senate approved Trump's \$23 billion arms sales to the UAE. Fifty F-35s are included in the sale. Lockheed Martin keeps a production line running to supply F-35s to Bahrain.

On Dec. 10, Trump announced that U.S.-backed King Mohammed VI of Morocco would also "normalize" relations with the Israeli settler state. In return, the U.S. would openly recognize Morocco's annexation of the Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic. The king, who has a personal fortune of \$2.1 billion, spent \$3.5 billion of his people's money on U.S. arms this year.

The 'supermajors'

Powerful forces in the U.S. ruling class are wary of Trump's war schemes in the Arab/Persian Gulf, unless they can be assured of a quick victory and that they would reap the benefits.

They worry about its impact on their European and Asian investments, the price of

oil and the value of the U.S.'s No. 1 export: the dollar. Bankers fear war would disrupt the flow of petrodollars that the ruling families of the Arabian peninsula pour into their vaults.

The four energy “supermajors” — XOM, Chevron, British Petroleum and Royal Dutch Shell — made huge profits off the wars in Iraq, Libya and Syria. Now they share the crisis of their industry. They have lost tens of billions of dollars this year.

In January, Chevron wrote off \$11 billion in fracking investments. In August, BP — registered in Britain but controlled by U.S. investors — reported a \$17 billion second-quarter loss. XOM, once the crown jewel of the Rockefeller empire, lost its 92-year-old spot on S&P's Dow Jones Industrial Average. On Dec. 1, the oil giant wrote off \$20 billion in U.S. domestic assets, the biggest downgrade in its history.

Their most important strength in the world market is their relationship with Saudi Aramco, which owns the biggest and cheapest oil reserves in the world. They once owned it outright, when it was the Arabian-American Oil Company. They still control most of its exports. They also operate in Iraq, Kuwait, Bahrain and the UAE. With those resources, they dominate the Asian energy market.

The Big Four have close ties to JPMorgan Chase and Citibank, which “manage” hundreds of billions of Gulf State petrodollars. XOM owns much of the Saudi petrochemical industry.

Those companies owned Iran's oil when the U.S. puppet Shah was in power. When the Iranian people overthrew the tyrant in 1979, they lost a gold mine. They dream of overthrowing the Islamic Republic and making Iran a colony again.

But a war that disrupts Arabian energy production or closes the Straits of Hormuz could make their bad situation worse. They don't want to lose vital markets to Russia — which they see as their main competitor — or lose out to their rivals in the U.S.

fracking industry. Trump helped his friends at Cheniere Energy score liquefied natural gas (LNG) supply contracts with China and South Korea this year.

[“Middle East Escalation Threatens Global Chemical Supply, Demand,”](#) Business & Industry Connection magazine warned after the Soleimani assassination.

Like the frackers, the supermajors want higher prices. But the prices the frackers need would also boost the renewable energy and electric vehicle industries. In their fight for the world market, the supermajors need access to cheaper production.

‘Game of Thrones’ in Washington: Persian Gulf vs. Permian Basin

Former XOM CEO Rex Tillerson was Trump’s first secretary of state. He said it was in the “U.S. interest” to stay in the Iran nuclear deal. Trump fired him in March 2018. Secretary of Defense Jim Mattis agreed with Tillerson. He was gone by the end of that year.

Trump replaced Tillerson with CIA Director Mike Pompeo. In his time on Capitol Hill, Pompeo was known as the “Congressman from Koch.” Koch Industries gets most of its revenue from North American energy operations. It also competes with XOM in the petrochemical industry.

For Koch, a devastating war in the Arab/Persian Gulf would be a windfall. As it would be for all the fracking barons and speculators behind Trump. They don’t have access to the oil and gas of West Asia, Africa and South America. The supermajors have locked them out. They don’t have interlocking directorates with transnational banks and corporations or their vast cash reserves. They want to follow in the footsteps of the Rockefellers, Pews and Mellons: robber barons who became monopolists. They are a century too late.

Their profits come from the Permian Basin in the southwestern U.S. — a region stolen from Mexico and Indigenous peoples — not the Persian Gulf. Yet they are no

less imperialist than their blue-chip cousins. They too must follow the iron law of capital: expand or die. They too are in constant struggle with declining rates of profit. They too must conserve the value of their capital and find new outlets for its profitable investment.

That law has driven every U.S. imperialist war since President William McKinley invaded Cuba, Puerto Rico and the Philippines in 1898.

The billionaires who own Trump

Who are they? "[Big oil remembers 'friend' Trump with millions in campaign funds](#)," the British Guardian reported August 9. The headline is misleading.

The capitalists behind Trump are very rich indeed. But they are not from among the shrinking club of giant multinationals that made up Big Oil. They are "new money" oil drillers and speculators, corporate "outsiders." Their fortunes multiplied in the energy-price boom created by the Iraq War. The biggest banks flooded them with cash. They are deep in debt and fighting to survive.

The Iraq War pushed them into the big leagues. Trump got them the White House. They don't want to give it up.

The Guardian article describes a fundraising gala for Trump at billionaire Kelcy Warren's "palatial Dallas, Texas, home." Warren's company, Energy Transfer Partners, is majority owner and operator of the Dakota Access Pipeline (DAPL).

Trump's first act in office was to unleash federal troops against Native water protectors blocking the pipeline. Trump personally invested in ETP and Phillips 66, which owns 25% of DAPL.

The Guardian also mentioned Trump donors Harold Hamm of Continental Resources, Jeff Hildebrand of Hilcorp, John Catsimatidis of United Refining Co.,

Syed Anwar of Midland Energy, Robert Murray of Murray Energy and Joe Craft of Alliance Resource Partners. Joe Craft is married to Kelly Craft, Trump's representative to the United Nations. She introduced his hate-Iran talk at the General Assembly in September by bragging about U.S. intervention in Syria.

Other big capitalists who've bet big on Trump and fracking include Blackstone Group's Steven Schwarzman, Ken Fisher of Fisher Investments, Texas banker Andy Beal, John Paulson of Paulson & Co., Jack Fusco of Cheniere Energy, Henry Kravis of KKR, Marc Rowan of Apollo Global Management, Paul Singer of Elliot Management, and the Hunts and the Wilks brothers. Oil-money heirs Timothy Mellon and Ross Perot Jr. also gave big to the Trump campaign.

Schwarzman has since called for Trump to accept the election results. So has energy magnate Charles Koch, who helped put the Manhattan real estate parasite in the White House. No doubt promises have been made.

Trump's biggest lie

In the Oct. 22 presidential debate, Trump told a whopper even by his standards. "We are energy independent for the first time," he claimed. "We don't need all of these countries that we had to fight wars over because we needed their energy. We are energy independent."

But even Trump knows that Washington's 30-year war in the "Middle East" is not about getting oil. He knows it's a war for monopoly, to control the world's energy reserves and revenues. Trump basically admitted that a year ago when he ordered U.S. troops to seize Syria's oil fields. He offered them to XOM.

Trump also knows that the U.S. fracking industry cannot survive without endless war.

Fracking barons need war

Fracking is not only environmentally destructive. It is very expensive. It costs from \$45 to \$90 per barrel to extract a barrel of oil from North American shale. Pumping a barrel of crude in Iran or Iraq costs less than \$10. A barrel of heavy crude from Venezuela's Orinoco Belt costs about \$12 to pump. A barrel from Arabia's giant Ghawar Field costs less than \$3.

A barrel of bitumen oil from Canada's Athabaskan tar sands costs \$85 to produce. The Koch brothers made billions there after the Iraq war. They abandoned their leases there last year.

Meanwhile, the onward march of technology is making renewable energy — wind, solar, fuel cells, etc. — cheaper and more practical, threatening the future of fossil fuels.

In April, the [price of oil fell to -\\$40 a barrel](#) — that is, below the cost of production. Oil companies had to pay for storage. It wasn't just the COVID pandemic. There was a price war between Russia and Saudi Arabia.

[“Bloodbath For America's Oil Frackers As Saudis Declare Price War On Russia”](#) was the headline of a March 9 article in Forbes magazine.

Here is how Forbes described the situation: “Oil companies are suffering massive share price losses, with ExxonMobil down 10%, Chevron 13% and BP 19%. Shares in Saudi Aramco also lost about 10%, sending the implied market cap of the world's biggest oil giant down to \$1.6 trillion—down 20% from its December high.

“Those losses are modest. The pain is much more acute among the heavily indebted, high-cost shale frackers like Chesapeake Energy (-22%), EOG Resources (-30%), Occidental Petroleum (-35%), Marathon Oil (-40%) and Diamondback Energy (-48%) so far today.

“At the beginning of 2020 oil prices were just above \$60 per barrel — even that was

scarcely high enough for American drillers to break even. Now all of a sudden we've nearly revisited the lows of \$26 last seen during the price war of 2016."

