

Cuba: Blackout and blockade

written by Struggle - La Lucha

October 23, 2024



Cuba is going through its greatest energy crisis, with practically the entire island and 10 out of 11 million inhabitants deprived of electricity. The blackouts that have been occurring with increasing frequency and duration for some time now, turned into a total collapse of the electrical system as a result of the shutdown of its main thermoelectric plant on Thursday, Oct. 17, which forced the suspension of classes and the closure of almost all economic activity while the authorities and technicians work to reestablish the power supply. The population fears that this situation could

lead to an imminent famine due to food putrefaction.

The immediate cause of the crisis lies in the lack of fuel to feed their thermoelectric power plants, worsened by a climatic situation that delayed the arrival of a ship with fuel oil. However, the ultimate cause is the same as the one shared by the island's major and minor problems: the commercial and financial blockade imposed by Washington more than six decades ago with the declared purpose of starving the Cuban population and forcing it to rise up against its authorities. Although that sinister objective has been frustrated, the endless difficulties Havana has to face to raise foreign currency and acquire essential supplies have indeed led the country to a severe shortage of everything necessary for daily life.

It is often thought that the argument of the blockade is a mere pretext and the criminal nature of the dozens of laws and decrees that make up the most dense network of unarmed aggressions directed against a sovereign nation is forgotten. As an island located in the Caribbean Sea, Cuba's natural economic vocation lies in tourism, and its location only 144 kilometers from the United States makes Americans its logical and elementary market. But Washington's illegal regulations prohibit its citizens from traveling to the island. The illegal application of sanctions not only affects the inhabitants of the superpower, but any company, from anywhere on the planet, that buys or sells any object – be it an onion, a cancer drug or a notebook for children to study – to Havana is subject to prosecution and crushing by the country that dictatorially controls the global financial system. One of the most important sources of income for practically all Latin American and Caribbean states, the remittances sent by their nationals working abroad, is also closed to Cuba because it is not allowed to access the international payment system, one of the many tentacles of U.S. imperialism.

Since Hugo Chavez democratically came to power in Venezuela at the head of the Bolivarian Revolution, Caracas has provided invaluable assistance to the Cuban

people with its shipments of hydrocarbons. But as Washington has made Venezuelans victims of the same atrocities it perpetrates against Cubans, the government of Nicolás Maduro has had to cut its aid to Cuba, which has ended up overwhelming an extremely precarious situation. Likewise, Havana is prevented from buying machinery, tools and spare parts to reverse the deterioration of the electric power infrastructure, so the failures will continue to be structural as long as Washington's boot suffocates the island. Cuba is also not allowed access to the technologies needed to undertake the energy transition, despite the fact that, in their discourse, the current occupant of the White House and other Western leaders proclaim themselves to be promoters of the fight against climate change.

In this century, with the exception of Israel over the Palestinian people, no country has been as systematically and enduringly sadistic with the civilian population as the United States in its onslaught against the Cubans. The human suffering and the stripping of any prospect of a dignified life in their own land are testimony to the total disregard of the U.S. political class for the welfare of the people and the freedom in the name of which they speak.

Source: [La Jornada](#), translation [Resumen Latinoamericano - English](#)



Cuba: Havana's electricity system fully restored

written by Struggle - La Lucha

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Empresa Eléctrica UNE reported through its usual [Telegram channel](#) the reestablishment of the electric system in the Cuban capital, after a new total nationwide disconnection suffered yesterday.

Yesterday at 4:01 pm (local time), Havana's electricity service was fully restored, according to the report issued by the company, although some breakdowns and minor damages persist in some neighborhoods.

Work is still being carried out to solve these problems as soon as possible to guarantee a stable supply to the population.

However, the impossibility of maintaining constant flows in the acquisition of fuel necessary for the operation and maintenance of the country's thermoelectric power plants continues to be an aggravating factor in the current situation regarding the

sustainability of the electric service, beyond the announced reestablishment. Until the blockade is ended once and for all and Cuba is allowed to trade normally with the world this types of crisis will re occur.

We must always remember that Cuba is going through an energy crisis, caused by this lack of raw material acquisition in the international market; directly caused by the existence of the economic, commercial and financial blockade imposed by the United States and its extraterritorial nature, as was denounced by President Miguel Díaz-Canel in his last public appearance.

The water supply system in Havana has also been affected by the energy contingency, since it practically depends on electric energy, which led to the adoption of strategies to sustain basic issues in the aqueduct systems.

In this sense, the Empresa Aguas de La Habana reported on the prioritization of basic services to hospitals and other critical places; meanwhile work furiously continues in order to guarantee that the total supply will be available for the population.

