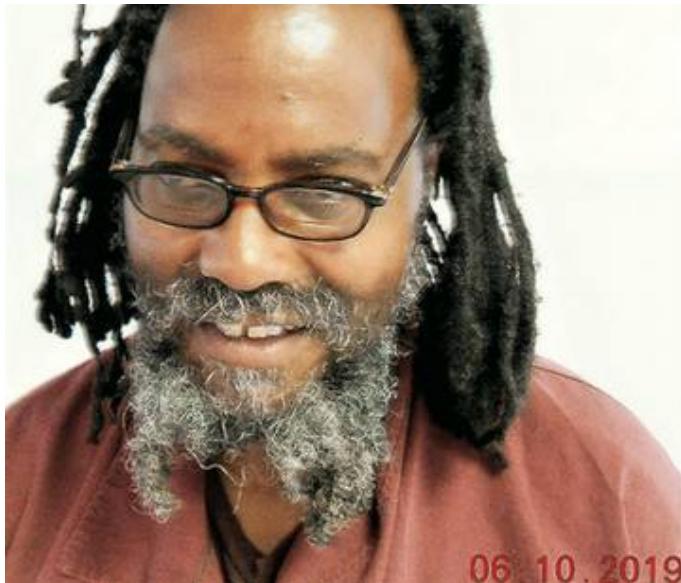


Coverage of Navalny vs. Mumia Abu-Jamal highlights corporate media hypocrisy

written by Greg Butterfield
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Mumia Abu-Jamal

In recent weeks, U.S. corporate media has been flooded with coverage of imprisoned Russian opposition figure [Alexey Navalny's hunger strike](#) and stories of his failing health. After three weeks on hunger strike, Navalny's personal doctors called his

symptoms “life threatening.”

On April 19, a panel of doctors recommended that Navalny be transferred to a hospital for treatment, which he was.

The Biden administration warned of serious “consequences” if Navalny, a pro-Western politician, should die.

Navalny’s imprisonment and alleged health problems have been front-page news in major media outlets like the New York Times and Washington Post. Amidst the public anticipation of the Derek Chauvin verdict last weekend, NBC Nightly News devoted several minutes to Navalny.

We say “alleged health problems” because, before returning to Russia earlier this year, Navalny had [claimed to have been poisoned](#) by the Russian government with the deadly Novichok nerve agent while traveling to Germany in 2020. The problem is, Novichok is so deadly that, had his story been true, not only Navalny but his entire entourage would likely be dead.

Navalny subsequently spent several months “recovering” in Germany, under the protection of the Berlin government. The alleged poisoning was used to make Navalny a cause célèbre in the Western media and pump up his reputation here as the main opponent of Russian President Vladimir Putin.

It’s worth drawing attention to the fact that Navalny chose the week of Joe Biden’s presidential inauguration to return to Moscow, where he was arrested for violating the terms of his probation in a 2014 money-laundering case. In early February, he was [sentenced to 3½ years in prison](#).

That Navalny’s case is filling the airwaves and websites right now should come as no surprise. Not only is it a convenient distraction from the rash of racist police murders and right-wing violence in the United States; it’s also propaganda for the

growing war drive against Russia by Washington and its NATO allies.

Other evidence of this dangerous course includes the recent escalation of [Ukraine's war on the Donbass republics](#) bordering Russia, [more sanctions](#) being imposed on Moscow, and the massive [U.S.-NATO war games](#) called Defender-Europe 2021 that are currently underway.

What about Mumia?

What makes the U.S. media's hypocrisy glaring is the near-complete lack of coverage by these esteemed media goliaths of the well-documented, truly life-threatening condition of the most famous imprisoned U.S. political dissident — the internationally lauded journalist and former Black Panther, Mumia Abu-Jamal.

Abu-Jamal — who has been unjustly imprisoned for 40 years! — [underwent emergency open-heart surgery](#) on April 19, the same day Navalny was transferred to the hospital. But you would be hard-pressed to find a word about it in the mainstream U.S. media.

For months, supporters have been shouting at the top of their voices to alert anyone who will listen about Abu-Jamal's deteriorating health. "Before this week's health emergency," says Dr. Ricardo Alvarez, his personal physician, "Mumia Abu-Jamal was already suffering from COVID-19, congestive heart failure, hypertension, diabetes, liver cirrhosis, and a worsening of a severe and debilitating chronic skin condition."

It took years of battle with Pennsylvania prison officials to win treatment for Abu-Jamal's hepatitis C — a struggle that opened the door for other prisoners to also finally receive treatment.

Hundreds of political prisoners are held in U.S. jails. Many of them are now seniors, veterans of the militant Black, Latin and Indigenous liberation struggles of the

1960s-70s, and have been imprisoned for decades. Activists have spent the past year of the COVID-19 pandemic demanding “Free Them All.”

Where are the declarations warning of serious consequences to Pennsylvania officials from President Biden and Vice President Kamala Harris? Where are the front page articles in the Times and the Post? Where are the high-profile televised interviews with Abu-Jamal’s physician, Dr. Alvarez, who has said “the only treatment is freedom”?

The answer is blatantly simple. The for-profit media, the bought-and-paid for politicians of both parties in Washington, are only interested in those deemed political prisoners when those politics suit their ends and benefit their system of divide-and-rule.

Stop U.S. drive to war

Capitalism’s global economic crisis, which the pandemic served to sharpen and expose, drives Washington toward war. The [U.S. spends more on the military](#) than the next 10 countries combined, year in and year out. President Biden has proposed [raising the Pentagon budget](#) even higher, by at least \$12.3 billion.

That money isn’t being spent for nothing. It’s being used to prepare for new, bigger wars. And Russia, like China, is one of the main targets.

Within the Russian left and workers’ movement, there are different views on the efficacy of Navalny’s imprisonment. As a collaborator with Western imperialism, as an advocate of privatization and exploitation of workers, and as a figure with a [history of racism](#) and association with neo-Nazis, some are happy to see the Russian government lock him up.

Others point out that Russia’s capitalist government has used Navalny as an excuse to ban protests, and this measure is primarily directed against left movements that

are fighting for workers' rights and which oppose Western imperialism. Imprisoning Navalny also risks giving him greater credibility with young people angry about cutbacks and repression.

This is an important conversation within the Russian movement. But progressives and revolutionaries in the U.S. and Europe must recognize why the West is promoting Navalny's case — as a pretext for war.

Let's fight for the release of Mumia Abu-Jamal and all the political prisoners and prisoners of war held by U.S. imperialism. And let's fight to end the U.S. war drive, dismantle NATO and bring all the troops and weapons home.

A century ago, the peoples of what was then the Russian czarist empire carried out one of the most profound revolutions in human history. If we do our duty and remove the U.S.-NATO boot heel from their necks, the peoples of Russia will undoubtedly make any political and social changes they feel are necessary — without Western interference.