The Financial Times of March 29 declared, "[Wall Street calls time on the shale revolution.](#)"

What did Trump do? In words, he tweeted, "Good for drivers, low gas prices." But in deeds, he ordered the U.S. Strategic Reserve to buy oil and drive up prices. Then he [gave the Saudis an ultimatum](#): Stop the price war and cut production. If not, the U.S. would end military support for the genocide in Yemen.

War in Iraq made fracking profitable

The year 2020 has been the energy industry's worst year since 1998. That's when the collapse of the Russian ruble drove prices below \$10 a barrel. That crash happened despite the murderous sanctions on Iraq imposed by the first Bush regime. Bill Clinton continued the Bush sanctions, hoping to induce U.S. oil firms to invest in the former USSR.

The year 1998 was also the year that Texas wildcatter George W. Mitchell patented the technology that the fracking industry uses today. It took the 2003 invasion of Iraq to make it profitable.

The entire U.S. ruling class and political establishment united behind the Iraq War, and the invasion of Afghanistan before that. Sen. Joe Biden of Delaware was the cheerleader from the Democratic side of the aisle.

Blood feast in Iraq

The U.S. invasion of Iraq devastated that country. Hundreds of thousands of Iraqi people died. Five million children became orphans. Six million people became refugees.

In the U.S., skyrocketing fuel prices forced poor families to choose between heating and eating. Lakota elders on the Pine Ridge reservation burned their clothes for fuel. Venezuela's Bolivarian government led by Hugo Chávez donated heating oil to help poor and oppressed communities in the United States. The U.S. government didn't care.

For Big Oil and Wall Street, the war was a bonanza. To these modern-day plunderers, Iraq was what the silver mines of Potosí were to the 16th-century Spanish conquistadores. Except in this case, the plunder came not from enslavement and exploitation but from simple destruction.

Accumulation by destruction

In 2002, before U.S. invaders destroyed Iraq's state-owned oil industry, the price of West Texas Intermediate crude, a benchmark used by the oil industry, hovered around \$20 a barrel. By April 2003, when U.S. tanks rolled into Baghdad, WTI crude was over \$40 a barrel. By 2007, it hit \$79 a barrel. XOM and Chevron saw their profits rise nearly 300%.

Then, the 2007 subprime mortgage meltdown hit. Prices fell back to \$30 a barrel. In January 2008, the U.S. Navy provoked a confrontation with Iran in the Straits of Hormuz. In March, the Bush regime imposed new sanctions on Iran, Sudan, Syria and Venezuela.

By July, oil prices soared to \$147 a barrel. It was XOM's most profitable year ever. The oil giant's market cap hit \$504 billion. It was \$234 billion in 2002, the year before the invasion of Iraq.

Mass murder in Iraq made profitable the DAPL and Keystone XL pipelines, the plunder of Canada's tar sands, and mountaintop removal projects in Appalachia. Or so it seemed.

Shelved projects like BP's Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan pipeline from the Caspian Sea to the Mediterranean and XOM's Chad-Cameroon Pipeline in West Africa became realities. XOM and Saudi Aramco built a huge refinery in Tianjin, China.

The slaughter unleashed a 21st-century gold rush into the shale plays and tar sands of North America. Credit flowed like a river. "Nonperforming" loans became "performing" loans. "Nonproductive" assets became "productive" assets. Millionaires and billionaires became multibillionaires.

XOM and Chevron competed with "new money" wildcatters and speculators for fields once thought marginal. The biggest banks competed to finance them all.

Shale oil, bitumen, offshore drilling, coal, even ethanol, all flourished. Firms like General Electric and Berkshire Hathaway poured money into fracking. Four of the top 10 companies on Fortune's 500 list for 2009 were energy companies. XOM was No. 1. In 2020, only XOM remained, at No. 3.

The flood of investment in North American shale paid off big in Obama's second term. In 2013, the U.S. Energy Information Agency declared that the U.S. had replaced Russia and Saudi Arabia as the world's top petroleum producer. (Trump, of course, claims it happened on his watch and that he made it possible.)

Capitalist bubbles always burst

But the boom was not without downsides for the U.S. capitalist class as a whole. High oil prices hurt such sectors as airlines, retail, auto sales, trucking and delivery companies and online retailers dependent on them (including Amazon).

High prices helped oil-producing countries free themselves from the grip of U.S. finance capital. They empowered the Venezuelan-led ALBA bloc in South and Central America and Libyan leader Muammar Qadaffi's vision of an African central bank and a gold-backed pan-African currency.

The Chávez government in Venezuela was able to build 500,000 units of rent-free housing and even help poor and oppressed communities in the U.S. It also strengthened Russia economically and militarily. A surge of Russian direct overseas investment challenged Wall Street.

But the biggest problem was capitalism itself. When prices and profits boom, capitalists will produce and invest more than “the market can bear.” Collapse follows. Every capitalist bubble bursts. Every boom leads to a crash.

In 2009, XOM spent \$30 billion to buy fracking giant XTO. The firm was No. 5 on Fortune’s list of “100 fastest-growing companies.” The purchase made the biggest U.S. oil company the biggest gas producer in North America.

Financial analysts now say that the purchase was the worst decision the XOM ever made. On Dec. 1, 2020, the giant wrote off XTO as a \$20 billion loss.

From restricting supply to predatory pricing

The Obama administration’s wars inflated the bubble further.

The year 2011 was a bloody year. The U.S. and its NATO allies bombed Libya and murdered Muammar Qadaffi. It joined with the Saudis, the UAE and Israel to arm and fund a mercenary war in Syria. That war has raged for nine years and taken hundreds of thousands of lives. It has blocked construction of the planned Friendship Pipeline, a project to bring natural gas from Iran and Iraq to the Mediterranean.

The U.S. also imposed new sanctions on Iran, Sudan and Venezuela. Oil prices stayed over \$90 a barrel.

Nonetheless, by January 2014, overproduction was driving prices downward. In February, the U.S.-backed coup in Ukraine threatened Russian energy shipments to

Europe. “Oil hovers near \$108 as Ukrainian crisis worsens,” CNN reported on April 14, 2014. Foreign Affairs magazine, the organ of the Council on Foreign Relations, devoted its spring issue to the glorious future fracking would bring.

Russian gas kept flowing west, however. And east. In May 2014, Russia and China agreed to build a \$55-billion gas pipeline, called Power of Siberia, from Yakutsk to China. A second pipeline deal was signed that September.

In July 2014, Russian President Vladimir Putin toured Latin America, meeting Fidel Castro, Daniel Ortega, Nicolás Maduro and Brazilian President Dilma Rousseff. In Havana, Putin announced that Cuba’s \$32-billion debt to Russia was canceled. Russia agreed to help Cuba develop newly discovered oil deposits in its waters, pledged more aid to Venezuela and to help build a canal across Nicaragua.

Washington responded with a major strategy shift, from doomed efforts to restrict supply to “predatory pricing.” Ida Tarbell popularized that term in the late 19th century to describe a tactic John D. Rockefeller’s Standard Oil trust used to crush its competitors. The Reagan regime and Saudi Arabia used it in the 1980s against the Soviet Union.

In June 2014, Secretary of State John Kerry met Saudi King Abdullah in Riyadh. According to Reuters, Kerry and Abdallah “briefly discussed oil supplies.” In reality, the U.S. ordered its Saudi clients to ramp up production and flood the world oil markets. The two met again in September.

On Nov. 27, at an OPEC ministers’ meeting in Vienna, the Saudis blocked production cuts. When the Saudis opened their taps, everyone else had to do the same. The price of oil plummeted. By January 2015, it was back below \$40 a barrel.

The Saudis got paid off in March 2015, with U.S. support for their war against Yemen.

Another kind of war

U.S. corporate media, which pretend the Saudi kingdom is an independent country, played the price war as an attack on U.S. producers: OPEC vs. Texas. "[Oil prices keep plummeting as OPEC starts a price war with the U.S.](#)," Vox news reported dutifully. But in fact, the "price war" was waged in collaboration with both Washington and the oil supermajors who export and market most Saudi oil.

Rightwing military analyst Ralph Peters (USA Lt. Col. ret.) called it more honestly. "[Saudi Arabia's oil war against Iran and Russia](#)" was how he described it in Rupert Murdoch's New York Post (Dec. 14, 2014).

"Did you know there's an oil war? And the war has an objective: to destroy Russia," [Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro said](#) on Dec. 29, 2014. "It's a strategically planned war ... also aimed at Venezuela, to try and destroy our revolution and cause an economic collapse."

"The fall of the oil prices is not just something ordinary and economical, this is not due to only global recession," [said Iran's Prime Minister Hassan Rouhani](#). "It is a political conspiracy by certain countries against the interest of the region and the Islamic world."

The U.S. fracking industry also took a beating, however. To the supermajors it was all good. They had huge cash reserves, ties to the biggest banks, and cheap oil and gas from around the world. If the "independent" drillers went under, they could buy up their assets and take their place in the next boom.