Source: [Cuba en Resumen](#)



U.S. blockade of Cuba causes electricity system to collapse due to lack of stable fuel supply

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On Sunday, Oct. 20, Cuban President Miguel Díaz-Canel pointed directly at the blockade policy of the United States government as the fundamental cause of the national collapse of the National Electric Power System (SEN) over the past few days. It is not complicated and it is not rhetoric that Cuba's lack of a stable supply of fuel is because of the threats of fines that the US government through its Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) has levied on banks, shipping companies and any other enterprise attempting to trade with Cuba.

The President of the country and head of the Cuban National Defense Council, on Sunday evening, clarified the situation the country is going through after the disconnection of the national electric system and the impact of hurricane Oscar, which is hitting the eastern part of the island with winds of over 130 kilometers per

hour.

The President declared that the country is living an exceptional situation determined by two events of great complexity: national energy emergency and the impact of Hurricane Oscar in the eastern provinces, with its consequences at territorial level hitting the country at the same time.

In the meeting, he explained the actions being taken to face the meteorological event in each one of the provinces and to protect the lives of the population, the first objective of the Civil Defense during the passage of hurricanes, were specified.

The first secretaries of the Cuban Communist Party (PCC) and the governors of the eastern provinces took part detailing the measures taken so far.

The head of the nation informed that the country is working in two directions: to stabilize the National Electro-energetic System and to continue the efforts to achieve a stable supply of fuels, which will make it possible to reach a better situation in the next two days.

Regarding specific acts of public disorder that have occurred in the capital, he clarified that there are mechanisms in place to respond to any concerns of the population, but acts of vandalism that disrupts the tranquility of the people will not be allowed, and he did not end his speech without highlighting the understanding and the necessity for the solidarity of the Cuban people to face these situations, as well as the commitment of the workers of the electricity sector who are committed to achieving stability of the service.

As of this post over 60% of Havana has electricity back. During the blackouts hospitals continued to function with power.

Source: [Cuba en Resumen](#)



Justice for Jordan Neely! Vigilante killings must be stopped!

written by Struggle - La Lucha

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Oct. 21 — A hundred people came to the Criminal Courts Building in lower Manhattan this morning to demand justice for Jordan Neely. The 30-year-old Black man was strangled to death by the white vigilante Daniel Penny on May 1, 2023, inside a subway car.

Penny, a former Marine sergeant from West Islip, New York., was in court, where his trial began. He's charged with second-degree manslaughter and criminally negligent homicide. Penny should be tried for first-degree murder instead.

The December 12th Movement called the protest, which began as a news conference and continued as a militant picket line. D12 chairman Omowale Clay and International Secretariat member Roger Wareham were among the speakers. Demonstrators chanted, "Never forget, never give up!"

“The facts in this trial for the jury are simple,” the December 12th Movement said in its statement. “The only person on that train in Manhattan that became violent was Daniel Penny. He initiated violence!

“Daniel Penny, an ex-Marine soldier jumped on Jordan Neely and put him in a chokehold that ended life. Begging for food or money does not warrant being put into a chokehold. Period.”

Chokeholds can cause unconsciousness in two minutes and kill within five. Daniel Penny knew that as an ex-Marine trained in martial arts. New York Police Department officers are no longer allowed to use chokeholds, although they often violate the rule.

Penny took 15 minutes to strangle Jordan Neely on the “F” subway line at the Broadway/Lafayette stop in Manhattan. The homicide was recorded on video and seen by millions.

The killing of Jordan Neely is no different than the murder of George Floyd by Minneapolis policeman Derek Chauvin, who put his knee on Floyd for 9 minutes and 29 seconds. Or the death of Eric Garner, who cried “I can’t breathe” 11 times as he was choked to death by a cop in Staten Island.

\$3 million for a killer

Daniel Penny wasn’t even arrested by police and allowed to leave the scene. Nor were the person or persons detained who had assisted the killer by holding down Jordan Neely. It took 11 days for Penny to be charged.

Why wasn’t Penny taken to Rikers Island prison like the Black teenager Kalief Browder was? Accused of stealing a backpack, Browder spent almost three years in Rikers because he couldn’t afford bail. Browder’s charges were dropped, but he was so traumatized that he hanged himself two years later in 2015.

As Roger Wareham pointed out, the same New York Police Department that didn't want to bust Daniel Penny used gunfire in a Sept. 16 incident involving alleged fare evasion. A 49-year-old subway rider, a bystander, was shot in the head because somebody else supposedly didn't pay \$2.90.

Wareham also denounced the \$3 million that had been collected in support of the vigilante Daniel Penny. Over \$2.6 million of the slush fund had been raised on the GiveSendGo site, which describes itself as "the #1 Christian fundraising site."

GiveSendGo collected dough for the fascists who were allowed to storm the U.S. Capitol on Jan. 6, 2021. Another recipient was Kyle Rittenhouse, who killed two anti-racists during a Black Lives Matter demonstration in Kenosha, Wisconsin.

