

Free Samaher Esmail!

written by Struggle - La Lucha

February 11, 2024



Ibrahim Hamed with mother Samaher Esmail. Photo courtesy of Ibrahim Hamed

On Feb. 5, Israeli Occupation Forces (IOF) soldiers kidnapped Samaher Esmail, a 46-year-old mother and Palestinian-American who lives in Gretna, Louisiana. The kidnapping occurred in the family home near Silwad city in the occupied West Bank, as reported by her son, Ibrahim Hamed.

Both the IOF and the U.S. State Department confirmed the arrest, but have revealed little else. The occupiers have prevented the family from obtaining information about Samaher's whereabouts or condition. This is typical, and is part of the Israeli practice of "administrative detention."

A Palestinian-American school teacher - another resident of the greater New Orleans area - wrote the following to explain the context of Samaher's situation, a context often absent in mainstream media coverage:

"Administrative detention - a grim facet of Israeli military policy - involves the arbitrary apprehension of Palestinian individuals in the West Bank and Gaza. Labeling them as 'potential suspects,' the military confines them to prisons for up to six months, with the possibility of indefinite extension, all without trial, formal charges, or due process.

"Families are left in agonizing uncertainty about their loved ones' whereabouts, while detainees are denied access to legal counsel. Shockingly, even children as young as 8 or 9 are not spared from this injustice, further exacerbating the trauma inflicted upon entire communities.

"The surge in detentions from 1,200 to about 4,000 between Oct. 7, 2023, and January 2024 reflects Israel's wanton disregard for international standards, which mandate the use of administrative detention only in emergency situations. This abusive practice has become a cornerstone of Israel's oppressive policies against Palestinians throughout its existence, perpetuating a climate of fear and uncertainty among the populace.

"The recent kidnapping of Samaher Esmail, a 49-year-old American-Palestinian mother and resident of Gretna, Louisiana, with strong ties to the Palestinian city of Silwad, underscores the chilling reality faced by those who dare to speak out against Israeli injustices. Despite her unknown offense, it is suspected that her social media

post expressing grief over the death of a Palestinian at the hands of Israeli settlers served as the pretext for her detention.

“This blatant suppression of dissent highlights Israel’s attempts to silence those who expose its atrocities, particularly through social media censorship.

“The [tragic toll on journalists and media personnel](#), with more than 122 lives lost in Gaza since October, serves as a stark reminder of Israel’s ruthless campaign to stifle first-hand information on its terrors.

“The U.S. government must condemn Israel’s ongoing genocide in Gaza. We demand an immediate ceasefire to halt the bloodshed. Accountability for human rights violations is non-negotiable.

“Samaher Esmail must be returned to her family without delay.”



Under attack for solidarity with

Palestine, NYC students are fighting back

written by Struggle - La Lucha

February 11, 2024

A thousand people came to New York City's Washington Square Park in Lower Manhattan on Feb. 8 to show their solidarity with Palestine. "All Students and Youth for Gaza" was the rally's call.

Many were college students under attack for protesting the slaughter of 30,000 Palestinians, although older folks also came. Hundreds of Palestinian flags were flown, accompanied by many signs.

Speakers included representatives from the Palestinian Youth Movement, Resist 4 Return, and the Party for Socialism and Liberation.

Amin Husain, an adjunct professor at New York University, described how he was suspended for speaking out against the genocidal bombing of Gaza. The Palestinian scholar has been absurdly labeled an "antisemite" even though he's a Semite.

Surrounding the rally were lavish buildings belonging to New York University. Wealthy donors to NYU, which has an endowment of nearly \$6 billion, are propelling a witch hunt against any pro-Palestinian voices. Similar inquisitions are taking place at Columbia, Harvard, the University of Pennsylvania, and other schools.

Caesar, a Dominican student at the State University of New York campus at Purchase, described how he was suspended after a Zionist assaulted him. He quoted Malcolm X: "If you're not careful, the newspapers will have you hating the people who are being oppressed and loving the people who are doing the oppressing."

A Columbia University student described how campus Zionists, who are Israeli army reservists, used “skunk spray” on pro-Palestinian protesters. This is a chemical formula developed by that apartheid army for crowd control. Yet it’s the protesters who are being attacked by the school’s administration, not the thugs who sprayed them.

Columbia officials suspended both Students for Justice in Palestine and Jewish Voice for Peace. So much for freedom of speech on the campus!

Other solidarity messages were given by speakers from The People’s Forum, a Stony Brook University student, as well as representatives from the Hunter College Palestine Solidarity Alliance and the Students for Justice in Palestine chapter at NYU.

People then marched over 35 blocks north to Grand Central Terminal before going over to the big reference library on Fifth Avenue. Numerous cars and trucks honked their horns in support of Palestine.



NYU's dirty laundry

Just behind the Washington Square rally was NYU's Elmer Holmes Bobst library. It's

named after a big NYU donor and pharmaceutical executive who hated Jewish people.

In one of his letters to fellow bigot Richard Nixon, Bobst complained to the U.S. president about the alleged “malicious action of Jews.” Bobst was accused by his granddaughter and great-granddaughter of raping them.

One of the architects of the 12-story library was Philip Johnson, who accompanied the Nazi army during its invasion of Poland. Johnson did so as a correspondent of the pro-Hitler “Social Justice” newspaper published by the fascist priest Charles Coughlin.

None of this prevented the Zionist regime from hiring Johnson to redesign Al-Quds (Jerusalem). (“Father Coughlin” by Sheldon Marcus.)

A block east of Washington Square Park is the still-intact building, now owned by NYU, that housed the Triangle Shirtwaist factory. A fire there on March 25, 1911, killed 146 workers, who were overwhelmingly young women, including many teenagers.

Almost all the victims were from Italian and Jewish immigrant families. The company refused to hire Black workers.

To avoid being burned alive, many women leapt to their deaths. None of the Jewish workers cried out the Zionist slogan “Next year in Jerusalem!” as they fell. Why should they have?