"Exxon Could Be the Big Winner of the Oil Crash," wrote Bloomberg News on Feb. 2, 2015.

Fracking barons revolt, bring in Israel

Then the Obama White House announced progress on the Iran nuclear deal (JCPOA), which could lead to lifting sanctions. "[Iran's Nuclear Deal Could Open Oil Flood](#)," Murdoch's Wall Street Journal warned (March 15, 2015).

(Full disclosure: Rupert Murdoch sits on the board of New Jersey-based Genie Energy, which had a contract to explore for oil in the Israeli-occupied Golan Heights. The project was found to be "not commercially viable" — prices weren't high enough.)

The frackers rebelled. Their political servants in the Republican Party invited Israel's Netanyahu to address a hate-Iran, hate-Obama rally in the Capitol on March 3, 2015. It was an unprecedented action.

In June 2015, Trump threw his hat into the ring. He made tearing up the JCPOA a plank on his platform. He also said Saudi Arabia should have nuclear weapons. And he raved against Obama's alleged "war on coal."

Price wars are easier to start than to finish. Capitalist market forces don't advance or retreat on command. By 2016, even the supermajors were hurting. In April, Standard & Poor's stripped XOM of its AAA credit rating. It had held that rating since the Great Depression, when the company was known as Standard Oil of New Jersey.

The Saudis and the UAE also chafed at Washington's low price diktat. They threatened to cut back on U.S. arms contracts. They funneled money to the Trump campaign.

Trump's rebellion of oil billionaires

Donald Trump's campaign was neither a Russian plot nor a populist upsurge. It was a rebellion of the fossil fuel industry against low prices, environmental regulations and the Obama administration's retreat from military confrontation with Iran and

Syria.

In December 2016, the Obama White House ordered work stopped on the DAPL pipeline. It was a parting shot against the frackers. Trump lifted the stop-work order and unleashed federal troops against Indigenous water protectors.

In January 2017, the Saudis made major production cuts and most of OPEC followed. [“Saudis cut oil output to lowest in 2 years, pledge further reductions,”](#) Reuters reported (Jan. 12, 2107).

Trump wanted to assassinate Syria’s president

In April 2017, Trump did what Obama backed down from doing in September 2013. He ordered the first direct U.S. attack on Syrian government forces: a missile strike on the Syrian airbase at Al Shayrat. In September 2020, Trump told Fox News that he had planned to order the murder of Syrian President Bashar Assad. He said Secretary of Defense James Mattis restrained him.

The exit of Tillerson and Mattis marked the breaking of the alliance that put Trump in the White House. The most desperate “new money” oil interests and speculators were now in charge. They were less interested in invasion and occupation than the [quick profits of destruction](#). War with Iran was their priority.

Everything the Trump regime has done in the last two years — from troop redeployments to the courting of Turkey’s President Recep Erdoğan — should be seen in that context.

An example of the conflicts inside the ruling class was Trump’s April 21, 2020, order to Chevron to stop drilling in Venezuela. It was good for Trump’s fracking bosses and bad for Venezuela. But it was also bad for Chevron.

The new regime

What will Joe Biden do? The same as every other U.S. president has done: What he's told.

Presidents, including Trump, are not decision makers. They are paid actors hired by ruling class factions. There will be a fight over which ruling class faction does the telling.

In monopoly capitalist states, finance capital is the ultimate power. But even the bankers are not their own masters. The sands of the world economy shift constantly beneath their feet. They are slaves to the ceaseless battle of capital against crisis and contraction, which defines the monopoly capitalist era.

The Biden regime is also a coalition. It faces the same contradictions as Trump's does. There is the clash between the position of U.S. monopoly capital in the world economy and the need and right of oppressed nations to develop their own productive forces. There is a constant battle for position between capitalist factions, which intensifies in times of economic contraction.

It often appears as a fight over grand strategy, but usually comes down to who gets what. Both are expressions of the contradiction between the explosive growth of human productivity and the fetters of capitalist ownership. That contradiction leads inevitably to crisis and war.

The real interests of working-class and oppressed people in this country are opposed to those of monopoly capital. We have nothing to gain from U.S. banks and investment funds being at the center of the world economy. Imagine how much better off we would be in a world of cooperation, not competition, destruction and plunder.

Shut down the U.S. Central Command! Bring home all the troops, ships, planes, spies and other weapons and agents of destruction! End the sanctions! End all U.S.

aid to the racist state of Israel!

Make the arms plants manufacture vaccines, ventilators, medical equipment and PPE, not weapons of destruction. Money for health care, housing, schools and the people, not endless war!



Trump's racist revenge executions

written by Struggle - La Lucha
December 18, 2020

During his final days in the White House, Trump is executing more prisoners than any U.S. president has since the 1950s. Starting on Bastille Day (July 14) this year, 10 prisoners have been put to death by the U.S. government.

[Five of those executed were Black and one was Indigenous.](#) The mentally disabled Black man Alfred Bourgeois was executed on Dec. 11, despite the opposition of Supreme Court Justice Sonia Sotomayor.

Two more Black men — Cory Johnson and Dustin John Higgs — are awaiting execution.

Trump also wants to kill Lisa Montgomery, a white woman who suffered psychosis from childhood rapes. Montgomery would be the first woman executed by the U.S. government since Ethel Rosenberg was burned to death in the electric chair for allegedly typing spy reports.

Killing people by lethal injection doesn't satisfy Trump. His Justice Department [changed the rules](#) to allow prisoners to be electrocuted or shot by a firing squad. Crucifixions are still a no-no.

The wave of executions is Trump's revenge for losing the election by 7 million votes. The billionaire president blames Black, Indigenous and Latinx voters for his defeat.

While Rudy Giuliani and other Trump lawyers are trying to throw out Black votes, Trump wants to execute as many Black, Indigenous and Latinx people as he can. The only reason Trump hasn't executed any Latinx prisoners is because those on federal death row haven't exhausted their appeals.

Trump has a special hatred for Indigenous people. He refuses to pardon Leonard Peltier. The framed American Indian Movement leader has spent 44 years in federal prisons.

Trump [lost Arizona](#) by just 10,457 votes. But he lost Arizona's Apache County — which is 77% Indigenous — by 11,854 votes.

Trump's lust for revenge is shared by his Proud Boy supporters. The [fascists attacked two historic Black churches](#) in Washington, D.C., on Dec. 12 and set Black Lives Matter banners on fire.

Many more executed by Trump

Those killed on federal death row are just a small percentage of those executed by Trump. He bragged about [ordering U.S. Marshals to execute](#) anti-racist activist

Michael Reinhoehl on Sept. 3 without a trial.

Trump also executed Iranian Maj. Gen. Qasem Soleimani by a drone strike in Baghdad on Jan. 3. The Iraqi government wasn't consulted about assassinating the father of two children.

Thousands of children and adults killed by drones and bombs in Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya, Somalia and Yemen were executed by Trump. Two million Yemeni children [suffering from severe malnutrition](#) are being slowly executed by Trump.

Will Biden be any different? The president-elect says he's now against the death penalty. So is Vice President-elect Kamala Harris.

Biden was singing another tune when he was a U.S. senator. He voted for the Antiterrorism and Effective Death Penalty Act of 1996. Some of those executed by Trump were killed under its provisions.

Biden [declared](#) that "the liberal wing of the Democratic Party is now for 60 new death penalties. The liberal wing of the Democratic Party is for 100,000 cops. The liberal wing of the Democratic Party is for 125,000 new state prison cells."

Biden changed his position on the death penalty only because of the Black Lives Matter movement with over 20 million people in the streets.

In 1988, George Bush-the-First defeated the Democratic presidential candidate Michael Dukakis by 7 million votes. The elder Bush ran racist ads about Willie Horton, a Black prisoner, and emphasized Dukakis' opposition to the death penalty.

Thirty-two years later, Joe Biden, running on an anti-death penalty platform, defeated Donald Trump by 7 million votes. Biden's 81 million votes were almost double the votes cast for Dukakis.

Some Democratic Party leaders are claiming candidates can't win calling for community control of the police or defunding them. That's the same thing that was said about the death penalty.

Why isn't Trump on death row?

If the death penalty is supposedly reserved for the worst murderers, why isn't Elliot Abrams on death row? The war criminal has the blood of thousands on his hands by organizing death squads throughout Central America in the 1980s.

Abrams is now attempting to overthrow the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela's elected president, Nicolás Maduro Moros.

Why isn't Trump awaiting execution for murdering children? Among his victims was [19-month-old Mariee Juárez](#). She died because of neglect and mistreatment in one of Trump's migrant concentration camps.

The death penalty, like deportations and police terror, is meant to terrorize the working class.

There's never been a millionaire executed in the U.S. The death penalty is reserved for the poor.