Super bigot [Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis](#), who wants to ban Black history, urged his followers to donate to the killer. So have fascist members of Congress Marjorie Taylor Greene and Matt Gaetz. Greene calls the vigilante a "hero."

The campaign to defend Penny comes right from the top of capitalist society. "Free Daniel Penny" was the title of William McGurn's May 15, 2023 column in the Wall Street Journal. McGurn was the chief speechwriter for the war criminal George W. Bush, who killed hundreds of thousands of people in Iraq.



Los Angeles stands with Gaza: Protest against Western media's pro-Zionist bias

written by Struggle - La Lucha

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Oct. 18, Los Angeles – Seventy-five people turned out for an emergency protest in front of CNN.

The protest was called when the Israeli military bombed targets that had been declared safe zones – a tent encampment at Al-Aqsa Hospital, a school at the Nuseirat camp, and the Al-Shati camp, all in northern Gaza.

Dozens of Palestinian people were killed in the bombardments or burned alive in massive fires that followed. The majority were children.

Organizers selected CNN as the site for the protest because of the Western media's extreme pro-Zionist bias in its coverage of the genocide.



Cuba under intensified U.S. sanctions confronts its greatest challenge: The continuity of Obama-Trump-Biden policy

written by Struggle - La Lucha
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"The majority of Cubans support Castro ... every possible means should be undertaken promptly to weaken the economic life of Cuba...to decrease monetary and real wages, to bring about hunger, desperation and overthrow of government."

Lester D. Mallory, [U.S. Deputy Assistant Secretary of State](#), 1960.

Despite draconian coercive measures by the U.S. – overwhelmingly [condemned](#) every year by the UN General Assembly, with the next vote slated for October 29-30 – the Cuban Revolution has had extraordinary successes. This small, impoverished,

formerly colonized island nation has achieved levels of education, medical services, and performance in many other fields, including [sports](#), that rival the first world, through the application of socialist principles.

Cuba has rightly become a model of internationalism and an exemplar of socialism. As a consequence, every U.S. administration for over six decades has targeted this “threat of a good example.” Back in its early days, the Cuban Revolution was bolstered by socialist solidarity, particularly from the Soviet Union.

The contemporary geopolitical situation is very different. Most notably the socialist bloc is defunct. Meanwhile, Cuba continues to be confronted by a still hegemonic U.S.. In turn, the Yankee empire is now challenged by the hope of an emergent multipolar order. Cuba has expressed [interest](#) in joining the BRICS trade alliance of emerging economies and will attend their meeting in Russia, October 22-24.

Successes turned into liabilities

Today, Cuba is confronting perhaps its [greatest challenge](#). The ever [intensified](#) U.S. blockade is designed to perversely turn the successes of the revolution into liabilities.

For example, the revolution achieved one hundred percent literacy, created farming collectives and cooperatives, and mechanized cultivation, thus freeing the *campesinos* from the drudgery of peasant subsistence agriculture.

But now, most tractors are idle, in need of scarce fuel and embargoed spare parts. Agricultural production has subsequently contracted. In May, I was on a bus that traveled the length of the island. Mile upon mile of once productive agricultural fields lay fallow.

Historical yields of key crops are down nearly 40% due to lack of fertilizers and pesticides, [according](#) to a Cuban government statement. The daily bread ration has

been slashed, *Reuters* [reports](#).

In order to feed the nation, the state has had to use precious hard currency to import food; currency which otherwise could be used to repair a crumbling infrastructure. Broken pipes have caused widespread [shortages](#) of drinking water.

Under siege, some 10% percent of the population, over a million Cubans, [have left](#) between 2022 and 2023. This has, in turn, led to a drain of skilled labor and a decrease in productivity, contributing to a vicious cycle driving out-migration.

Le Monde diplomatique [cautions](#): “Cuba is facing a moment that is extraordinarily precarious. While numerous factors have led to this...U.S. sanctions have, at every juncture, triggered or worsened every aspect of the current crisis.”

The Obama engagement

Of the some 40 sovereign states [sanctioned](#) and slated for regime-change by Washington, Cuba is somewhat unique. Until recently, the island did not have the domestic social classes from which a counter-revolutionary base could be recruited.

In Cuba, most bourgeoisie under the Batista dictatorship left the country shortly after the revolution. The large U.S. corporations that they had operated were expropriated. Similarly, when the government nationalized many small businesses in the 1960s, others fled to U.S. shores.

By 2014, then-U.S. President Obama [lamented](#) that Washington’s Cuba policy had “failed to advance our interests.” Obama’s new strategy was to engage Cuba in the hope of fostering a counter-revolutionary class opposition.

Obama reestablished diplomatic relations with Cuba after a hiatus dating to 1961. Travel and some trade restrictions were lifted. And more remittances from relatives living in the U.S. could be sent to Cuba.