The two Jewish capitalists who owned the factory had locked the doors, guaranteeing their deaths. What common interest did these murdered workers have with their killers?

Zionism is racism, and capitalists, like those who owned the Triangle Shirtwaist

firetrap, are the enemies of all workers.





Putin debunks Tucker Carlson's warmongering anti-China propaganda, mocks his CIA ties

written by Struggle - La Lucha
February 11, 2024



The U.S. TV host Tucker Carlson set off a political scandal by traveling to Moscow this February to interview Russian President Vladimir Putin.

This provoked a debate in the media, which – as is so often the case in partisan U.S. politics – completely missed the forest for the trees.

Liberal war hawks like Hillary Clinton portrayed Tucker Carlson as a traitor and “useful idiot” of Putin.

Democrats have been blinded by their obsessive hatred of Russia and are utterly incapable of seeing what is happening geopolitically.



In reality, Carlson and other Donald Trump allies in the Republican Party have tried for years to drive a wedge between Russia and China while maniacally pushing for war on Beijing.

Trump's former top advisor Steve Bannon, who ran the far-right leader's 2016 presidential campaign, stated openly in 2018: "[We're at war with China](#)."

Bannon called to "unite the West against the rise of a totalitarian China." And he considers Russia to be part of the "West."



The image shows the top navigation bar of the CNBC website. It features the NBC logo and the word "CNBC" in white. To the right is a search bar with the placeholder "Search quotes, news & videos" and a magnifying glass icon. Further right are "WATCHLIST" and a bell icon. Below the main navigation, there are links for "MARKETS", "BUSINESS", "INVESTING", "TECH", "POLITICS", "CNBC TV", "INVESTING CLUB", "PRO", "MAKE IT", and "SELECT".

DELIVERING ALPHA

Former Trump advisor Steve Bannon: 'We're at war with China'

PUBLISHED WED, JUL 18 2018 4:59 PM EDT | UPDATED THU, JUL 26 2018 5:05 PM EDT

This strategy was also adopted by [France's far-right leader, Marine Le Pen](#), who stated in 2022 that she wanted to improve relations with Russia in order to prevent it from allying with China.

The Trumpist Republicans and their far-right counterparts in Europe see Russia as white, European, Christian, and capitalist, and a potential ally against China, which they demonize as a non-white, Asiatic, atheistic, and communist threat to so-called “Judeo-Christian Western civilization.”

Carlson has played a key role in this warmongering campaign against China.

When he had his prime-time show on Fox News, Carlson declared, “Russia is not America’s main enemy. Obviously, no sane person thinks it is. [Our main enemy, of course, is China](#). And the United States ought to be in a relationship with Russia, aligned against China”.

Anyone claiming Tucker Carlson is "anti-war" is a useful idiot. He's just a neocon 2.0

The only reason he criticizes NATO's war on Russia is because he wants war on China instead

Tucker lamented, "If Russia ever joined forces with China, American global hegemony would end" pic.twitter.com/P42zHVIS3A

— Ben Norton (@BenjaminNorton) [April 24, 2023](#)

The narrative that Carlson is “anti-war” is totally false. The reason that he opposes the [proxy war against Russia in Ukraine](#) is simply because he wants all resources focused on war with China.

Carlson insisted on his Fox program, “The biggest threat to this country is not Vladimir Putin; that’s ludicrous. [The biggest threat, obviously, is China](#)”.

The far-right TV host is afraid that a China-Russia alliance would end U.S. hegemony

over the planet, which the close Trump ally wants to preserve.

"If Russia ever joins forces with China, [American global hegemony](#), its power, would end instantly", Carlson lamented. "If Russia and China ever got together, it would be a brand new world, and the United States would be greatly diminished. Most Americans agree that would be bad".

Another clip of warmonger Tucker Carlson: "The biggest threat to this country is not Vladimir Putin; that's ludicrous. The biggest threat obviously is China"

He fearmongers about Chinese spying and its "growing military", blames it for fentanyl deaths, brings on a neocon guest pic.twitter.com/B7XpqpdyM

— Ben Norton (@BenjaminNorton) [April 26, 2023](#)

Since he was fired from Fox News in 2023, Carlson has continued pushing this same warmongering narrative: that the U.S. should ally with Russia against China.

In his February interview with Putin, however, the Russian leader could clearly see that Carlson is a political operative acting on behalf of the Republican Party and Trump, and that they hope to encourage division between Moscow and its most important ally.

Putin pushed back against Carlson's hysterical anti-China narratives, which he referred to as mere "boogeyman stories".

The Russian president emphasized that China wants peaceful cooperation, and that "China's foreign policy philosophy is not aggressive".

The following is a transcript of [the February 6 exchange](#):

TUCKER CARLSON: The question is what comes next? And maybe you trade one colonial power for another, much less sentimental and forgiving colonial power. I mean, is the BRICS, for example, in danger of being completely dominated by the Chinese, the Chinese economy, in a way that's not good for their sovereignty? Do you worry about that?

VLADIMIR PUTIN: We have heard those boogeyman stories before. It is a boogeyman story.

We're neighbors with China. You cannot choose neighbors, just as you cannot choose close relatives. We share a border of a thousand kilometers with them. This is number one.

Second, we have a centuries long history of coexistence. We're used to it.

Third, China's foreign policy philosophy is not aggressive. Its idea is to always look for a compromise. And we can see that.

The next point is as follows. We're always told the same boogeyman story, and here it goes again, through a euphemistic form, but it is still the same boogeyman story.

The cooperation with China keeps increasing. The pace at which China's cooperation with Europe is growing. It's higher and greater than that of the growth of Chinese-Russian cooperation.

Ask Europeans. Are they afraid? They might be. I don't know. But they are still trying to access China's market at all costs. Especially now that they are facing economic problems.

Chinese businesses are also exploring the European market.