But it's billionaires like Trump who spread death and misery all over the earth.



Traveling to Cuba in the time of COVID-19

written by Struggle - La Lucha

December 18, 2020

Of course, by the time this small story is read, the conditions and procedures giving rise to these experiences will likely have changed.

We hope that one thing will change and be no more: COVID-19, now spreading silently where people gather, especially inside, in enclosed spaces, where people are in close, extended contact. Airlines say the air on planes is filtered. Passengers respected the marked-off, socially distanced seating at the gate, but, as Cuba travelers know, the U.S. economic, financial and commercial blockade makes our travel experience from the U.S. special.

Unable to travel to Cuba since March and with remittance transfers via Western Union newly blocked by the U.S., my co-fliers had plenty of luggage. Personal check-in required. The airline is required to ask, record and keep the category each passenger declares for the privilege of a general license to travel. A privilege only

for travelers from the U.S. and those under U.S. jurisdiction. Cuban tourist visa? General license category? Surcharge for COVID-19 health screening? The line was long, slow and closely packed although with proper face coverings.

I drove from Detroit to Tampa, my direct flight to Havana departure point. The 17 hours in my coronavirus safe car seemed to be a wise decision to minimize airport time, especially when I heard that a recent traveler to Cuba tested positive in her second test. She traveled through three airports and planes.

My traveling outfit included an N95 mask donated by my scientist brother, a cloth mask over that plus a face shield. The airline notified us in advance that the center seats would not be reserved on this flight, offering to reschedule if we objected. I arrived at the airport at 8:30 a.m. My flight took off at 1 p.m. and landed about 50 minutes later. We were told to stay seated when the doors opened.

The first 12 rows were called to stand. In groups of 10, we deplaned down the steps, walking a short way to the terminal. Usually, the reception area is a wide-open space with passport control booths at the other side. Not this day. A barrier channeled us all to the left where our health certificate — with our passport number added to it — was collected by a nurse who gave me a small box with a number written on the top. I was number 51.

The testing stations, each with two seats, made short work of the line, opening the way for the next 10. The little box had a vial for my test. A little swab in each nostril and I was on my way to the familiar passport control. Then carry-on x-ray and metal detectors. Collect bags with nothing to declare and off to the taxi stand. Oh, I thought maybe I'd go to an etecsa store [the government telecommunications service provider] and get a Cuban SIM card for my phone. Nope — directly to your place of accommodation and stay there until your test result.

Or so I thought. I arrived on Wednesday. On Thursday, a nice doctor came by to

check on my health. She impressed on the person I am renting from, who lives just down the hall, that there are stiff fines for both of us if I violate the quarantine. The fine is not what keeps me in the apartment. Every day, I watch the COVID-19 report. Eighty-six new cases, most in Havana, many from visitors. Respect for the Cuban medical system that has controlled the virus and avoided most deaths, without a vaccine, keeps me inside.

Cuba, too, is testing vaccines — four of them. But they didn't wait to save lives. The Cubans know what they are doing. Then, on Friday, another nice doctor came by, but with a paper for me to sign that says to stay inside for 10 days! Friday is only day two or three. And I am only here for 14 days!

The person I am renting from is intersecting with the Consultorio to explain the situation. Hopefully, I will get my second test on Monday — 5 days after arriving, then a day or two for results, and it will be seven or eight days not ten.

The process for people staying in hotels — by the way, people from the U.S. are forbidden to stay in Cuban hotels by the U.S. government — or people staying with their families isn't part of my experience

It is in the interest of all of us on both sides of the Florida straits to #unblockCuba2021. Please support the Saving Lives Campaign (on Facebook or at [SavingLivesCampaign.org](https://www.savinglivescampaign.org)) to get your union, city council or state legislature to pass a resolution to speak out against this 60-year injustice.

Nine U.S. cities and three labor councils have done this since May 5. Together we can make 2021 the year to end the blockade of Cuba.



Mass voter opposition leaves rulers of the world's largest economy in a struggle for stability

written by Struggle - La Lucha

December 18, 2020

Donald Trump was the biggest loser in the November election.

In a record turnout of the voting-eligible population, 51.4% of the vote went to Joe Biden and Kamala Harris. Donald Trump and Mike Pence got 46.9% of the vote. It was the biggest voter turnout percentage-wise since 1908, with more than 66% of those eligible voting.

Trump had made racism the core of his campaign, and the vote was mostly seen as a rejection of Trump and racism.

The U.S. consistently has nearly the lowest voter turnout of all the industrialized countries in the world. This is due, in part, to the extensive voter suppression in the

U.S. — including poll taxes, registration fees and “literacy tests” — and the many undemocratic measures that prevent participation in the elections, such as holding voting only on work days.

There are also millions who are blocked from voting because they are immigrants or were formerly incarcerated. Also, the unofficial — but strictly enforced — rule that only a Democrat or Republican can be president discourages a great many voters.

This election year had unusual complications because of COVID-19, which made voting at traditional polling stations dangerous. As a result, many voted by mail. Voting by mail is not only safe, it is democratic, removing some of the restrictions that prevent people from voting. Trump, therefore, has made a special issue of opposing voting by mail.

Donald Trump encouraged his supporters to vote in person, while the anti-Trump voters generally voted by mail. Since in-person votes were usually counted first, Trump racked up huge initial leads in most of the swing states as returns were reported on the evening of Nov. 3. At that point, Trump declared victory.

However, by the following day, as the mail-in votes were counted, Trump’s large leads in those states disappeared. By Friday, Nov. 6, it was clear that Biden had won the Electoral College as well as the popular vote.

However, the Associated Press, which unofficially declares the president-elect, held out for another day. On Nov. 7, AP finally declared Joe Biden the president-elect of the United States.

This unusual delay gave Trump and the Republicans a considerable head start in their campaign to steal the 2020 election. The archaic U.S. Constitution, written in 1787 — modeled on the slave-holding Roman Republic’s government, with its senate and single consul (president) with supreme command of the army and the civil

administration which was chosen by something like the Electoral College — provides many ways to disregard the majority vote against Trump.

First, Trump demanded recounts and looked for evidence of voter fraud. By voter fraud, Trump does not mean the suppression of the Black, Brown and Indigenous vote. Trump says there was ballot-box stuffing, with Democratic voters sending mail-in ballots and then voting in person, noncitizen immigrants voting, ballots sent in the name of dead people, and computerized voting machines programmed to flip a certain percentage of Trump votes to Biden.

If Trump could block the votes in a few key cities — Detroit, Philadelphia and Atlanta were particularly targeted — he could shift the Electoral College vote enough to claim victory, even though he still would have lost the popular vote badly. The trick was to shift just 4 states so that Trump would have 269 electoral votes, causing an Electoral College tie that Congress likely would have decided in his favor.

According to the Constitution, if no candidate gets a majority in the Electoral College, then Congress decides, using a unique formula for its decision. Each state's delegation gets one vote, so that a state with a majority of Democrats in the House of Representatives will be expected to vote for the Democratic candidate, and likewise for majority Republican states.

On that basis of one state, one vote in the current Congress, which has been heavily gerrymandered, the Republican candidate would win.

So challenging the vote in just four states had the possibility of gaining an Electoral College victory or pushing it into a selection by Congress.

A Trump coup?

Almost 90% of the Republicans in Congress have refused to acknowledge the winner of the popular vote. Top officials in 18 states and more than half of House

Republicans supported a lawsuit trying to reverse the result through the Supreme Court and the Electoral College. The court turned down the challenge on Dec. 11.

Getting an Electoral College victory was one of Trump's strategies from the beginning of his campaign. He never tried to win the popular vote. The Electoral College is designed to block democracy and provides many avenues for special interests to manipulate the outcome.

The Constitution allows states to select their electors any way they want. They are not required to choose the winner of the state's vote.

A state could decide to select its electors based on what they declare would best serve the national interest. Or a state legislature could step in after an election and select the electors, claiming that the will of the voters was unclear. (For more on the anti-democratic Electoral College, see Jesse Wegman's book, "Let The People Pick the President: The Case for Abolishing the Electoral College.")

Trump might be counting on creating constitutional and legal chaos, including large-scale violence by Trump supporters in the streets, as a basis for declaring martial law. During his first "debate" with Biden, Trump had told the fascist Proud Boys to "stand down and stand by."

[On Dec. 12](#), two days before the Electoral College vote, fascist Proud Boys wearing "MAGA" hats were recorded on video burning a Black Lives Matter banner at the Asbury United Methodist Church in Washington, D.C., an action widely characterized as "reminiscent of cross burnings." A similar attack took place at the nearby Metropolitan African Methodist Episcopal Church.

In Olympia, Wash., at a pro-Trump rally at the state Capitol, a counterprotester was shot; police reportedly removed a bomb found at the site that, had it detonated, "could have caused significant injury."