In his famous March 2016 speech in Havana, Obama [proclaimed](#) to rousing applause: “I’ve called on our Congress to lift the embargo.” This was an outright lie. The U.S. president had only remarked that the so-called embargo (really a blockade, because the U.S. enforces it on third countries) was “outdated.”

Obama lauded the *cuentapropistas*, small entrepreneurs in Cuba, and pledged to help promote that stratum. He promised a new U.S. policy focus of encouraging small businesses in Cuba. “There’s no limitation from the United States on the ability of Cuba to take these steps” to create what in effect would be a potentially counter-revolutionary class, Obama promised.

Obama warned the Cubans, “over time, the youth will lose hope” if prosperity were not achieved by creating a new small business class.

While normalizing relations with Cuba, Obama took a more adversarial stance toward Venezuela. He [declared](#) the oil-rich South American nation an “unusual and extraordinary threat” and imposed “targeted sanctions” on March 2015. The successes of Venezuela’s Bolivarian Revolution in promoting regional integration were challenging U.S. influence in Latin America, prompting Washington to adopt a “dual-track diplomacy” of engagement with Cuba and containment with Venezuela.

Obama spoke of the “failed” U.S. policy on Cuba, which had not achieved “its intended goals.” Often left unsaid was that the “goal” has been to reverse the Cuban revolution. Obama’s intent was not to terminate the U.S. regime-change policy, but to achieve it more effectively.

His engagement tactic should not be confused for accord. Obama still championed the three belligerent core elements of the U.S. policy: a punishing blockade, occupation of the port of Guantanamo, and covert actions to undermine and destabilize Cuba.

Trump undoes and outdoes Obama

Donald Trump assumed office at a time when the leftist [Pink Tide](#) was ebbing. Taking advantage of the changed geopolitical context, the new president intensified Obama's offensive against Cuba's closest regional supporter Venezuela, while reversing his predecessor's engagement with Havana. His "maximum pressure" campaign against Venezuela devastated their oil sector, thereby reducing Cuba's petroleum subsidies from its ally.

Trump enacted 243 coercive measures against Cuba. He ended individual "people-to-people" educational travel, banned U.S. business with military-linked Cuban entities, and imposed caps on remittances. In the closing days of his administration, he relisted Cuba as a State Sponsor of Terrorism, which further cut the island off from international finance.

Biden continues and extends Trump's policies

Joe Biden, while campaigning for the presidency, played to liberal sentiment with vague inferences that he would restore a policy of engagement and undo Trump's sanctions on Cuba.

By the time Biden assumed the U.S. presidency, Cuba had been heavily impacted by the Covid pandemic. Temporary lockdowns reduced domestic productivity. Travel restrictions dried up tourist dollars, a major source of foreign currency. Once in office and Cuba ever more vulnerable, Biden continued and extended Trump's policies, including retaining it on the State Sponsors of Terrorism list.

At the height of the Covid pandemic, *Belly of the Beast* [reported](#) how scarcities in Cuba fueled anti-government demonstrations on July 11, 2021. Eleven days later, Biden imposed yet more sanctions to further exacerbate the scarcities.

As an article in the *LA Progressive* [explained](#), "Cuba's humanitarian crisis – fueled

by the sanctions maintained by Biden – seems to have only encouraged his administration to keep tightening the screws,” concluding “his policy remains largely indistinguishable from that of Trump.”

Biden, however, continued the Obama policy of empowering the Cuban private sector. He allowed more remittances, disproportionately benefiting Cubans with relatives in the U.S. (who tend to be better off financially). He also facilitated international fund transfers involving private Cuban businesses. Amendments to the Cuban Assets Control Regulations enhanced internet access to encourage development of private telecommunications infrastructures for “independent entrepreneurs.”

What about Democratic Party presidential hopeful Kamala Harris?

“When evaluating the impact of a possible Kamala Harris electoral victory on the United States’ Cuba policy,” *On Cuba News* [admits](#), “the first thing that should be recognized is the lack of evidence or antecedents to form a well-founded forecast.” Likewise, the *Miami Herald* [finds](#) Harris’s current Latin American policies a mystery with “few clues and a lot of uncertainty.”

Going back to when she was on the vice-presidential campaign trail in 2020, Harris [commented](#) about the possibility of easing the blockade on what she called the “dictatorship.” She said that won’t happen anytime soon and would have to be predicated on a new Washington-approved government in Cuba.

Alternative for Cuba

If Cubans want to see what an alternative future might be like under Yankee beneficence, they need only look 48 miles to the east at the [deliberately failed](#) state of Haiti.

In the U.S., the [National Network on Cuba](#), [ACERE](#), and [Pastors for Peace](#) are

among the organizations working to end the blockade and get Cuba off the State Sponsors of Terrorism list.

