

The links between East Palestine, Ohio, and Gaza, Palestine

written by Stephen Millies
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The former Rafa train station in Gaza.

President Biden [showed up](#) in East Palestine, Ohio, on Feb. 16 — a year after the Feb. 3, 2023, train wreck that poisoned the village. “You’ve been through hell,”

Biden told the residents.

What about the hell that families in Gaza and the rest of Palestine are going through, Mr. President? Thirty thousand people have been killed there with U.S.-made and U.S.-paid-for bombs and missiles.

Over 10,000 [children](#) have been murdered. More than 25,000 have been orphaned. Biden's response to this slaughter is to demand another \$14 billion for the apartheid killing machine that calls itself Israel.

Meanwhile, in the U.S., monthly [SNAP](#) (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program) benefits, formerly known as food stamps, have been cut by an average of \$86 per person. Making these cutbacks more painful is that capitalist monopolies have [jacked up food prices](#) by 25% since 2020.

East Palestine is in Columbiana County, Ohio, where nearly [15,000 people](#) — one out of seven residents — depend on SNAP benefits to eat.

Biden said the Norfolk Southern train wreck in East Palestine “was an act of greed that was 100% preventable.”

The U.S.-funded massacre in Gaza, Palestine, is a bigger crime that's being waged for Big Oil, which uses Israel as its cops.

In the U.S., [Norfolk Southern](#) cut over 35% of its operating employees between 2018 and 2021 using the corporate model called Precision Scheduled Railroading to increase profits. Railroad management did this by running longer trains.

The train that poisoned East Palestine was 150 cars long, which means it had 1,200 axle bearings. A single “hot box” in one of these bearings — through no fault of the railroad crew — was enough to derail the train.

Three days after the derailment, on Feb. 6, 2023, [Norfolk Southern deliberately ignited five tank cars](#) that released a mushroom cloud of dangerous toxins. Many people, including Pennsylvania Gov. Josh Shapiro, believe the explosion was done not out of safety concerns but to clear the tracks for trains.

Jobs not war

[Norfolk Southern CEO](#) Alan Shaw took home \$9.8 million in 2022. Yet the rail tycoon didn't want to give any sick days to workers.

Two months before the East Palestine disaster, Congress passed legislation that prohibited railroaders from walking off the job. "Amtrak Joe" signed the strikebreaking law in the White House. Only under the impact of the Ohio train wreck did Norfolk Southern agree to [sick days](#).

Pulling the strings at Norfolk Southern are some of the biggest banksters, like [BlackRock](#), which holds 6.4% of the corporation's stock. BlackRock also has \$4.6 billion invested in [Lockheed Martin](#), one of the largest war profiteers.

Thousands of Palestinians have been killed by [bombs dropped from F-16s](#) and other warplanes sold by Lockheed Martin. In addition, BlackRock has investments in the Israeli weapons maker Elbit Systems, whose drones kill children and their families.

The genocide in Gaza is a goldmine for only a few.

East Palestine borders Pennsylvania and sits between Pittsburgh and Cleveland. This region was once one of the biggest concentrations of industry in the world.

Almost all the steel mills in Pittsburgh, Youngstown (22 miles from East Palestine),

and Cleveland have been shut down. Deindustrialization destroyed hundreds of thousands of union jobs.

Columbiana County was the center of the U.S. ceramic industry. Hundreds of factories turned out plates and cups for dining tables across the country.

These potteries are also gone. The war profits grabbed by BlackRock and Lockheed Martin are not helping anybody in East Palestine.

Karl Marx — the great teacher of the working class — described the working conditions in British potteries in “[Capital](#)”: Testifying before an 1860 parliamentary inquiry, “Dr. Greenhow states that the average duration of life in the pottery districts of Stoke-on-Trent, and Wolstanton is extraordinarily short.”

Another physician, Dr. Arledge, said that these workers “are, as a rule, stunted in growth, ill-shaped, and frequently ill-formed in the chest.” Heartbreaking was the testimony of nine-year-old William Wood, who described how he worked from 6 a.m. in the morning to 9 p.m. at night.

The world labor movement fought to change these conditions. Capitalists want to bring back [child labor](#). When Trump was in the White House, he moved to roll back child labor rules.

We need a socialist revolution

The Great Migration of Black people from the U.S. South barely made it to East Palestine. White people account for 95% of [Columbiana](#) County’s population.

That’s why Trump and his fellow racist clown Rudy Giuliani went to East Palestine a few weeks after the train wreck. Along with Fox News, Trump claims that people in

East Palestine were being ignored because they're not Black.

That poison is the stuff of fascism. Trump and his kind despise all workers.

To build [Trump Tower](#) on Manhattan's Fifth Avenue, Trump hired Polish immigrants to tear down an older building. They were paid low wages and given hardly any safety equipment to protect them against asbestos. It's unknown how many died of mesothelioma, a form of lung cancer.

Decaying capitalism wrecks small towns like East Palestine. Nearly [200 rural hospitals](#) have been shut down in the U.S. since 2005.

Almost all the hospitals in Gaza have been attacked by U.S.-armed Zionist forces.

Despite interstate highways and the internet, small towns in the U.S. are becoming more isolated. [Trump-appointed Postmaster General](#) Louis DeJoy wants to close thousands of rural post offices. Asian, Black, Indigenous, Latinx, and white postal workers are helping to keep them open.

American Postal Workers Union President Mark Dimondstein, who is Jewish, demands a ceasefire in Gaza.

The Norfolk Southern's busy freight line through East Palestine carries Amtrak's Capitol Limited between Washington, D.C., and Chicago. But the nearest stop — in the wee hours of the morning — is in Alliance, Ohio, 33 railroad miles away.

Back in 1953, when it was a main line of the Pennsylvania Railroad, five different passenger trains stopped in East Palestine: one going to Cleveland, another headed for Chicago, and three trains going east to Pittsburgh. ("The Official Guide of the Railways," November 1953)

Gaza also had a passenger station with trains going between Egypt and Palestine. Israel severed the railroad service.

People in Gaza are fighting for their lives and freedom. Working people in East Palestine need a revolution, too.

Super racist Trump and Genocide Joe Biden have nothing to offer the working class other than war and hate. The coming upsurge of the working class will reach East Palestine, Ohio, and help liberate Palestine.

The writer is a retired railroad worker.