Do Chinese businesses have small presence in the United States? Yes.

The political decisions are such that they are trying to limit the cooperation with China.

It is to your own detriment, Mr. Tucker, that you are limiting cooperation with China. You are hurting yourself.

As Putin made clear, the Republicans have failed to isolate China from Russia and divide BRICS.

The irony is that the Democratic Party's hysteria over the Russiagate conspiracy, combined with the [war in Ukraine](#), prevented the Trumpist elements from realizing this strategy.

(Washington's failure to divide Russia from China has only further incentivized the United States to focus heavily on [allying with India's far-right government](#), seeking to provoke conflict between New Delhi and Beijing. Both Trump and Joe Biden have sought to woo India.)

Carlson's bellicose anti-China rhetoric was not mere red meat for his typical Fox News conservative audience. Since he was fired, Carlson has continued churning out this cartoonish propaganda as an independent broadcaster.

On February 2, just four days before he interviewed Putin, Carlson published a video claiming that [China is “fueling the invasion of America”](#). The implication was that war would on Beijing would be justified in response to a supposed Chinese communist-backed “invasion”.

In November 2023, Carlson released an interview with Trump, in which both [fearmongered about Beijing](#).

"Why is China allowed to conduct imperialism in our hemisphere?" Carlson asked.

Trump replied, "Yeah, and it's far beyond Cuba; it's all over South America". The former U.S. president then claimed, without a shred of evidence, that "China is building military installations in Cuba".

Carlson is a personal friend of Trump, and acts as a propagandist for the former president and his faction of the Republican Party.

But their relationship goes deeper than friendship. In fact, Trump has publicly said that he has considered [Carlson to run with him to be vice president](#) of the United States.

This is especially relevant considering that Trump may very well win this year's presidential election. Most polls show that he is [leading over Biden](#), including in critical swing states.

As he campaigns for president, Trump has pledged to implement extremely aggressive anti-China policies. The Washington Post reported, citing his advisors, that "Trump is preparing for a [massive new trade war with China](#)", and wants to impose 60% tariffs on all imports of Chinese goods into the U.S..

When asked about this on Fox News, [Trump floated tariffs even higher than 60%](#), stating, "I would say maybe it's going to be more than that."

Historically, economic wars of this magnitude often lead to military conflict. So, Trump's hawkish anti-China policies could escalate into a conventional war.

In addition to being a close ally of Trump, Carlson has used his large post-Fox personal media platform to [promote the Republican presidential candidate Vivek Ramaswamy](#). Together, they have China and fearmongered about war over Taiwan.

Ramaswamy has campaigned on a Trumpist and Carlsonian foreign policy platform, arguing that the U.S. should [ally with Russia in order to try to isolate China](#).

Ironically, this strategy advocated by Trump, Bannon, Ramaswamy, and Carlson was also previously promoted by Henry Kissinger.

Back in the Richard Nixon administration in the 1970s, Kissinger used “triangular diplomacy” to play China against the Soviet Union. Washington’s alliance then with Beijing was a significant factor that led to the destabilization and, eventually, overthrow of the USSR.

In 2018, Kissinger called for returning to this triangular diplomacy, but in the opposite direction. The Daily Beast reported, “Henry Kissinger suggested to President Donald Trump that the [United States should work with Russia to contain a rising China](#)”.

Putin mocks Tucker Carlson for applying to join the CIA

With the rise of Donald Trump and his far-right movement, Tucker Carlson tried to rebrand himself as a so-called populist.

But Carlson was always blue-blooded media royalty. His middle name is Swanson, and his stepmother was the heiress of the eponymous food corporation.

The scion of a powerful, wealthy, politically connected family, Carlson started his media career as a neoconservative hawk, churning out diehard pro-war articles for the notorious neocon bible the Weekly Standard.

Carlson was soon kicked upstairs, in the 2000s, to host shows at CNN and MSNBC, before later moving to Fox News.

In the Trump era, Carlson has marketed himself as a paleoconservative, condemning neoconservatives to try to score points with “populists”. But back during the George W. Bush administration, Carlson was a card-carrying neocon.

Carlson eagerly supported the illegal U.S. invasion of Iraq, using crude, neocolonial, racist talking points.

As [The Daily Beast wrote](#) (emphasis added):

Tucker Carlson described Iraqis as “semiliterate primitive monkeys” in past comments made on the Bubba The Love Sponge radio show, according to new audio recordings uncovered by Media Matters. The Fox News host also **claimed Iraqis don’t “behave like human beings”** and said **he had “zero sympathy” for Iraqis or their culture** during a May 2006 discussion of the Iraq War on the popular radio show. **“A culture where people just don’t use toilet paper or forks,”** Carlson said—adding that **Iraqis should “just shut the fuck up and obey” the U.S. because “they can’t govern themselves.”** In a Sept. 2009 episode, Carlson also proclaimed that **Afghanistan would never be a “civilized country because the people aren’t civilized.”**

In fact, Carlson was such a dedicated Reaganite and cold warrior that, back when he was in college, he [applied to join the CIA](#).

[Journalist Alan Macleod showed](#) how, in the 1980s, Carlson traveled to Nicaragua to support the CIA’s far-right death squads, the Contras, in their terror war against the revolutionary Sandinista government.

Tucker’s father, [Richard “Dick” Carlson](#), was the director of Voice of America, a U.S. government propaganda outlet that is closely [linked to the CIA](#) and other spy agencies.



Russian intelligence clearly knew about Carlson's CIA ties. So when he interviewed Putin in February, the Russian leader mocked Carlson for having applied to join the notorious U.S. spy agency, which Putin emphasized had organized many coups d'état and meddled in the internal affairs of countless foreign countries.

The following is a transcript of the exchange:

TUCKER CARLSON: *With the backing of whom?*

VLADIMIR PUTIN: *With the backing of CIA, of course. The organization you wanted to join back in the day, as I understand.*

We should thank God they didn't let you in. Although it is a serious organization, I understand.