As the U.S. Peace Council [admonished](#): “No matter how heroic a people may be, socialism must provide for their material needs. The U.S. blockade of Cuba is designed precisely to thwart that and to discredit socialism in Cuba and anywhere else where oppressed people try to better their lot. ... The intensified U.S. interference in Cuba is a wakeup call for greater efforts at solidarity.”

Roger D. Harris is with the human rights group, [Task Force on the Americas](#), founded in 1985.

Source: [Resumen Latinoamericano – U.S.](#)



Gov. Jeff Landry, lawmakers to spend millions on juvenile

detention center expansions

written by Struggle - La Lucha

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Oct. 16 — Louisiana officials expect to put tens of millions of dollars over the next two months into expanding juvenile detention centers that house children and teenagers accused of crimes.

At the beginning of the summer, Gov. Jeff Landry and Louisiana lawmakers diverted \$100 million from a state savings account in order to make upgrades to criminal justice facilities. A large chunk of the money will be used to increase the state's capacity to incarcerate youth offenders, though the exact amount hasn't been set yet.

"We are trying to prioritize funding for regional juvenile facilities," Christopher Walters, Landry's deputy executive counsel, said at an August hearing about how the money will be spent. "We are lacking in bedspace for juvenile offenders."

The Landry administration gave the state juvenile justice office, adult prison system, sheriffs and parish officials the month of September [to apply for criminal justice grants](#) funded by money.

The Legislature's Joint Legislative Committee on the Budget will select the winning projects by the end of the year based on recommendations from a newly formed group called the Criminal Justice Priority Funding Commission, which is primarily made up of state lawmakers.

Projects eligible for the funding go beyond juvenile justice facilities. They also include criminal justice data integration efforts, crime labs and local adult jail upgrades.

Walters and lawmakers made it clear, however, that they intend to focus a large portion of the \$100 million on expanding the capacity of the Office of Juvenile Justice and local law enforcement to house more children and teenagers accused and convicted of crimes.

The Louisiana Center for Children's Rights, which provides attorneys to incarcerated youth, disagrees with the decision to add detention center beds.

"We believe any money our legislature spends should be invested on the things that are proven to create community safety, disrupt the cycle of harm that incarceration perpetuates, and help youth feel supported and thrive in their homes, schools and communities, not additional detention centers," Kristen Rome, the organization's executive director, said in a written statement.

District attorneys and parishes in rural areas have struggled to find places to hold underage suspects they arrest because they don't operate their own local juvenile detention center. At times, they have resorted to sending them to facilities in Mississippi and Alabama, which is expensive for the local parishes.

The surge in juvenile detention spending also falls in line with Landry's overall "tough on crime" agenda. During his first few months in office, the Republican governor increased criminal penalties across the board, including ratcheting up punishments for younger people.

In February, Landry and lawmakers signed [a new law](#) that requires 17-year-olds who are arrested to be treated as adults in the criminal justice system. Previously, district attorneys had been given the discretion to charge a 17-year-old as either an adult or a minor.

This law change has also put pressure on local jail and juvenile center capacity. While state law now classifies 17-year-olds to be adults, federal law does not. Some

sheriffs have been unwilling to house 17-year-olds in adult jails, despite the state law change, because they say they don't have enough space to comply with federal regulations that apply to incarcerated minors.

At least three regions of the state seem poised to get some funding to open new juvenile detention centers.

Kenny Loftin, deputy secretary of the Office of Juvenile Justice, said at an August hearing that he expects the Central Louisiana Juvenile Detention Center Authority to receive money. First established in 1997, the group has been trying to build a local juvenile justice facility for decades.

The planned detention center would serve Avoyelles, Catahoula, Concordia, Grant, LaSalle, Vernon and Winn parishes.

Legislators also set up two other juvenile justice districts in 2023 with an eye toward increasing the number of spaces available for incarcerated children and teens.

The Acadiana Juvenile Justice District would be expected to run a detention center for Acadia, Allen, Evangeline, Iberia, Jefferson Davis, St. Landry, St. Martin, St. Mary and Vermilion parishes.

The River Parishes Juvenile Justice District would build and run a detention center for Ascension, Assumption, St. Charles, St. James and St. John the Baptist. Lafourche Parish Sheriff Craig Webre said in an interview last month that his parish might also join this group.

In both cases, the juvenile justice districts would be controlled by local sheriffs, district attorneys and judges. In Acadiana, each parish government would also have seats on the detention center governing body.

The River Parishes Juvenile Justice District is partially funded through criminal

justice fines. In the Acadiana district, parishes will be able to levy a local tax to help cover the costs of the new detention center.

The state will also be picking up some of the ongoing operating costs of these detention centers.

In order to receive one of the state grants, the districts will have to agree to use at least 30% of their beds to house incarcerated youth who have been found guilty of crime already and are in the state system.

This means the new detention centers will be housing minors who are arrested – but not yet convicted – of crimes alongside children and teenagers who have been found guilty of an offense. While Louisiana has long done this in the adult system, it refrained from mixing those two populations among minors until now.