Trump's shakeup of the Pentagon leadership has certainly [fueled speculation](#), and his attempt to remove civil service protection from most federal employees, making them political appointees to be hired or removed at the will of the president, makes little sense for a president that will be leaving office in less than two months.

But if the U.S. capitalist ruling class, including the military brass, allows a Trump coup that way, they will lose the crucial legitimacy that 231 years of uninterrupted constitutional rule has given them. Would they do that just to keep out Joe Biden?

While a declaration of martial law is unlikely to get support, it shouldn't be completely discounted.

Many capitalists prefer Trump

As is always the case in U.S. presidential contests, the big capitalists differ among themselves as to which Democrat or Republican candidate should be president. While many capitalists preferred Trump, others backed Biden.

The argument for Trump is that as a big capitalist and landowner, he is one of their own and understands their interests. Over the last four years, Trump has run the most "pro-business" U.S. administration in history. He won over to his side many originally skeptical capitalists.

Trump first sabotaged the Affordable Care Act, trying to drive tens of millions of people off health insurance and reducing coverage for those who have it. Trump moved to dismantle public education with devastating funding cuts to the Department of Education, starving public schools and pushing privatization schemes.

Trump gutted regulations designed to protect workers and the environment. Along with the congressional Republicans, Trump pushed through a massive tax cut for the rich in 2017. He has consistently opposed any policy to combat climate change and

took the U.S. out of the Paris Climate Agreement.

Then during the COVID-19 pandemic, he pulled the U.S. out of the World Health Organization. Trump has also filled the federal judiciary from the Supreme Court down and the National Labor Relations Board with pro-business and anti-labor judges.

But even those capitalists who hoped for “four more years” of this may not now support the attempts of Trump to go beyond the law and tradition in order to cling to office. That could do far more damage to their class interests than will any slight moderation of Trump’s “pro-business” policies by Biden.

The Nov. 23 New York Times reported, “Concerned that President Trump’s refusal to accept the election results is hurting the country, more than 160 top American executives asked the administration on Monday to immediately acknowledge Joseph R. Biden Jr. as the president-elect and begin the transition to a new administration.”

Signers of this letter “included the chief executives of Mastercard, Visa, MetLife, Accenture, the Carlyle Group, Condé Nast, McGraw-Hill, WeWork and American International Group, among others. They included some of the most important players in the financial industry: David M. Solomon, the chief executive of Goldman Sachs; Laurence D. Fink, chief executive of the asset management giant BlackRock; Jon Gray, Blackstone’s president; and Henry R. Kravis, a prominent Republican donor who is the co-chief executive of KKR, a private equity firm.” In other words, a representative group of the ruling capitalist class.

The ruling class

Since Trump’s 2016 presidential victory, the ruling capitalist class has been strongly divided on Donald Trump. Who are the people that collectively make up the U.S. ruling class?

The capitalist class is not just [647 billionaires](#). Though that is how it is sometimes seen, that's not how Karl Marx defined it in his writings. The 1% percent or even 0.001% doesn't really define it.

The ruling capitalist class, as Karl Marx defined it, consists of those people who live off profit — banking interest, stock market dividends, business profits and landlord rent. The working class lives off the wages of labor. There is also an intermediate class — the middle class — between the capitalist class and the working class. In the Communist Manifesto, written by Marx and Frederick Engels, they use the traditional French name for the middle class — the petty bourgeoisie.

As Marx elaborated, if you can live off property income — profits, interest and rent — at a level exceeding that of a skilled worker without having to hold a job, you are a member of the capitalist ruling class.

In the U.S., there are some 20.2 million millionaires, according to the Credit Suisse “Global Wealth Report 2020.”

Only part of the capitalist class are actually business people, what Marx called “active capitalists.” These include heads of banks and other financial corporations as well as the CEOs of industrial and commercial enterprises. The active capitalists are those people who manage large and medium-sized businesses.

Small business people generally have net assets of less than \$10 million, even if they hire and exploit wage workers. Having \$10 million or more in assets should be sufficient to have an upscale living standard without engaging in wage labor.

Without at least \$10 million in assets, small business people can't retire from the active management of their business and hire professional managers to run it. They must at the very least perform the labor of supervising and managing and are therefore not full members of the capitalist class, even if they exploit hired labor.

At the bottom are the smallest business people, who cannot even hire workers and must depend on their own labor and the labor of their family members. This category of business owners — which includes small family farmers — can swing between the working class, hiring themselves out part time to avoid extreme poverty, to “successfully” moving into the capitalist ruling class.

In large corporations, the CEOs don’t usually own anything close to a controlling interest in the corporation. But if they have net assets exceeding \$10 million, they can live quite well even if they lose their corporate positions. They are therefore both active capitalists who represent the owners of the corporation as well as being money capitalists in their own right through their ownership of capital.

The closest allies to the capitalist class are the near-capitalists: the upper middle class. These are the people who have accumulated an amount of capital enabling them to almost but not quite quit working altogether and live off profits, interest, or rents.

To maintain their upper-middle-class lifestyle, these people still have to work either in high-salaried jobs or as managers in their own businesses where they are not quite rich enough to hire professional managers and still retain their upper-middle-class lifestyle. These candidate members of the capitalist class identify with the class they hope to join as full members.

Some people unrealistically expect to become capitalists in the future and thus identify with the interests of the class they will never in fact join. These range from people doing tech startups to small business people who lack enough capital to hire professional managers and therefore must work hard in their businesses to enjoy a “decent” middle-class lifestyle.

Another group identifying their interests with the interests of the capitalist class are the local, state and federal police and prison guards — the chief instruments of state

power to ensure capitalist class rule. These are the men and some women who do the dirty work of the capitalist class. Virtually all the police “unions” in the U.S. endorsed Donald Trump.

Still another group in the middle area that identifies their interests with the interests of the capitalist class are the managers and supervisors. In “Capital,” Marx described how the division of labor requires a complex managerial hierarchy: “An industrial army of workers under the command of a capitalist requires, like a real army, officers (managers) and NCOs (foremen, overseers), who command during the labor process in the name of capital.” They are salaried, with higher incomes. Almost all are white men, as is the capitalist ruling class as a whole. People of color and oppressed genders are a fraction. Racism and sexism are part of the root ideology of the capitalist class.

The working class, those who live off the wages of labor, makes up the vast majority in this country, but not 99%. Based on Marx’s definitions of the capitalist class, the middle class and the working class, the working class in the U.S. makes up 67% of the population, [according to one estimate](#).

If there were real democracy in the U.S., the rich would have been voted out of power years ago. But that’ll only come with socialism.



Struggle □ La Lucha PDF - Dec. 14, 2020

written by Struggle - La Lucha

December 18, 2020

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Why won't Congress deliver badly needed stimulus checks?

By Gary Wilson

"Stimulus bill and checks not likely to arrive before Biden takes office," Newsweek reported on Dec. 5.

On Dec. 2, House Speaker Nancy Pelosi and Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer announced that they had offered Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell a \$908 billion coronavirus stimulus plan. Under the Pelosi-Schumer plan, there will be no stimulus checks at all, only a new \$300-per-week unemployment benefit that is not retroactive for those whose \$600-per-week benefits have ended. McConnell says he'll accept something that's a little more than half that amount, \$550 billion.

Pelosi and Schumer had rejected an offer from President Trump two months ago, on Oct. 1, for \$400 per week in retroactive unemployment benefits for those whose \$600-per-week benefit had ended, plus a stimulus check, because it "wasn't enough."

Of course, Trump's election campaign might have benefited from checks going out then — which is why he offered it — but why put forward something that's much, much less now? Are they even trying?

There's a puzzle here. At first glance, it might appear that the capitalist class favors the stimulus since the stock market rises whenever passage appears more likely. Is there a common interest between Wall Street and the workers, who certainly need the extended unemployment benefits and stimulus checks?

The stimulus checks are newly printed money from the U.S. Treasury and some say that the new money is what is raising stock prices. That's the New Deal Democrats' approach, which is also given as the reason that reactionary Republicans are opposed to the stimulus.

Why would Mitch McConnell — who more openly than most speaks for big capitalist interests — oppose the proposal to put extra money into the hands of the workers if it is so good for the stock market? Is McConnell turning against the interests of business?

From the standpoint of the capitalists, the mass unemployment created by the COVID-19 pandemic provides a unique opportunity for employers to lower wages and increase the rate of surplus value gained from the exploitation of workers. Don't ignore the reports that say that in this pandemic, the billionaires are winning. While many have suffered, the richest among us



PHOTO: DAVID BACON

"Our Black seniors are suffering all over Oakland," says Sharena Diamond Thomas. "The largest percentage of tenants are Black, and high rents are terrifying to them. They can't rest, they're stressed out, they can't move during the pandemic, and all of this makes them vulnerable to the virus."

kept getting richer. (Farhad Manjoo in the New York Times, Nov. 25)

To the extent that the government feels obliged to put money into the hands of workers, if only to subdue unrest, the opportunity to raise the rate of surplus value — the ratio of unpaid to paid labor — is lost if the workers aren't desperate and are able to in any way resist wage cuts.