My former vis-à-vis, in the sense that I served in the first main directorate, the

Soviet Union's intelligence service.

They have always been our opponents. A job is a job.

Tucker Carlson's neocolonial views on Latin America

Although he criticizes neocons today, Carlson's foreign policy regarding Latin America is decidedly neoconservative, and neocolonial.

Carlson routinely treats Latin America like the U.S. "backyard", and frequently complains that China is supposedly trying to "[take over](#)" and even colonize "our hemisphere".

In 2022, when he was still at Fox News, [Carlson traveled to Brazil](#) to produce a propaganda documentary for far-right leader Jair Bolsonaro, who was staunchly pro-U.S. and anti-China.

In effect, Carlson was meddling in Brazil's election, seeking to prevent the return to power of leftist Lula da Silva (who went on to win the 2022 election).

In the promotional video that Carlson made for Bolsonaro, he invoked the 200-year-old, explicitly colonial Monroe Doctrine, in order to fearmonger about China's bilateral, consensual relations with Latin American nations - and to justify increasingly aggressive U.S. interventionism in the region.

The Fox News host declared (emphasis added):

*In 1823, President James Monroe announced a policy that has been the center of American foreign policy for the last 200 years. Called the **Monroe Doctrine**, it has a very simple thesis: Great powers would not be allowed to control nations in*

the Western hemisphere. That would be a direct threat to the interests of the United States. And for 200 years, we haven't allowed it.

Under the Biden administration, the Monroe Doctrine is no longer enforced.

Constrained by its ideological concerns, consumed with petty political grievances and above all, distracted by a faraway war in Eastern Europe [ie, against Russia in Ukraine], the Biden administration has abdicated its responsibility.

And into the void left by the United States moves a new superpower.

*We've come to Brazil to see for ourselves the **rise of China**, and how the government of **China is replacing the United States as the dominant power in our hemisphere**.*

Washington's bipartisan imperialism

This anti-China, pro-colonial diatribe was a stark reminder that Carlson is, in fact, an ardent advocate for U.S. imperialism.

Carlson is not opposed to war on principle. He only criticizes the U.S. proxy war against Russia because he wants to focus the entire attention of the U.S. empire for war on China.

Carlson is co-opting many well-intentioned people who don't want war on Russia, and brainwashing them to want war on China.

However, U.S. liberals' hysteria over the Russiagate conspiracy has blinded them to this reality.

Of course, in Washington there is bipartisan opposition to China. But the Democrats

are more fixated on Russia now, in the short time, while [referring to China as a “long-term threat.”](#)

Republicans, led by Trump and Carlson, want to put aside differences with Russia and dedicate all of the U.S. empire's resources into containing, weakening, and ultimately overthrowing the Communist Party of China.

Both dominant U.S. political parties are thoroughly imperialist. Their fight is not about whether the U.S. should be an empire; rather, their debate is about what is the best strategy to preserve the U.S. empire.

Carlson and Trump share much in common politically with neocons and liberal-interventionist hawks, whom they sometimes criticize for “populist” credit.

What unites them all is their desire to strengthen the U.S. empire and maintain Washington's unipolar hegemony over the planet.

This is precisely why Tucker Carlson warned with terror, back on his Fox News show, “If Russia ever joins forces with China, American global hegemony, its power, would end instantly.”

Source: [Geopolitical Economy Report](#)



Venezuela rejects new ExxonMobil oil wells in Essequibo, ramped-up U.S. military aid

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Venezuelan Vice President Delcy Rodríguez has strongly criticized the expansion of US corporation Exxon Mobil's oil exploration in the territorial waters of the disputed Essequibo region.

"The energy multinational not only usurps the sovereignty of Guyana [...] but also seeks to protect its illicit operations in a sea that is pending demarcation," Rodríguez wrote Tuesday on social media while taking aim at the "warmongering US influence."

The Venezuelan VP [warned](#) that expanded oil activities in the Essequibo area would violate international legality and the [Argyle Agreement](#) signed in December in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines between Venezuelan and Guyanese Presidents Nicolás

Maduro and Irfaan Ali.

"Venezuela will not rest in its defense of the Essequibo and will assert its rights in all circumstances," she concluded.

In the "Joint Declaration of Argyle for Peace Between Guyana and Venezuela," Maduro and Ali committed to not use force against each other and to continue direct talks to resolve the [Essequibo controversy](#) under international law.

On January 25, a [second meeting](#) took place in Brazil between the foreign ministers Yván Gil and Hugh Hilton Todd as part of a joint commission. The two officials renewed the pledge to maintain peace and continue working toward a diplomatic solution.

Rodríguez's reaction came after ExxonMobil's president Alistair Routledge [announced](#) on Tuesday the company will drill two new exploratory wells in the Stabroek Block, which is located some 200 kilometers offshore the Essequibo region. It covers an area of 26,800 square kilometers and contains more than 11 billion barrels of crude and gas. Routledge said the company has no intention of ceasing operations in the Stabroek Block and has Guyana's and US support.

Talking to the press, Routledge said that ExxonMobil would continue "pursuing business and delivering on commitments" with Guyana, claiming that present oil operations do not violate international law. He added that the company and partners Hess Corporation and China National Offshore Oil Corporation (CNOOC) have invested over US \$29 billion into oil developments in the Stabroek Block.

Exxon is currently producing approximately 645,000 barrels of oil per day (bpd) from the offshore reserves and aims to reach more than 1.2 million bpd by the end of 2027.

For his part, Guyana's foreign secretary Robert Persaud told the press that the

government supported the expansion of oil projects in the Stabroek Block, claiming the area belongs to the country's land and maritime space.

The renewed tensions between the neighboring countries regarding the 160,000 square kilometer Essequibo region were exacerbated by Washington's announcement this week to provide Guyana with new aircraft, helicopters, military drones and radar technology. On Monday, Brazil also sent more troops to its border with Guyana. Both military collaborations were [welcomed](#) by ExxonMobil.