Mary Livers, who was the head of the Office of Juvenile Justice for Gov. Bobby Jindal, agrees Louisiana needs more juvenile justice beds, but worries about housing pre- and post-adjudicated youth alongside each other as planned.

She said the young people who have been found guilty of a crime need intensive treatment that isn't typically offered in regional detention centers.

"The risk would be that kids would not get the treatment they were supposed to get in an OJJ facility," Livers said in an interview.



State Sen. Heather Cloud, R-Turkey Creek, said at the August hearing the state had decided to house the two populations together so that the new juvenile justice system would have a "sustainable" source of funding and not run into financial problems.

Livers also said she had hoped to see the state conduct a study of state facility needs before officials started allocating money to build new juvenile justice facilities.

“I’m disappointed there doesn’t appear to have been more planning done,” she said.

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A law was meant to target teen violence. Instead, 17-year-olds are

being charged as adults for lesser offenses.

written by Struggle - La Lucha

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This article was produced for ProPublica's Local Reporting Network in partnership with [Verite News](#). [Sign up for Dispatches](#) to get stories like this one as soon as they are published.

In February, a prosecutor from a rural area outside Baton Rouge asked members of Louisiana's Senate judiciary committee to imagine a frightening scene: You are home with your wife at 4 a.m. when suddenly a 17-year-old with a gun appears. The teenager won't hesitate, District Attorney Tony Clayton said. "He will kill you and your wife."

According to Clayton, teenagers were terrorizing the state without fear of consequences. The only way to stop them was to prosecute all 17-year-olds in adult court, regardless of the offense, and lock them up in prison. Law enforcement officials from around the state made similar arguments. Legislators quickly passed a bill that lowered the age at which the justice system must treat defendants as adults from 18 to 17.

But according to a review of arrests in the five months since the law took effect, most of the 17-year-olds booked in three of the state's largest parishes have not been accused of violent crimes. Verite News and ProPublica identified 203 17-year-olds who were arrested in Orleans, Jefferson and East Baton Rouge parishes between April and September. A total of 141, or 69%, were arrested for offenses that are not listed as [violent crimes in Louisiana law](#), according to our analysis of jail rosters, court records and district attorney data.

Just 13% of the defendants — a little over two dozen — have been accused of the sort of violent crimes that lawmakers cited when arguing for the legislation, such as rape, armed robbery and murder. Prosecutors were able to move such cases to adult court even before the law was changed.

The larger group of lesser offenses includes damaging property, trespassing, theft under \$1,000, disturbing the peace, marijuana possession, illegal carrying of weapons and burglary. They also include offenses that involve the use of force, such as simple battery, but those are not listed in state law as violent crimes either, and they can be prosecuted as misdemeanors depending on the circumstances.

In one case in New Orleans, a boy took a car belonging to his mother's boyfriend without permission so he could check out flooding during Hurricane Francine last month, according to a police report. When the teen returned the car, the front bumper was damaged. The boyfriend called police and the teen was arrested for unauthorized use of a vehicle. In another case, a boy was charged with battery after he got into a fight with his brother about missing a school bus.

In July, a 17-year-old girl was charged with resisting arrest and interfering with a law enforcement investigation. She had shoved a police officer as he was taking her older sister into custody for a minor charge resulting from a fight with another girl. None of those defendants have had an opportunity to enter a plea so far; convictions could result in jail or prison time of up to two years.

In juvenile court, teenagers facing charges such as these could be sentenced to a detention facility, but the juvenile system is mandated to focus on rehabilitation and sentences are generally shorter than in adult court, juvenile justice advocates said. And in the juvenile system, only arrests for violent crimes and repeat offenses are public record. But because these 17-year-olds are in the adult system, they all have public arrest records that can prevent them from getting jobs or housing.

Rachel Gassert, the former policy director for the Louisiana Center for Children's Rights, said there was one word to describe what she felt when Verite News and ProPublica shared their findings: "Despair."

Eight years ago, Gassert and other criminal justice advocates convinced lawmakers to raise the age for adult prosecution from 17 to 18 years old, pointing to [research that shows](#) that the [human brain does not fully develop until early adulthood](#) and that youth are [more likely to reoffend](#) when they are prosecuted as adults. The law enacted this spring was the culmination of a two-year effort to reverse that.

"The whole push to repeal Raise the Age was entirely political and all about throwing children under the bus," Gassert said. "And now we are seeing the tire treads on their backs."

Gov. Jeff Landry's office, Clayton and state Sen. Heather Cloud, R-Turkey Creek, who sponsored the bill to roll back Raise the Age, did not respond to requests for comment. The Louisiana District Attorneys Association, which supported the bill, declined to comment.

Landry and his Republican allies argued that Raise the Age and other liberal policies were responsible for a [pandemic-era uptick in violent offenses](#) committed by juveniles in Louisiana. They said juvenile courts, where a sentence can't extend past a defendant's 21st birthday, are too lenient.