Why does the stock market rise when the passage of the stimulus appears more likely? The stock market looks only at the short term. What is going to happen in the next quarter? If money is put into the hands of workers now, the pace of business will increase. Seeing the prospect of more business activity, the stock market rises.

But any reduction in the rate of surplus value will reduce the rate of profit in the long run. While the stimulus can improve business activity, it also reduces the rate of profit — more business at a lower rate of profit.

So Sen. McConnell is right from the viewpoint of the capitalist class. And the working class has the exact opposite interest. McConnell and his capitalist patrons sense that without the stimulus there will be a higher rate of surplus value — gained by cuts in wages and benefits — even if this means less business activity in the next few quarters. Therefore, in the long run, the less stimulus put out by the government, the higher the rate of profit will be.

The interest of the capitalist class in the stimulus is thus diametrically opposed to the interest of the working class.

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Let's move forward in building socialism!

Dear Readers,

Dec. 9, 2020, marked the two-year anniversary of our publication, *Struggle-La Lucha* (SL). We are proud that it has continued to bring news and revolutionary socialist analysis of critical developments in this past year.

As soon as the Black Lives Matter uprising took to the streets, we were able to publish hard copies of our newspaper and distribute papers from Los Angeles to New York City, from Baltimore and Washington, D.C., to San Diego and Atlanta, and at many other protests during the critical summer months despite the pandemic. We also expanded our online subscriptions by 75% in the past year.

Struggle-La Lucha analyzed the U.S. elections, the COVID and capitalist economic crises and published the popular series "Socialism and Dignity." We continued with our international coverage of global developments and U.S. imperialism's relentless war drive.

Struggle-La Lucha is dedicated to strengthening the movement and building unity. We publish daily news links and include a section for events, for What is Marxism? and on how to join the **Socialist Unity Party**.

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Despite these difficult times for the working class, we are optimistic about a socialist future and our role in it. We have plans to amplify the voice of socialism. This includes:

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Biden's picks don't treat capitalist disease

written by Struggle - La Lucha
December 18, 2020

If the treatment for a symptom exacerbates the underlying illness, unleashing far more dangerous symptoms, then that “cure” would be considered a failure — especially if it accelerates the death of the patient.

The disease of racism, capitalism's primary tool to keep our class divided, has many symptoms. One of these is the lack of representation by oppressed peoples in all aspects of leadership in society. This is most glaringly seen in Washington, D.C., where people of color and women make up a small percentage of those in the highest offices of government compared to the dominance of white men.

That's the symptom in government. The capitalist establishment's preferred way of treating this symptom is like the pharmaceutical companies that gave us Oxycontin, now considered the source of the current opioid epidemic: combating the symptom of pain related to an illness even though it would exacerbate the underlying illness with a deadly addiction.

For the sake of profit, the ruling class uses the symptom of exclusion and lack of diversity — which it is responsible for, and which must be taken on — in a way to actually erode working-class solidarity and unity, so that the capitalist system and imperialist war can continue, with no threat to the flow of profits derived from increased exploitation of our class here and abroad.

That's what's going on right now in regards to President-elect Joe Biden's cabinet nominees. From the pages of the same book that saw the selection of the likes of

Margaret Thatcher in Britain and Barack Obama in the U.S., we again see the necessary fight against exclusion used cynically by capitalist politicians to advance the interests of the ruling class.

Role of capitalist state

Biden is breaking many records in his selection of the first Black woman as vice president, Kamala Harris, and in his Cabinet nominations, with appointments that include the first woman to run the Treasury Department, the first Black deputy treasury secretary, and the first Black chair of the Council of Economic Advisers (CEA).

It's therefore understandable that many will feel hopeful about these appointments. In terms of the war on poverty, the appointment of more liberal figures, like Heather Boushey and Jared Bernstein, proposed as members of the CEA, could be a turn away from the Trump administration — right?

Well, if they are actually interested in making real change, hopefully they won't wield the same kind of toothless powerlessness that civilian police review boards around the country have.

In that case, the problem arises from the fact that the capitalist state needs repression to maintain inequality and exploitation of our class, so police review boards are a façade meant to appease people, not to have any real control over the police. And the role of the state in regard to economics is to maintain capitalist profits and the exploitation that keeps us in poverty.

Biden made that clear during his campaign speeches in 2019, where he also showed his willingness to lie as blatantly as Trump. [Bloomberg News reported](#) that during a campaign event with wealthy donors at the Carlyle Hotel in New York City, Biden said that he would not “demonize” the rich. Then he pledged that “no one’s standard

of living will change, nothing would fundamentally change.”

Worse, he made those comments after praising racist politicians, saying that he reaches “across the aisle” to bring about compromise. The problem is that his reach, in essence, only goes towards the right.

What makes this comment so Trump-like in its dishonesty? Shortly before, Biden had [addressed the Poor People’s Campaign Presidential Forum](#) in Washington, saying that economic inequality was “the one thing that can bring this country down.” He listed several new programs to help the poor that he said he would fund if elected.

“We have all the money we need to do it,” he said.

Inequality and exploitation

Yet Biden’s picks for economic advisers are very diverse. Some are making pledges to bring jobs and make fundamental changes to economic inequality.

[Wally Adeyemo](#), chosen as deputy treasury secretary, was quoted speaking on the importance of combating income inequality. He said his motivation came from his childhood: “In California’s Inland Empire, where I had grown up in a working-class neighborhood, the Great Recession hit us hard,” he said. “We were one of the foreclosure capitals of the United States. The pain of this was real for me.”

However, Adeyemo was also senior adviser and deputy chief of staff during the Obama administration and helped create the Trans-Pacific Partnership proposal, which, like other imperialist “free trade” initiatives, would have increased economic inequality — which is why it was backed by transnational corporations and praised by the U.S. Chamber of Commerce.

Biden’s promise to the rich of no real changes is even being pointed out by business publications like [Fortune.com](#), which had an article Dec. 7 about another Biden

Cabinet pick, Janet Yellen.

“But some argue,” the writer notes, “that in an attempt to pull the U.S. out of its pandemic-adjacent slump, the President-elect’s administration has relied too heavily on the old guard, borrowing heavily from the Clinton and Obama administrations, instead of including new and progressive voices on the team that will shape economic policy for at least the next four years.”

Yellen is certainly not rocking any boats towards fighting economic inequality. Biden’s pick as treasury secretary was chair of the Federal Reserve from 2014 to 2018. She was also chair of the White House Council of Economic Advisers during the Bill Clinton administration.

Fortune reports that Republicans have praised Yellen’s qualifications and won the support of almost a dozen GOP senators in 2014, when she was nominated to head the Federal Reserve, an institution that maintained welfare for the banks, with bailouts and low interest for the financial monopolies.

Environmental devastation

Brian Deese, proposed director of the National Economic Council (NEC), is another former Obama economic aide, who helped create the 2009 bailout of the auto industry. In addition to prioritizing monopolies over workers in the bailouts, he and Adeyemo are also associated with BlackRock, the world’s largest asset manager, according to its website. The financial investment company came under scrutiny regarding its role in enabling climate change.

In response to news that Deese, then managing director at BlackRock, was a top contender for the head of the NEC under the Biden administration, the [Action Center on Race and the Economy \(ACRE\)](#) released the following statement in November: “BlackRock executives like Brian Deese are responsible for financing

environmental devastation while profiteering from Black and Indigenous communities,” said Vasudha Desikan, political director of ACRE.

“We are in the midst of a global pandemic that has devastated the economy and destroyed the lives of millions of people. We urgently need diverse leadership at powerful economic institutions like the NEC that is committed to economic policymaking that will prioritize people and the planet. ...

“The truth is he was a supporter of fracking and fossil fuel production. Under his watch at BlackRock, the firm paid lip service to racial and environmental justice, while continuing to vote against shareholder proposals that sought to address these issues, especially proposals related to corporate political spending disclosure and oversight.

“BlackRock has a long history of financing climate devastation, like the Amazon fires, and racist institutions like police foundations. BlackRock should not be given any power in economic policymaking by the federal government nor should any investment firm’s executives be considered to lead major public economic institutions.

“We demand that President-elect Biden rescind consideration of Deese and other private sector executives for economic positions, and instead, pull together a short list from the many qualified policymakers of color who will do right by people and the planet.”

The statement recognizes the need, not for corporate-minded people of color to fill those positions, but those who will “prioritize people and the planet” over profits.

Then there’s Center for American Progress President Neera Tanden, Biden’s pick to run the Office of Management and Budget, who was one of the most vocal critics inside the Democratic Party against the campaign platform of Vermont Sen. Bernie

Sanders.

