

U.S.-Africom out! Justice and reparations for Somalia!

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January 21, 2021



Carl Muhammad at Jan. 16 speakout in San Diego. Photo: PSL San Diego

Remarks by the Socialist Unity Party at a Jan. 16 protest in San Diego against the ongoing U.S. Africa Command (Africom) military intervention in Somalia. Despite an

announced Jan. 15 withdrawal of several hundred U.S. troops from the African country, drone strikes and Special Forces operations will continue. The troops will not be brought home, but transferred to bases in Kenya and Djibouti.

The actions of Africom sparked global controversy. Leaders around the world were alerted. As a result of the outcry, Amnesty International conducted an investigation. Their investigation of just nine airstrikes revealed 21 civilians killed, 11 wounded, many more displaced, and they ruled it a clear violation of international law.

Africom subsequently admitted to killing and injuring people in four separate airstrikes. Up to this very day, neither the victims nor their families have ever been compensated or even contacted by the U.S. or Somali governments.

So what is Africom for? We know it's not to help people. Nothing the U.S. ever does makes it better for the people there. I challenge anyone to show me one time where the lives of the average people improved when the U.S. moved in.

Imperialism is still the agenda — just like in the slavery trade, just like in the scramble for Africa. To steal and exploit the inexhaustible mineral wealth and to cause the continued underdevelopment of the continent and its inhabitants.

That's an important part, the underdevelopment, when we talk about slavery. When you take key people out of their community, guess what happens to that community? Don't let them tell you that they were all savages and barbarians.

In western Africa, we know that they had empires before the 1500s. They had doctors, teachers, what you would call professional people who maintained those societies. And when you went in and took millions out, you underdeveloped that entire continent. That's a crime in and of itself.

Specifically, the U.S. is in central Africa for the coltan mines that fuel the tech industry. Coltan is key. That's why they're there.

A news report from 2015 after the reporter visited a coltan mine demonstrated how the imperialists were exploiting the workers. After their haul is weighed and classified, the miners are paid \$5 a day for the backbreaking work to dig out the precious metals that power our smartphones.

Recently, Africom announced it would be withdrawing from Somalia. This is no doubt in response to the public outcry against their war crimes in the country. But Somalians are demanding justice for these crimes. You can't do the out-of-sight, out-of-mind trick. Pulling out of Somalia is not going to make us forget. It doesn't absolve you of those crimes or make you not responsible.

Citing Africom's own admission of wrongdoing, Amnesty International said the troop withdrawal must not derail this momentum. Africom has an ongoing duty to care for the civilians impacted by its operations.

It's been said that solidarity with Somalia is key. So we must stand with the Somali people in demanding justice, from Africom and its imperialist aims.

We must not only join in Amnesty International's demand for justice and for reparations, we must also call for an end to Africom. And we must call for the destruction of U.S. imperialism around the world.