Juvenile justice advocates argued that the law would cause teenagers to be prosecuted as adults for behaviors that are typical for immature adolescents. These 17-year-olds would face long-lasting consequences, including arrest records and prison time. And the harm would fall largely on Black children. Nearly 9 out of every 10 of the 17-year-olds arrested in Orleans and East Baton Rouge parishes are Black, Verite News and ProPublica found. (A similar figure couldn't be calculated for Jefferson Parish because some court records weren't available.)

Opponents of the law also pointed out that the data didn't show a link between enacting the Raise the Age legislation and a surge in violent crime. In 2022, when then-Attorney General Landry and others first tried to repeal the law, crime data analyst Jeff Asher said in a legislative hearing that Louisiana's [increase in homicides](#) during the pandemic was [part of a national trend](#) that began before Raise the Age was passed.

"It happened in red states. It happened in blue states. It happened in big cities, small towns, suburbs, metro parishes," Asher told lawmakers. Starting in 2023, data has shown a significant drop in [homicides in Louisiana](#) and [nationwide](#).

Conservative lawmakers dismissed Asher's numbers and instead cited horrific crimes committed by teenagers, such as the [brutal killing of 73-year-old Linda Frickey](#) amid a surge in carjackings in New Orleans in 2022. In that incident, four teenagers between 15 and 17 years old stole Frickey's SUV in broad daylight. One of them kicked, punched and pepper-sprayed her as he pulled her out of the vehicle, according to court testimony. Frickey, who had become tangled in her seat belt, was dragged alongside the vehicle. Landry argued that teenagers who commit such heinous crimes must be punished as adults.

Opponents said the Frickey case instead showed why the law wasn't needed: District attorneys in Louisiana have long had the discretion to move cases involving the most serious crimes out of juvenile court, which is what Orleans Parish District Attorney Jason Williams did. Three girls who took part in the carjacking pleaded guilty to manslaughter and were each sentenced to 20 years in prison; the 17-year-old who attacked Frickey and drove her car was found guilty of second-degree murder and sentenced to life in prison.

After the attempt to repeal the Raise the Age law failed in 2022, lawmakers passed a bill in 2023. It was vetoed by Democratic Gov. John Bel Edwards. "Housing seventeen year olds with adults is dangerous and reckless," [Edwards said](#) in a

written statement at the time. “They often come out as [seasoned criminals](#) after being victimized.”

This year, with Landry in lockstep with the Republican supermajority in the Legislature, the law sailed through. For Landry, who was elected on an anti-crime platform, the law’s passage fulfilled a campaign pledge. When the law took effect, [he declared](#), “No more will 17-year-olds who commit home invasions, carjack, and rob the great people of our State be treated as children in court.”

Now these teenagers are treated as adults from arrest to sentencing. In New Orleans, that means that when a 17-year-old is arrested, police no longer alert their parents, a step that department policy requires for juveniles, according to a department spokesperson. It’s not clear if law enforcement agencies elsewhere in the state have made a similar change.

All 17-year-olds arrested in New Orleans are now booked into the Orleans Parish jail, where those charged with crimes not classified as violent have spent up to 15 days before being released pending trial. Though the jail separates teens from adults, it has been under a court-ordered reform plan since 2013 after the Department of Justice found [routine use of excessive force by guards](#) and rampant inmate-on-inmate violence. Federal monitors said in May that [violence remains a significant problem](#), although they acknowledged conditions have improved somewhat. The sheriff has agreed with this assessment, blaming understaffing.

Most of the cases involving 17-year-olds in Orleans, Jefferson and East Baton Rouge parishes are pending, according to court records and officials in those offices. Several defendants have pleaded guilty. Prosecutors have declined to file charges in a handful of cases. Many defendants are first-time offenders who should be eligible for diversion programs in which charges will eventually be dropped if they abide by conditions set by the court, according to officials with the Orleans and Jefferson Parish district attorneys.

None of the DAs in Orleans, Jefferson or East Baton Rouge parishes took a position on the law, according to officials in those offices and news reports. Williams, the Orleans Parish DA, responded to Verite News and ProPublica's findings by saying his office is holding "violent offenders accountable" while providing alternatives to prison for those teenagers "willing to heed discipline and make a real course correction."

Margaret Hay, first assistant district attorney with Jefferson Parish, declined to comment on Verite and ProPublica's findings except to say, "We're constitutionally mandated to uphold and enforce the laws of the state of Louisiana." East Baton Rouge District Attorney Hillar Moore declined to comment.

Even those who avoid prison face the long-term consequences of going through the adult court system. Background checks can reveal arrests and convictions, which could [prevent them](#) from obtaining a job, [housing](#), professional licenses, loans, [government assistance](#) such as student aid or food stamps, or custody of their children.

