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Sessions on Imperialism(s) and the New Cold War •  
The politics of the new far right •  
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From Ukraine to Palestine and beyond, the world is in turmoil.  
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the world and how we can change it.

Speakers include Gilbert Achcar, Hanna Perekhoda,  
Derek Wall, Seema Syeda, and Simon Hannah

YMCA Indian Student Hostel, 41 Fitzroy Square, W1T 6AQ 11:30am



# ANTI★CAPITALIST RESISTANCE

# Stop Israel's genocide



# Free Palestine!



Picture: Steve Eason

# Whither Israel's War on Gaza?

By Gilbert Achcar

By the end of 2023, the Zionist state will likely alter its war against Gaza. The preliminary intense, murderous bombing was followed by a ground invasion targeting Gaza's north before the invasion moved south to Khan Yunis. Rafah has been relatively spared and could serve as a refuge for the Gazan population until the Zionist leaders decide what fate to impose on the afflicted territory. It was clear early that the invasion would be determined by "what the Israeli army can achieve before a combination of losses in personnel and international pressure forces it to stop."

The preliminary bombing lasted three weeks due to the surprise befalling the Israeli military command, unprepared for an invasive war. Like most wealthy countries, Israel's armed forces have become cowardly, especially facing combatants willing to die. They seek the lowest human cost in their ranks through extensive use of remote warfare. In urban settings, this entails a tremendous cost to local civilian lives.

That is why aggression in Gaza has taken on genocidal proportions, with about twenty thousand overwhelmingly civilian Palestinians now killed, and thousands missing under rubble. Israeli army sources claim to have lost only about 125 soldiers. Even if this is a substantial underestimation given the many wounded, the same calculations apply to wounded Palestinians – besides indirect victims of the invasion and deadly siege. It is a record case in military history for disproportionate deaths incurred by opposing sides. To some extent, it resembles the unilateral use of weapons of mass destruction in populated areas.

The Zionist army seized most of northern Gaza after destroying the majority of its buildings, displacing its people – killing a terrifying percentage. It is now tightening control over the southern half – especially its northern and eastern sections. Despite propaganda efforts, the worldwide protest provoked by the extent of killing and destruction committed by the Zionist army is escalating, whereas sympathy for the Israelis after the "Al-Aqsa Flood" is weakening. International pressure on the Zionist government increasingly demands it refrain from further large-scale killing and destruction, now joined by the only government whose position Israel cannot ignore, whose military and political support is vital, the United States.

Occupying forces must therefore move to a fourth phase, to continue to receive the backing of the US and Western governments. They will strive to tighten control through a "lower-intensity war" aimed at eradicating remaining resistance and destroying tunnel networks. The longer-term goal, a projected fifth phase, will be determined by their success and Israel's ability to continue implementing the "Second Nakba" – preventing the return of a large portion of the Palestinian population to these areas, lest they turn anew into hotbeds of resistance exhausting the occupation army.

The far-right Zionist goal is the annexation of the Gaza Strip and the development of settler colonialism there, but the scenario imposed by the balance of powers on the leadership of the Zionist state could be a repetition in Gaza of the West Bank. Israel's occupation army would control a sizeable strategic security belt within the Gaza Strip and its borders, as it does in the Jordan Valley, maintaining other buffer sites between populated areas to permit the establishment of a settlement movement similar to that in the West Bank. Nominal rule over the rest of the Gaza Strip would be given to a Palestinian leadership whose identity is still disputed between Israel and Washington. The Biden administration wishes to hand over power in the Gaza Strip back to the Ramallah-based "Palestinian Authority" after supposedly "revitalizing" it, while Netanyahu and the Zionist right resist the establishment of a single authority ruling the West Bank and Gaza Strip, so as not to be pressured into conceding to the declaration of a "Palestinian state." This is true even though a state would be no more than a statelet deprived of sovereignty in all essential matters and, therefore, a continuation of occupation.

## ISRAEL'S WAR ON GAZA

by Gilbert Achcar

Israel has seized the opportunity of Hamas's operation on 7 October 2023 to devastate Gaza, reducing it to rubble, massacring a huge number of its inhabitants and forcing the rest to flee. Another Nakba is underway, 75 years after the creation of Israel. This booklet includes articles by Gilbert Achcar written as the Israeli onslaught started unfolding in Gaza. He explains why the population of Gaza is facing such 'massive extermination', and argues that the refusal of Western governments to call for a ceasefire is making them accomplices to crimes against humanity.