In 2012, Tanden proposed cutting Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid in an interview with C-SPAN: “If we’re going to have a deal to address long term deficit reduction,” she said, “we need to put both entitlements on the table, as well as taxes ... Some of our progressive allies aren’t as excited about that as we are.”

Record of war crimes

Like Deese, Biden’s pick for national security adviser, Jake Sullivan, is a veteran of the Obama administration. He was adviser to Vice President Biden during that administration and also deputy chief of staff to former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton. That means Sullivan worked with two of the most visible forces in the Obama administration that oversaw the U.S.-supported coup in Honduras in 2009 and the 2011 war on Libya, in addition to other war crimes.

Regarding the national security of the ruling class and U.S. imperialist war, Biden’s Cabinet picks include retired Army Gen. Lloyd Austin to be U.S. Secretary of Defense. Austin was in the U.S. military for more than four decades and led the U.S. Central Command from 2013 to 2016. If confirmed, Austin will make history as the first African American secretary of defense.

Austin was in the U.S. military when, at the end of Obama’s term, the Council of Foreign Relations reported that the U.S. dropped an average of 72 bombs every day — the equivalent of three an hour — in 2016. The council admitted that these numbers were low since they only had information on Libya, Yemen, Pakistan, Somalia and Afghanistan. Around the same time, a report from military officials admitted that twice as many civilians were killed as previously reported.

According to an article in [Mother Jones](#), “After retiring from the Army in 2016, Austin joined the board of a defense industry giant, set up his own consulting firm,

and became a partner at a private equity firm that invests in defense and aerospace companies. He quickly cashed in, earning at least \$1.4 million since he joined the board of United Technologies Corp. in 2016.

“Earlier this year, UTC merged with Raytheon, giving Austin a seat on the board of one of the country’s most powerful defense contractors. Last year, Raytheon received more than \$16 billion in federal government contracts, the fourth-most of any company.”

Imperialist war, however, is also a domestic war waged against our class by means of economic deprivation. This pays for the profiteering of the military-industrial complex as it furthers imperialist terror around the world. And it pays for the repression necessary to keep our class in fear of the police, discouraging our fight for justice.

The case of Susan Rice

This may be why Susan Rice, former President Obama’s ambassador to the United Nations and later his national security adviser, was chosen as Biden’s pick for White House Domestic Policy Council. The job is supposed to, among other things, help fight racial injustice.

However, Rice, along with another Biden pick, John Kerry, pushed Obama towards bombing Syria. [As national security adviser](#), Rice was an integral part of Obama’s use of drones for assassinations and admittedly pushed Obama toward the war and destruction of Libya.

According to the Guardian, Obama [increased drone strikes](#) by 10 times over his predecessor, George W. Bush. The strategy that allowed this increased use of drones came by categorizing all males of military age in these regions as combatants, “making them fair game for remote controlled killing.”

If Rice was part of and encouraged this type of racial profiling with the use of military weapons abroad, why would she be opposed to the profiling and frequent assassinations of Black and Brown children “of military age” here at home by police using tanks and other military equipment meant for the battlefield?

The extrajudicial killings and bombings during the Obama administration occurred largely in countries of East Africa and West Asia, including Somalia and Yemen, and ignored mounting tolls of civilians killed on the African continent by U.S. terrorism. Again, if Rice couldn’t challenge the racial injustice of U.S. imperialist war, why would she see it in Black and Brown occupied communities?

Business as usual

So far, we see that economic change is unlikely from Biden’s picks, and imperialist war is also on the same trajectory as usual. What about another threat to all of humanity — climate change?

Unfortunately, the same “business as usual” approach — meaning continuing on the road to wiping out humanity — comes with the appointment of former Secretary of State John Kerry as the head of Biden’s climate-change effort.

Biden has already rejected the Green New Deal for changes in the infrastructure to discourage the use of fossil fuels and slow down climate change. So it’s not surprising that [Kerry told NPR](#) that he was going to rely on the same force that Trump relied on to miserably fail in supplying health and safety equipment during the pandemic: the capitalist market.

Trying to reassure the interviewer that things would change in the fight against climate change, Kerry said: “What is clear is that the marketplace itself, globally, is moving in this direction. ... I spoke with an airline’s president, and he talked about what his airline is going to be doing — spontaneously, automatically. Real

businesspeople, real leaders within the business world understand that this is an imperative. They also understand that there's money to be made in producing the products."

In "Capital," the historic three-volume work scientifically analyzing the workings of capitalism, Karl Marx quoted economist T.J. Dunning: "Capital eschews no profit, or very small profit, just as Nature was formerly said to abhor a vacuum.

"With adequate profit, capital is very bold. A certain 10 percent will ensure its employment anywhere; 20 percent certain will produce eagerness; 50 percent, positive audacity; 100 percent will make it ready to trample on all human laws; 300 percent, and there is not a crime at which it will scruple, nor a risk it will not run, even to the chance of its owner being hanged."

The market is in search of profits, not saving humanity. And the two often have irreconcilable conflicts. So you can add to that list of things the ruling class is willing to do: the willingness to run humanity over the cliff of nonexistence with an irrational allegiance to capitalism and profit over people.

This explains Biden's cabinet choices — predominantly made up of the enablers of capitalism's many diseases, along with war criminals who belong in jail, not in office. Therefore, it will take a unified movement of our working class to promote and fight for socialism.



National Assembly elections in Venezuela: A blow to regime change

written by Struggle - La Lucha
December 18, 2020

Venezuela held legislative elections on December 6 and, as has become the norm, the U.S. and sectors of the opposition that boycotted the election are claiming fraud without presenting evidence. The coalition of parties supporting President Maduro won 68% of the vote and a supermajority in the National Assembly. All the evidence suggests the elections were free and fair. However, turnout was only 31%, a participation rate that was hampered by a partial opposition boycott of the election.

This call to abstain was made by Juan Guaidó and his allies, but a different faction of the opposition participated fully. In the past three years, this faction of the opposition has taken a moderate stance that involves engaging in dialogue and participating in elections. The moderates accepted the election's results, called for reflection and strongly criticized the call for a boycott.

The Trump administration spent the last several months attempting to sabotage

Venezuela's elections by characterizing them as a "sham" and sanctioning some of these moderates. Yet now that the vote took place, there is no evidence of irregularities. Claiming that elections are fraudulent before they're even held - and insisting that fraud occurred in the face of overwhelming evidence against such a claim - is a specialty of the Trump administration.

The U.S. government repeatedly said that there were "no conditions" for free and fair elections, but the condition it sought to impose was the resignation of President Maduro. Unsurprisingly, the European Union, the Lima Group (an ad hoc set of Latin American countries pushing for regime change in Venezuela) and the corporate media followed the State Department's lead, attempting to delegitimize what is likely one of the most fraud-proof electoral processes in the world. In contrast, observers on the ground, including the Latin American Council of Electoral Experts, underscored the election's compliance with international standards.

A secure electoral system

Back in 2012, Jimmy Carter called Venezuela's process "the best in the world." It's not hard to see why. Venezuela has electronic voting machines that print paper receipts. The machines are only unlocked when a voter's identity is verified by digital fingerprint scan and a spot-check of their national identity card. After voting on the machine (a simple process that can take as little as 10 seconds), it prints out a paper receipt so electors can verify that their vote was correctly recorded. The elector then places this receipt in a secure ballot box, and then signs and places a thumbprint on the voter roll.

After polls close, the digital vote count is compared to a random sampling of at least 54% of the ballot boxes (a figure that is higher than necessary to have a statistically significant result). It's a system with multiple redundancies that is backed by 16 different audits that must be signed off on by representatives of political parties.

In these elections, 14,000 candidates from 107 parties (97 of which oppose the Maduro government) ran for 277 seats. The choices ran the ideological spectrum from communists and socialists to evangelicals, Christian conservatives and neoliberals. Opposition candidates got air time on state television stations and took part in several debates.

The elections were monitored by 300 international observers from 34 countries, as well as over 1,000 national observers from political parties and social organizations. Teri Mattson, who observed two previous elections in Venezuela, led a CODEPINK observation delegation and described this year's elections as free and fair, and without fraud or tampering.

"Voting is easy, fast and secure: an incentive for all voters while also preventing long lines due to cumbersome ballots and voter procedures such as those seen in the U.S.," Mattson said.

Voter turnout

Of course, the low turnout is bound to raise eyebrows, yet it's important to place it into context. One factor that depressed participation is a gasoline shortage induced by U.S. sanctions, which made it difficult for some voters to travel to polls. Migration is another factor that artificially reduced turnout. Only citizens who currently reside in the country can vote in legislative elections, but most who left in recent years still appear on voter rolls as living in Venezuela.

A further factor is the pandemic. Venezuela is doing significantly better than most countries in handling the coronavirus (3,694 cases per million population and 33 deaths per million population, versus 46,348 cases per million and 877 deaths per million in the U.S.). However, there's still enough fear of the virus that it serves as a disincentive to voting.