Venezuela's Defense Minister Vladimir Padrino López [said](#) that any provocations from the US Southern Command (Southcom), which he described as ExxonMobil's "private security," would be met with a "proportional response."

In recent months, Caracas has repeatedly denounced US interference and military threats as the territorial dispute with Guyana escalated. In December, the US Southcom carried out [flight operations](#) with the Guyana Defence Force (GDF) and a [British warship](#) arrived in Guyanese waters for open sea defense exercises. In response, Venezuela held large-scale military drills of its own.

The December 3 [Essequibo referendum](#) held in Venezuela likewise raised tensions between the countries as Guyana interpreted the move as an attempt to forcefully annex the region. Voters overwhelmingly supported the country's sovereignty claim over the Essequibo and President Maduro ordered the creation of a new Venezuelan state called Guayana Esequiba as well as civil and military institutions for the disputed area.

The two neighboring South American nations' dispute over the resource-rich Essequibo Strip dates back to the 19th century. For its part, Venezuela maintains that an 1899 ruling that granted the territory to the United Kingdom, Guyana's former colonizer, was fraudulent due to the lack of Venezuelan representation and alleged collusion between the judges.

In February 1966, the United Kingdom and Venezuela reached the Geneva Agreement to work out a mutually satisfactory solution, with Guyana taking over the UK's role after gaining independence months later. However, the controversy remained dormant and the dispute flared up again in 2015 following the discovery of massive offshore oil deposits by ExxonMobil. Caracas has contested the oil exploration for violating the 1966 accord.

In 2018, Guyana requested that the International Court of Justice (ICJ) in The Hague rule over the territorial dispute, but Venezuela does not recognize the court's jurisdiction and contends that the 1966 Agreement is the only binding instrument to solve the controversy. The case is still ongoing.

Source: [Resumen](#)



Pakistan's misery continues

written by Struggle - La Lucha

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Pakistan has a general election on 8 February. It will decide on the next government of the world's fifth-most populous nation and the governments of its four provinces

— Punjab, Singh, Balochistan, and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Around 128 million people can vote to pick 266 representatives to form the 16th parliament in a first-past-the-post system. They will also vote to elect the legislatures of the country's four provinces.

In a country of 241 million people, two-thirds are below the age of 30. A citizen becomes eligible to vote at the age of 18. But only a little more than half of Pakistan's electorate voted last time in the 2018 elections. [The previous winner of the 2018 election was former star cricketer turned politician Imran Khan.](#) He was ousted from office in a no-confidence vote in parliament in April 2022. Since then, he has been shot and injured and then locked up for up to 20 years on various charges of corruption and sedition. Thousands of his party members have been arrested, and he has been banned from standing. But polls suggest that he would win this election if the election were 'fair.'

No Pakistan Prime Minister has ever completed a full term. That's because ever since the formation of the country, the military has been in control. It is the most powerful institution in the country with a huge 12.5% of the government budget going towards military spending. The military decides the needs of Pakistan's elite.

Khan fell out with the military when the latter decided to switch sides from leaning on the support of China against its main perceived enemy, India and from relying on Chinese credit to survive. The military switched back to the side of the Americans with bribes of money from Saudi Arabia and the UAE and because of the desperate need to get funds from the IMF, which Khan was reluctant to take because of austere conditions attached. *"From a Washington perspective, anyone would be better than Khan,"* said Michael Kugelman, the director of the South Asia Institute at the Wilson Center in Washington. In contrast, the likely winner of the election and the candidate backed by the military is perceived as *"business-friendly and pro-America."*

The military don't want to run the country directly, but they are making sure that they get a government that follows their interests. And this is the party of Nawaz Sharif, three-time former Prime Minister, who was previously [ousted](#) for corruption in 2017 and sentenced to 10 years imprisonment. In 2022 he returned to Pakistan with his corruption conviction swiftly quashed and his lifetime ban from politics overturned. His party and the military then ensured the removal of Khan. Sharif's government is now trying to meet the demands of the IMF and the military to turn the economy around.

And Pakistan's economy is in deep trouble and in recession. Major floods caused heavy damage to crops and livestock, and with 44% of workers relying on agriculture, this has driven millions into deep poverty. Investment has collapsed. It has been estimated that Pakistan needs more than \$16bn to recover from the disaster.

Pakistan's per capita income and GDP growth are the lowest in the region, bar war-torn Afghanistan. Its unemployment and inflation rates are one of the highest in the region. The [Human Development Index](#), which measures a country's achievements through three basic dimensions - health, knowledge, and standards of living - placed Pakistan in the 161st position out of 185 countries in 2022. In other words, Pakistan is among the 25 countries with the lowest human development in the world.

Pakistan remains in the grip of a small group of landowners and business families. It is one of the most unequal countries in the world. Just 22 families control 66% of Pakistan's industrial assets, and the richest 20% consume seven times more than the poorest 20%. The top 1% of income earners have the same share of total personal income as the bottom 50% (15.7%), and the top 1% of wealth holders own 26% of all personal wealth, while the bottom 50% of Pakistanis have just 4% (World Inequality Lab). Both the names Khan and Sharif mean 'ruler' or 'noble'. Around 45% of all holders of office across Pakistan came from family 'dynasties', with their political

direction decided by whom the military establishment selects. Most income held by the rich goes into real estate and financial assets (much of it spirited abroad).

Investment by the capitalist sector is just 11% of GDP. This compares with China at 45% or even most less developed countries at over 20%. Exports make up just 7.6% of the country's GDP. That's nearly 17 percentage points less than the average for [middle-income countries overall](#). What the country does export tends to be low-value-added products, like textiles, cotton, and rice. As a result, Pakistan relies on the [flow](#) of remittances from Pakistanis working abroad (and these have been falling) and outside funding.