98 Pages; £5 from [resistancebooks.org](https://resistancebooks.org)



## We need effective boycotts

People around the world are enraged over what is happening in Gaza. Many feel compelled to boycott any and all products and services of companies tied in any way to Israel. For example, we see the proliferation of extensive "boycott lists" on social media.

But how do we make boycotts effective and hold corporations accountable for their complicity in the suffering of Palestinians? The BDS movement uses the successful method of targeted boycotts inspired by the South African anti-apartheid movement, the US Civil Rights movement, and the Indian anti-colonial struggle, among others.

We focus on a smaller number of carefully selected companies and products for maximum impact. We target companies that play a clear and direct role in Israel's crimes and where there is real potential for winning, as happened with e.g G4S, Veolia, Orange and Ben & Jerry's.

Compelling huge companies, through strategic boycotts and divestment campaigns, to end their complicity in Israeli apartheid and war crimes against Palestinians also sends a powerful message to hundreds of other complicit companies that "your time will come, so get out before it's too late!"



See [bdsmovement.net/](https://bdsmovement.net/) for more information

## A significant blow against weapons suppliers to Israel

By Veronica Fagan

December 22 saw the end of a six-week trial of eight campaigners collectively known as the Elbit Eight. They had taken direct action under the banner of **Palestine Action** against Israel's most prominent private weapons firm, Elbit Systems.

Two were acquitted of all charges, while the remaining defendants were acquitted of some of the charges. Most of these focused on protests around Elbit's former headquarters in central London, which were splashed with red water-soluble children's paint, stencilling messages such as "**Shut Elbit down**". Other protests targeted factories belonging to the weapons manufacturer in a concerted campaign over more than eighteen months. The CPS may decide in January whether to retry the defendants on the charges on which the jury was unable to reach a verdict.

**Palestine Action** was organising direct action long before the current Israeli offensive against Gaza, while the larger and better known **Palestine Solidarity Campaign (PSC)** had focused more on consumer protests such as Puma and Hewlett Packard and in so far as it took up divestment, Barclays has been its primary focus. Regrettably, **PSC** has seemed reluctant to publicise the work of **Palestine Action**. But since October 7 – and the urgent call for action from Palestinian trade unions on October 16, the emphasis has shifted somewhat with local PSC groups targeting both Elbit and BAE and parallel action organised by other groups such as **Workers for a Free Palestine**.

Links:

[electronicintifada.net/content/court-victory-activists-who-disrupted-israels-weapons-trade/43111](https://electronicintifada.net/content/court-victory-activists-who-disrupted-israels-weapons-trade/43111)

[palestineaction.org/elbit-eight- verdicts/](https://palestineaction.org/elbit-eight- verdicts/)

# Israel: a settler-colonial state

The Zionist movement from its origins in Europe, its foundation of Israel in 1948 and its displacement of Palestinians has been a settler-colonial project. To establish, maintain, and expand its territory, the Israeli state has had to ethnically cleanse Palestinians. Throughout this process it allied with imperialist powers, first the British empire and then the United States, using Israel as their agent in the struggle against Arab nationalism and socialism.

The Israeli state's support for Zionist settlers expropriation of Palestinian's homes is a continuation of the Nakba ("catastrophe" in Arabic) that drove over 700,000 Palestinians from their homes in 1948. This is why more than 5 million Palestinians refugees live in camps and cities in the Middle East and North Africa. Given all this, the far right's political hegemony over the last decade should come as no surprise. It is the logical outgrowth of the Zionist movement, its ethnonationalism, Israel's institutional racism, and more than seven decades of dispossession of Palestinians. These create the conditions for the flourishing of right-wing Zionist mobs marching through Palestinian neighborhoods chanting "Death to Arabs."

## Mistaken alliances with authoritarian regimes

Like any other population under colonial occupation and apartheid, Palestinians have the right to resist, including militarily. Support for this right should not be confused with support for the perspectives of the various Palestinian political parties. None of these parties—Fatah, Hamas, Islamic Jihad, the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) and others—offer a political strategy capable of winning Palestinian liberation.

The dominant Palestinian political parties look not to the Palestinian masses and the regional working classes and oppressed peoples as the forces to win liberation. Instead, they seek political alliances with the region's ruling classes and their regimes to support their political and military struggle against Israel. They collaborate with these regimes, and argue for non-intervention, even as those governments oppress their own popular classes and Palestinians within their borders.