International comparisons should also be taken into account when analyzing the turnout. For example, parliamentary elections were also held Sunday in Romania, which had similarly low voter turnout (33%). Other countries have also had poor participation this year, including legislative elections in Egypt (28% turnout), Mali (35%), Jamaica (38%) and Jordan (30%), as well as municipal elections in Costa Rica (38%). Additionally, U.S. midterm elections typically feature 40% voter turnout (it's not an apples-to-apples comparison, as virtually all eligible voters are registered in Venezuela, which is not the case in the U.S.). None of these elections are less legitimate for their low participation, and neither is Venezuela's.

The failed strategy of boycotts

Clearly, a significant factor in reduced turnout was the extremist opposition's call for a boycott. This tactic of boycotting elections has been used by the opposition in the past, including in the 2005 legislative elections, the 2017 national constituent assembly elections, the 2017 municipal elections (partial boycott) and the 2018 presidential elections (partial boycott).

However, at no point has boycotting elections helped them in any way. So why do the extremists keep engaging in a failed tactic? After all, the opposition routinely claims (again, offering no evidence) that 80% of the population disapproves of the Maduro administration; it doesn't make sense to cede ground when there's the possibility of winning.

One explanation is that they were afraid of losing. In the last elections that featured full participation, the 2017 gubernatorial elections, the opposition ended up losing in 19 of 23 states. It's not clear that they would have won this time around, particularly as a significant percentage of their base has migrated in recent years. A loss would have destroyed once and for all the fiction of Juan Guaidó being the so-called interim president (his "claim" to the presidency is based on his being a legislator in the current National Assembly). Better to not run than run and lose.

Another explanation is that a boycott was part of the Trump administration's maximum pressure campaign, which involves ongoing attempts to delegitimize Venezuela's democratic credentials. This strategy was threatened when the moderate opposition engaged in dialogue and announced they were running in the elections. The Trump administration quickly denounced them as "complicit" with and "puppets" of the Maduro government, before sanctioning several of those leaders.

The U.S. got the European Union on board with this plan as well. In January, the EU sanctioned three moderate opposition figures for "acting against the National Assembly's democratic functioning" after they were elected to leadership positions in the legislature, replacing Juan Guaidó and two of his allies.

More recently, the EU refused the calls from two-time presidential candidate Henrique Capriles to monitor the elections. Capriles said his participation was contingent upon EU monitoring, which didn't occur because the EU claimed it did not have enough time to prepare a delegation. This was back in September, three months before the vote. After the elections, the EU had the gall to criticize the Venezuelan government for failing "to mobilize the Venezuelan people to participate."

In practical terms, higher turnout may have opened the doors for negotiations between the U.S. and the moderate opposition, but that possibility now seems less likely. Other than that, the low turnout is not going to have much impact on the ground in Venezuela.

The Maduro government will have a supermajority in the National Assembly for the next five years, which should help it develop measures to counter the economic sanctions. It's in a stronger position now than it was prior to the elections. After four years of sanctions, sabotaged industries, attempted coups, an assassination by drone attempt, a mercenary incursion and paramilitary attacks, among others, Venezuela

managed to survive the Trump administration's maximum pressure.

The elections were carried out in complete tranquility. That is quite an achievement and puts to rest the magical thinking of the Trump administration and extreme opposition, which have spent years saying that regime change is just around the corner.

Source: [Resumen](#)



Trump wants Iran's oil and gas off the market for the benefit of U.S. oil corporations: Expert

written by Struggle - La Lucha
December 18, 2020



From [PressTV](#)

U.S. President Donald Trump's pursuit of confrontation with Iran is about keeping its oil and gas off the market for the benefit of U.S. oil corporations, an American political analyst has said.

Bill Does, a writer for Struggle-La Lucha and longtime antiwar activist, made the remarks in an interview with Press TV on Thursday while commenting on the statement of EU foreign policy chief Josep Borrell who said the United States needs to rejoin the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA).

The European official also called for Iran to resume its full compliance with the nuclear accord.

"We need to find a way for the U.S. to rejoin the Iran nuclear deal, and for Iran to come back into full compliance. The nuclear deal is still assessed as a landmark of successful diplomacy ... We are proud of it as the biggest success of our diplomatic

capacity,” Borrell told a GLOBSEC webinar on Tuesday.

“First of all, the Trump regime’s opposition to the JCPOA, and its pursuit of confrontation with Iran, is not about Iran’s peaceful nuclear energy program, which everyone knows is peaceful. It’s about keeping Iran’s oil and gas off the market for the benefit of U.S. oil corporations, monopolies, in particular the fracking interests in the United States who are behind the Trump regime. They are desperate for confrontation, even war with Iran,” Does said.

“From the point of view of Europe that would be a disaster. The United States has long used its control of the energy resources of West Asia and North Africa and its ability to use war to disrupt the flow of energy as leverage over Europe. And most of the West European countries or EU countries don’t have oil. They don’t have gas. They want oil and gas at the cheapest prices. And they need trade. They don’t want to be at the mercy of U.S. oil monopolies anymore,” he added.

“And so this creates a conflict of interest in the U.S. corporate establishment as well. It will be a conflict of interest in the incoming Biden administration. There are different factions, those who may benefit at the moment from relaxing sanctions, and those who, like the Trump regime are working with Israel to not only keep sanctions in place but actually escalate to war, as we can see with the murder of Dr. Fakhrizadeh,” he stated.

In May 2018, Trump withdrew Washington from the JCPOA, and since then, he has been piling sanctions on Iran as part of his administration’s so-called maximum pressure campaign.

In response to the U.S.’s unilateral move and Europe’s failure to help Iran take advantage of economic benefits of the deal, Tehran rowed back on its nuclear commitments five times in compliance with Articles 26 and 36 of the JCPOA.

As the Europeans continued to fail to put their verbal support for the deal into action, the Iranian Parliament (Majlis) passed a law last week to protect Iran's interests against the Western sanctions.

Under the law, the Tehran administration is required to halt UN inspections of its nuclear sites and step up uranium enrichment beyond the limit set under Tehran's 2015 nuclear deal if sanctions are not eased in two months.

The Islamic Republic has, however, stressed that its retaliatory measures will be reversible as soon as Europe finds practical ways to shield the mutual trade from the U.S. sanctions or if the U.S. decides to return to the JCPOA unconditionally and compensate for the economic losses Tehran suffered due to its abrupt pullout.



Turkey: Freedom for people's lawyer Aytaç Ünsal

written by Struggle - La Lucha
December 18, 2020

Struggle-La Lucha is sharing this urgent bulletin on the case of political prisoner

Aytaç Ünsal in Turkey, who won his release in September after a 213-day hunger strike. His fellow lawyer, Ebru Timtik, died after 238 days on hunger strike. [Get background on the struggle here](#).

Dec. 10: Death Fast resister and lawyer of the People's Law Bureau, Aytaç Ünsal, was arrested in Edirne, Turkey. His mother, retired judge Nermin Ünsal, was informed that he was detained by Edirne anti-terror police last evening: "His health was not good. He was nervous, had a lot of trouble and was receiving treatment. The one-year suspension of his punishment was revoked. The police just called and said that he had been detained on suspicion of escaping."

According to information obtained from the People's Law Bureau, it was reported that anti-terrorism police officers had detained him for 48 hours. For Aytaç Ünsal, whether 48 hours or even a minute, he is not in a position to be kept in a cell and remain safe. The fascist police in Edirne tortured him and are responsible for everything that might happen to our comrade.

The fascist AKP [the Justice and Development Party of Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan] is afraid of Aytaç because, together with the resisters and the martyrs of resistance, he achieved victory with the Death Fast. Because he is a fighter of justice. Because together with our martyr Ebru Timtik, he has been the advocate of the people and has devoted his entire life to the struggle for his people. Because with their struggle they give voice to the thousands of people of Turkey, workers and youth, who are feeling the injustice and repression of AKP fascism. This fact was clearly shared with every place in the world through the death fast resistance and the martyrdom of Helin, Mustafa, Ibrahim and Ebru.

That's why they arrested him, tortured him and made the decision to send him to prison again, in Edirne F-type prison. That's why, one month earlier, police raided the house of resistance where he was being treated after 213 days of Death Fast. Because he never surrendered. He never stopped being the advocate of the people.

This is not a crime but an honor! For this cause our immortal comrade, lawyer Ebru Timtik, gave her life, for the cause of the people, for the cause of justice.

We stand by Aytaç Ünsal's side. We are giving our solidarity to him and promise that we will struggle together and in the end WE WILL WIN.

Freedom for people's lawyer Aytaç Ünsal!

The honor of resistance will defeat torture!

International solidarity is the weapon of the people against fascism and injustice!

[Source: Anti-Imperialist Front](#)