Remittances \$bn

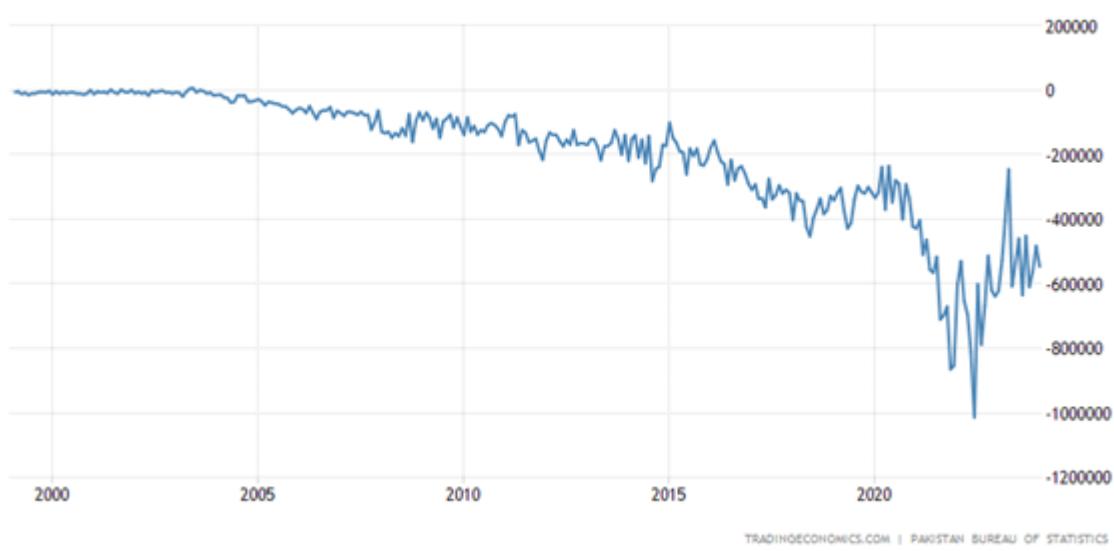


Pakistan depends heavily on imported oil. A constant decline in the value of the country's currency has resulted in much higher energy costs. Pakistan's real effective exchange rate, a broad measurement of the strength of a currency, declined from 88.0 in 2022 to 72.0 in 2023, and the Pakistan rupee is down 40% against the US dollar in the last year. The falling currency and rising living costs drove the inflation rate to near 40% (now around 30% a year). Interest rates are at a

record high, crushing investment.

This decline in the value of Pakistan's currency is because of the country's export failure. Pakistan is essentially running on foreign loans. External debt accounted for 36% of the country's nominal GDP in 2023, a noticeable increase from the previous year. The government debt-to-GDP ratio reached 89%. By June 2026, Pakistan will have to repay around \$80 billion in foreign debt.

Balance of trade PKR m



Of Pakistan's \$126bn external debt and liabilities, [30%](#) is owed to China. Under the Belt and Road Initiative, China has invested more than \$60bn in the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), which began in 2015. This connects the Pakistani port of Gwadar in the Arabian Sea to China's north-western region of Xinjiang through a network of highways, railways, and pipelines. So far, of the numerous projects agreed upon under CPEC, only a few have been completed. Chinese frustration over [endless delays](#) in project completion, halting of projects, and security threats to its nationals working in Pakistan has resulted in hesitation to invest in new projects.

The military wants to switch away from Chinese funding to that of the West and the

Arab states. In July 2023, the IMF approved an emergency \$3bn Stand-By Arrangement (SBA) to avert a complete collapse and debt default. But the IMF wants Pakistan to go further and completely 'float' (sink!) its exchange rate, ostensibly to boost exports. And for any further loans that Pakistan wants, the IMF is insisting on the government increasing electricity tariffs and cutting government spending.

The military is now looking to sell off state assets to attract foreign investment. It has established a military-dominated body to manage major economic projects in the country — the Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC). Comprising the prime minister and army chief, the SIFC has greenlit [28 investment projects](#) to pitch to the Gulf nations. The SIFC is also trying to sell off the Reko Diq mines, one of the world's largest reserves of gold and copper, to Saudi Arabia. Other plans include outsourcing the management of airports to the UAE, privatizing the national airline on an accelerated timeline, and expediting a free trade agreement with the UAE, referred to as the Comprehensive Economic Partnership Act. With this strategy, the government hopes to get the US to back a further IMF loan.

Meanwhile, some 700,000 workers have lost their jobs following the closure of about 1,600, or about one-third, of the country's textile factories, which contribute 60% of the country's total export earnings. One textile-working family explained how the escalating cost of living was affecting them and their five children. The couple work extra-long hours to feed their three daughters and two sons, none of whom go to school. *"We used to somehow manage our daily expenses within 500 Pakistani rupees (£1.40; \$1.75) a day. Now things have changed. To cook just one meal, we need 1,500 rupees,"* Mr Maseeh said. His wife added: *"Our earnings are not enough even to provide a good meal. How can we afford to send our children to school?"*

Pakistan's adults vote today but with no prospect of obtaining an end to the disaster that is Pakistan's capitalism and landlordism and its military rule.

Source: [Michael Roberts' blog](#)



Anti-war activist Merle Ratner mourned in Vietnam

written by Struggle - La Lucha

February 11, 2024

Le Hoai Trung, secretary of the Party's Central Committee and head of its Commission for External Relations, has expressed the Vietnamese Communist Party's condolences to the family of U.S. anti-war activist Merle Ratner following her death.

Merle Ratner, a left-wing and anti-war activist in the U.S., died in a car accident earlier this week.

According to her husband, New York University professor Ngo Thanh Nhan, she was struck and killed by a truck while crossing the street near her home in Brooklyn.

The New York-based U.S. activist was born in 1956. Growing up, she developed a

special affection for Vietnam.