A key example of this approach was in Jordan 1970, culminating in the events known as Black September. Despite the strength, organization and popularity of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), within Jordan—a country whose population was seventy per cent Palestinian—the Fatah leadership of Yasser Arafat initially refused to support a campaign to overthrow the country's dictator, King Hussein. With the backing of the U.S and Israel, Hussein declared martial law, and ultimately drove it out of Jordan into Syria and Lebanon. Despite this the PLO pursued this strategy of collaboration and non-intervention for decades. Shockingly, Abbas sent a message of congratulations to Syrian autocrat Bashar al-Assad in May 2021, despite

Assad's brutal repression of Palestinians.

Hamas pursues a similar strategy; cultivating alliances with monarchies in Gulf states, especially Qatar, as well as the fundamentalist regime in Iran. In 2012, Ismail Haniyeh, then prime minister of the Hamas government in Gaza, praised Bahrain's "reforms" while the regime smashed the country's democratic uprising. Unfortunately, the Palestinian left has mostly implemented its own version of the same strategy. The PFLP, for example, has not voiced any objections to the Syrian regime's crimes and even supported its army against "foreign conspiracies," declaring that Damascus "will remain a thorn in the face of the Zionist enemy and its allies." The PFLP's relationship towards the theocracy in Iran, and the military dictatorship in Egypt follow a similar pattern.

## Regimes betray the liberation struggle

Rather than advance the struggle, despotic states in the region have repeatedly betrayed it and even repressed Palestinians.

In 1976, Hafez al-Assad's regime in Syria intervened in Lebanon against Palestinian and leftist organizations in



support of far-right Lebanese parties. He conducted military operations against Palestinian camps in Beirut in 1985 and 1986. By 1990, approximately 2,500 Palestinian political prisoners were in Syrian prisons.

Egypt has collaborated in Israel's blockade of Gaza since 2007.

While the Syrian regime has supported Hamas, it drastically cut assistance to it when it refused to support the regime's counter-revolution against the democratic uprising in 2011.

Iran opportunistically seeks to use the Palestinian cause as foreign policy tool to achieve its wider objectives in the region. Tehran collaborated with U.S. imperialism in Afghanistan and Iraq. That's why during the Iraqi uprising in 2019 protesters marched under the slogan "Neither USA, Nor Iran".

Turkey, despite Erdogan's criticisms of Israel, maintains close economic connections with it. Erdogan has increased the volume of trade with Tel Aviv from the \$1.4 billion when he came to power to \$6.5 billion in 2020.

The regimes restrict their support for the cause to areas

where it advances their interests and betray it when it doesn't.

## Dead end of peace deals brokered by U.S. imperialism

When this strategy failed, the PLO turned to an even more bankrupt approach of pursuing a peace deal brokered by the U.S. and other great powers. The hope was to secure a two-state settlement through the Oslo Accords in 1993.

This settlement amounts to surrender; accepting Israeli colonialism in historic Palestine, while at best winning a Palestinian rump state, and betraying the right to return for Palestinian refugees to their stolen land in Israel. The peace process reduced the PA to ruling over a bantustan entirely under Israel's control.

This disaster should come as no surprise. The U.S. and other imperialist powers have supported Israel as their local police force against the revolutionary transformation of the region, an event that would challenge their control over its strategic energy reserves. Israel has always served this purpose. In 1956, it participated in France and Britain's attack on Egypt following Nasser's nationalization of the Suez Canal. In

1967, Israel's Six Day War targeted Nasser's Egypt and the Syrian state during their radical nationalist phase.

Since then, the U.S. has poured an average of \$4 billion annually into Tel Aviv's coffers. Washington supported Israel's military intervention in Lebanon in 1978 and 1982 that oversaw the terrible massacre of Sabra and Shatila, destroyed progressive Palestinian and Lebanese forces, and installed a friendly regime in Beirut.

Israel's victories saw the retreat of radicalism in the region, isolating the PLO. This led, in 1978, to Yasser Arafat's Fatah faction adopting the two-state

solution, a necessary step along the path to its signing the Oslo Accords.

This surrender of the struggle for the liberation of historic Palestine saw the transformation of Fatah into the Palestinian Authority (PA), administering the occupied territories.

With the PA functioning as a quisling regime, the U.S. has promoted Israel's political and economic integration with states in the region, most recently through the Trump administration's Abraham Accords. This normalization of relations between Israel and several Arab states further isolated the Palestinian struggle. Biden reaffirmed Washington's unflinching support for Israel immediately after his election.

*This is an edited version of an article by Joseph Daher, a Syrian/Swiss academic and Marxist internationalist, originally published in the journal*

*Tempest on July 5, 2021 which we think is very relevant to the current situation.*

*You can read the original here:*



# ORGANISING FOR THE FUTURE – REPORT FROM 2023 ECOSOCIALISM CONFERENCE



We held our first Ecosocialism Conference on 2 December in central London and online. It was well attended; 90 people in person and 60 online.