"Having a felony arrest or conviction on your record," said Aaron Clark-Rizzio, legal director for the Louisiana Center for Children's Rights, "is like wearing a heavy yoke around your neck."

Marsha Levick, chief legal officer with the Juvenile Law Center, a nonprofit law firm based in Philadelphia, said that what's happening in Louisiana reminds her of the late 1990s, when states toughened punishments for juveniles after a noted criminologist warned of a generation of "[super predators](#)." That theory was eventually debunked — but not before tens of thousands of children had been locked up and saddled with criminal records.

[Mariam Elba](#) contributed reporting and [Jeff Frankl](#) contributed research.

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Struggle □ La Lucha PDF - October 21, 2024

written by Struggle - La Lucha
October 23, 2024
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Inicio de una histórica presidencia en México, Claudia Sheinbaum Pardo
Promesa de cambio en Puerto Rico

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Hurricane chaos

Capitalism fails in a crisis

By Stephen Millies

What happened in Florida is horrendous and preventable. Millions of people were trying to escape as Hurricane Milton approached. Mile after mile of expressways were clogged with cars, and over a thousand gas stations ran out of fuel.

The Pentagon has close to a trillion-dollar budget. At least \$175 billion has been spent on the U.S. proxy war with the Russian Federation in Ukraine. Another \$18 billion has been spent on the genocidal war against Gaza and all of Palestine.

Climate catastrophe: How fossil fuel giants fueled storm crisis

Yet the U.S. capitalist state is incapable of protecting its own population from disasters as capitalist climate change makes them all the more likely to happen.

What we've seen in Florida is a repeat of the same preventable tragedy that happened during Hurricane Katrina in 2005. At least 1,392 people were killed as President Bush let Black and poor people drown and die in New Orleans.

How are disabled people, prisoners, people needing dialysis treatments, going to survive the current hurricane? To the billionaire class and its stooge, Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis, all these people are expendable.

One obvious way to evacuate people would be to mobilize public transportation. Instead of Air Force planes being used to send U.S. troops to Western Asia, the aircraft would be used to carry thousands of people to safety. Commercial airliners could move many more, with free fares paid out of the misnamed defense budget.

Buses would be mobilized as well. Meanwhile, hotels and empty apartments — kept off the market to jack up rents — would be prepared to house families.

Continued on page 14



U.S. cities join world in solidarity with Palestine & Lebanon

20,000 march for Palestine and Lebanon in NYC

Thousands gather in San Diego to protest Israeli genocide

New Orleans coalition shuts downtown in support of Palestine

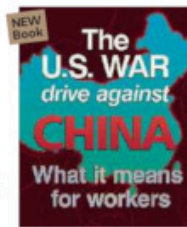
No more war! Young working-class activists expose U.S. imperialism
Sales of stolen Palestinian land must be stopped!



Elections, war and wages

Meat monopolies rip off everyone

Cuba to Palestine: The spirit of Che



Nobel winner: Gaza like Japan after A-bombs

Biden-Harris' attack on Iran

Protesters freed in Nigeria

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- Promesa de cambio en Puerto Rico



U.S. to be ready for war on China by 2027: Navy Chief

written by Struggle - La Lucha
October 23, 2024

On Tuesday, Oct. 15, a large-scale military exercise named Kamandang commenced in the Philippines. The exercise, scheduled to run until Oct. 25, involves over 2,300 military personnel from the United States, the Philippines, Japan, South Korea, Australia, and Britain.

Kamandang coincides with a separate naval exercise taking place in northern Luzon Island, Philippines.

The exercise will include live fire drills, amphibious landings, and training for possible chemical and biological warfare. It will take place in Burgos, Ilocos Norte, and Basco and Itbayat in Batanes, areas facing the Taiwan Strait.

The United States has been increasing its military operations in the Asia-Pacific region, including:

- Deploying more aircraft carriers, bombers, and submarines
- Introducing the Typhon mid-range missile launcher system
- Expanding military bases in the Philippines from five to nine under a new defense agreement

The U.S. has also been conducting joint exercises with South Korea and Japan.

The trilateral military alliance of AUKUS — Australia, Britain, and the U.S. — is bringing Japan in for military drills as well as increasing NATO involvement in its regional military strategies. North Korea and China have observed these developments and accused the U.S. of trying to create an Asian version of NATO. The newly elected Japanese Prime Minister Shigeru Ishiba has recently proposed that such a formation of a “collective self-defense system,” referring to NATO, is “essential.”

The United States is gearing up for a potential war on China.

[Adm. Lisa Franchetti](#), the Chief of Naval Operations and the highest-ranking officer in the U.S. Navy, revealed a strategic plan on Sept. 18 to achieve preparedness for a conflict with China by 2027. This initiative reflects the U.S. military’s belligerent intent to incite war with Beijing.