Merle joined anti-war demonstrations at the age of 13 and became famous for hanging anti-war banners on the Statue of Liberty.

She also helped found and run the Vietnam Agent Orange Relief & Responsibility Campaign (VAORRC) in New York.

During her career, Merle began to play an active role in anti-war protests against the war in Vietnam and was a strong supporter of the Vietnamese armies and people in their struggle for independence and reunification in the late 1960s.

The activist also joined U.S. communities in the anti-imperialist movements of the 1970s and 1980s and anti-racism campaigns in America today.

After 1975, Merle worked tirelessly for [the normalization of the Vietnam-U.S. relations](#) and supported Vietnam's international missions.

She made several visits to Vietnam, where she met with the Vietnamese Fatherland Front, the Ho Chi Minh National Academy of Politics, and others.

In 2013, she was awarded the insignia "For the Development of Vietnamese Women" in 2010 and the insignia "For [Vietnam Agent Orange Victims](#)."

In an interview with the Vietnam News Agency in New York on February 1, on the occasion of the 94th anniversary of the Communist Party of Vietnam, she praised the crucial role of the Party as the main contributor to Vietnam's successes and achievements.

The anti-war activist stressed that Vietnam will fulfill its tasks and achieve its goals because of its steadfastness on the path it has chosen.

According to Jonathan Moore, a lawyer and board member of the VAORRC, Merle is

a loyal friend who has devoted her entire life to the rights of Agent Orange victims.

Le Thanh Chung, a Vietnamese expatriate in New York, said the activist had a strong belief in communist ideals and believed socialism was the right way for people to pursue happiness.

Both Jonathan and Chung believe Merle will be remembered for her love and loyalty to Vietnam and its people and for her support of those seeking dignity and social justice.

Source: [Hanoi Times](#)



John Parker to Genocide Joe: People of the world say no to war!

written by Struggle - La Lucha
February 11, 2024

JOHN PARKER SOCIALIST FOR CONGRESS TO GENOCIDE JOE:



On Feb. 2 and 3, the U.S. bombed alleged Iran-linked targets in Syria and Iraq. U.S. authorities say this was in retaliation for the attack that killed three U.S. soldiers in Jordan on Jan. 28. The attacks represent a further escalation in U.S. military action in the region amid its strikes in Yemen.

John Parker, socialist congressional candidate for California's 37th district, demands the White House and Congress end all wars and war provocations.

"The same way the overwhelming majority of the world stands with Palestine, so do they oppose war," said John Parker. "U.S.-led wars serve only the interests of the billionaires and war profiteers, offering the people nothing but pain, death, and suffering."

To this day, the U.S. has not formally ended its 74-year war on the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, nor its political and military occupation of the Korean peninsula. Yet the West's corporate media rattles sabers whenever People's Korea demonstrates its ability to defend itself. Ostensibly, only the U.S.'s biggest aircraft carrier, "Israel," has the right to self-defense.

Parker mourns the death of the three Black soldiers killed in the Jordan attack. At the same time, their deaths are an indictment of U.S. imperialism and white supremacy.

"Black, Brown, and poor working class people will always bear the brunt of the ruling class's wars," John reminds us. "Another war puts the most marginalized and exploited people in the line of fire. The ruling class can thank their poverty draft for that."

Parker declared: "Whether or not I am elected, I am calling on all peace-loving people to unite and build a mass movement strong enough to topple imperialism. It is the only way to truly stop the genocide in Gaza and to end the occupation of Palestine."

For more information on John Parker's campaign, visit Vote4Socialism.org.



PFLP: War criminal Biden's

statements on Gaza are false, deceptive, and election-oriented

written by Struggle - La Lucha

February 11, 2024

Feb. 9 — The Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) confirmed that the recent statements by the U.S. president, war criminal Joe Biden, regarding Gaza are false, deceptive, and have electoral dimensions, reaffirming the involvement of the U.S. administration in the zionist genocidal war waged against our people in the Gaza Strip.

The Front emphasized that Biden's false statements about "the zionist response behavior in the Strip exceeding the limit, and that he is working towards achieving a sustainable cessation of fighting" are brazen and evasive.

The U.S. administration, to this moment, does not support a ceasefire, overlooks the occupation's massacres against civilians in the Strip, thwarted decisions to stop the aggression in the U.N. Security Council, and, more dangerously, continues to supply the zionist entity with various types of lethal weapons, and persists in its political cover for the occupation to continue the genocidal war against our people.

The Front added that the U.S. administration tries to exploit the humanitarian issue to try to beautify its ugly face before the voters and the American public, despite not exerting real pressure on the occupation to allow all relief aid into the Strip, most of which were prevented from entering, especially in the northern areas and Gaza suffering from siege, hunger, thirst, and diseases.

The Front clarified that Biden's deceitful speech is aimed at the American voter after his popularity declined according to opinion polls.

The American public, especially among the Black, Arab, and Palestinian communities, Indigenous people, and the youth, is beginning to lose confidence in the complexities of Biden's administration, convinced that it is fully complicit in the zionist genocide in the Gaza Strip, and does not respond to the American voters' calls to stop this war and its support for the Zionist entity.

The Front concluded its statement, affirming that the U.S. administration's full partnership in the zionist genocide against our people is indisputable, and all statements and clamor of the U.S. administration about its efforts to stop the aggression and facilitate the delivery of humanitarian aid are exposed and false, falling before its behaviors on the ground, and its insistence on its stance in supporting the continuation of the occupation's aggression on the Strip, and not stopping the aggression.

**Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine
Central Media Office**

Source: [Resistance News Network](https://www.resistancenewsnetwork.org/2024/01/15/palestinian-front-calls-us-administration-complicit-in-zionist-genocide-gaza/)



□□ Baltimore Outreach Day for Palestine

written by Struggle - La Lucha
February 11, 2024

BALTIMORE OUTREACH DAY FOR PALESTINE

Sat., Feb 10, 11 am

(rain date)

**Sunday, Feb 11,
11 am**

meet @
2011 N. Charles St.
Balto. 21218

Join teams to put up
posters & flyers in the
community.



#Free Palestine - Stay in the streets

Baltimore Outreach Day for Palestine

Saturday, Feb 10, 11 am

If it rains

Sunday, Feb 11, 11 am

Meet at 2011 N. Charles Street

We will go out as teams to put up posters and flyers in the community.

Wear comfortable clothes, if it rains on Saturday (which will make it difficult for posters to stick), we will reschedule for Sunday, which looks clear. We are meeting

at 11 am.

Please be on time or as close to 11 am as possible, as all teams will be dispersed by 11:30 am.

(Contact phone for Outreach Day is 410-218-4835).

See you at 2011 N. Charles Street, Baltimore, MD 21218

[DONATE HERE](#)

You can also write checks to Solidarity Center (earmark for March)

Send to 703 E. 37th Street, Baltimore, MD 21218

Follow us on Instagram, Facebook, Twitter and Telegram @PeoplesPowerAssembly

Donate Venmo@SolidarityCenter

[PAYPAL CLICK HERE](#)

or mail checks made out to Solidarity Center,

Send to 703 E. 37th Street, Baltimore, MD 21218.



U.S. hands off Iraq, Syria and Yemen! Will the Pentagon attack Iran?

written by Struggle - La Lucha
February 11, 2024

After frame-up victims Ethel and Julius Rosenberg were executed in 1953, French philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre wrote that the capitalist United States was “sick with rabies.”

Seven decades later, Wall Street’s Big Oil empire is even more rabid and bloodthirsty. Using U.S.-supplied bombs and shells, the Zionist regime occupying Palestine has killed 30,000 people in Gaza. Behind the fascist Benjamin Netanyahu is Genocide Joe Biden.

In less than a month, the Pentagon has attacked Iraq, Syria, and Yemen, killing dozens with bombs and missiles. Over 106 million people live in these three

sovereign countries.

Twenty-one years after the Second Gulf War, [U.S. troops are still in Iraq](#) despite the country's parliament demanding that they leave. The U.S. occupies oil fields in Syria and steals the petroleum.

Beginning in 2014, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates — both vassal states of Big Oil — invaded Yemen, [killing 377,000 people](#) before being beaten back. Meanwhile, Yemen was blockaded by the U.S. Navy as its children starved.

Now, the U.S. and Britain are bombing Yemen because the country has closed the Red Sea to ships owned by or going to apartheid "Israel." Yemen's people, led by the Ansarallah movement, are doing so in righteous solidarity with Gaza.

In the last week, the Biden administration has struck Iraq and Syria over 75 times. A Feb. 7 attack killed two commanders of a resistance group in Baghdad. [Iraqis responded](#) by chanting, "America is the devil."

The White House's excuse for these devilish attacks was a drone that hit a U.S. base in Jordan near the Syrian border on Jan. 28. Three Black GIs from Georgia were killed.

As with over 7,000 Black GIs killed in the dirty war against Vietnam and Laos, it's the Pentagon that has the blood of these three soldiers on its hands.

Demonizing the oppressed

The wealthy and powerful always slander freedom fighters. The U.S. State Department kept Nelson Mandela [on its terrorist list](#) until he was 89 years old.

The response of the Zionist state to the International Court of Justice chastising its crimes in Gaza was to attack the United Nations Relief and Works Agency.

Netanyahu's regime claimed that a dozen of the UNRWA's 13,000 employees took part in the Oct. 7 Al- Aqsa Flood offensive.

While the capitalist media gave wall-to-wall coverage to this allegation, it's been almost silent about the [154 UNRWA employees killed](#) by Israel.

That one-out-of-a-thousand UNRWA employees supposedly participated in this uprising was enough for the United States and eight other capitalist countries to cut off funding. Endangered are the UNRWA's 706 schools with over 500,000 students and 140 health facilities.

In 2022, the U.S. contribution towards these absolutely essential activities was [\\$344 million](#). The U.S. Senate voted on Feb. 4 to give 40 times as much — \$14 billion — to the Israeli military to kill more Palestinian children.

Continual racist poison is necessary for this slaughter. Fox News and Tucker Carlson are not the only sources for a sewer of Islamophobia.

[New York Times columnist Thomas Friedman](#) has likened resistance fighters in Palestine and Lebanon to insects. Fairness and Accuracy in Reporting has rightfully compared Friedman's words with Nazi descriptions of Jewish people.

The Nazis used insecticide to kill millions in the gas chambers. The U.S.-supplied white phosphorus bombs that Israel drops on Gaza are not any more humane.

Is Iran or Korea next?

Biden's bombings of Iraq, Syria, and Yemen don't satisfy everyone in the military-industrial-complex. They want to attack Iran, a country of nearly 90 million people.

Forty-five years ago, the Iranian people overthrew the U.S. puppet called the Shah. His CIA-trained torturers in the SAVAK secret police were hunted down and given

justice.

Even the Pentagon's defeat by the Vietnamese people may not have affected Wall Street as much as the Iranian Revolution did.

The real Dr. Evil — David Rockefeller of the Chase Manhattan Bank, now JP Morgan Chase, with assets of \$3.9 trillion — welcomed the exiled Shah to the U.S.

For if the Shah could be overthrown, why not the kings, emirs and other U.S. stooges in the Arabian peninsula? The supremacy of the U.S. dollar as world money rests upon them, particularly the Saudi monarchy, using greenbacks.

For many in the Pentagon, the way out of their quagmire in Western Asia is to attack Iran. Or will the next target be the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (called "North Korea" in the media)?

Meanwhile, the Pentagon is continuing its "pivot to Asia," which is aimed at the People's Republic of China. And the U.S. is conducting a full-scale war against the Russian Federation in Ukraine.

These bloody wars will continue no matter who wins the presidential election until the people stop them.