This year we have witnessed record temperatures and more extreme weather: Pakistan underwater, wildfires devastating Greece, Canada and Haiti, flash floods killing thousands in Libya; the list goes on. Therefore there is a clearer than ever need to get ecosocialist ideas into the mainstream and organise around a strategy to overthrow capitalism

It seems the increase of average temperature by 1.5°C (compared to pre-industrial capitalist society) is already locked in. The key remaining fight is to prevent an increase to 2°C – something that fossil capital is propelling us towards at speed.

This year's Conference of Parties (COP), the main global forum tasked with preventing runaway Global Warming, was dominated by record numbers of fossil fuel lobbyists. The COP President, Dr Sultan Al Jaber, is also head of Abu Dhabi National Oil Company (Adnoc) and attacked the idea that we need to phase out fossil fuels. The BBC revealed the UAE intended to use the summit to sign new oil contracts. COP 28 has been a total and cynical disaster.

And it isn't just this year's COP – the whole process has failed. More Greenhouse gases have been released into the atmosphere since 1995 than in the entirety of previous human history.

António Guterres, UN Secretary-General warns about the consequences of global warming: "The dog days of summer are not just barking, they are biting. Climate breakdown has begun." He warns we are no longer in a period of global warming but "global boiling."

While a single Ecosocialist conference isn't going to solve any of these issues, we wanted to start gathering the forces that *can* build a something to make a difference. Despite some technical issues for online attendees (apologies!) we think the conference was an

overall success.

The first plenary was on how capitalism impacts the environment, the second a debate on degrowth and the final session about specific strategies around organising.

Simon Pirani and Clara Paillard provided useful frameworks to think about capitalism and organising resistance; how the problem of the lack of wages at the end of the month and the overproduction leading to the climate crisis are rooted in the same problem, capitalists who don't pay decent wages to ensure social reproduction are destroying the basis of life on the Earth.

The second session featured a debate over degrowth between Matt Huber and Elke Pirgmaier. On the surface many of the main contentions appeared rhetorical, about base building, locations of struggle, how to frame the concept of reducing harmful economic activity in a way that doesn't sound like austerity.) But this hides more substantive disagreements about electoral vs. movement based solutions, or variations of both; the role of the imperial core and how that shapes worker's consciousness, the limits of projecting a future state, the centrality of changing production and what aspects of economic activity should be reduced?

The session on strategy heard from Alia Amirali from Awami Workers Party Pakistan, Max Aji who authored *A People's Green New Deal* and Noah Herfort, co-founder of Climate Vanguard. Each gave a perspective on how to mobilise wider forces and the framing of revolutionary politics in the climate crisis. It was good to hear a range of perspectives from the floor in the final session with important points to about the fight around capitalism and environmental collapse in the global south. There was a stress on how class is fundamentally concerned with human agency.

The organising committee presented a draft statement to the conference and collected suggested amendments from participants. The updated statement is below.

The conference was not just a one off. We've had useful feedback from attendees asking for more in depth strategic discussions, a focus on practical campaigns, breakouts for horizontal discussions.

We will be building the networks and carrying on the conversation. We agreed to hold another conference, to organise an online reading group to deepen our knowledge and to launch an ecosocialist journal combining theory, analysis and action.

If you want to get involved, contact  
[info@ecosocialism-conference.org](mailto:info@ecosocialism-conference.org)

## FINAL STATEMENT FROM THE ECOSOCIALISM 2023 ORGANISING GROUP

The environmental crisis is accelerating. Six of the nine planetary boundaries have been breached; climate change; biogeochemical flows (i.e., excessive phosphorus and nitrogen pollution from fertiliser use); biosphere integrity (e.g., extinction rate and loss of insect pollination); and-system change (e.g., deforestation); novel entities (e.g., pollution from plastics, heavy metals, and what are commonly referred to as "forever chemicals"); and fresh water use.

The rise in pre-industrial average temperature above 1.5C cannot be allowed to happen. This would cause climate chaos and collapse of society. We urgently need emergency programmes to prevent this happening such as replacing all fossil fuels with renewable energy, insulating buildings, cheap and reliable public transport, reducing meat production and stopping deforestation. These programmes would need socialisation of industries and services to break the domination of capital which works for immediate profits and not for the benefit of people and the planet. We pledge to build mass movements to achieve these goals.

Our ultimate goal is to fight to end all the class hierarchies and social oppressions that come with capitalism – and replace it with a society based on democratic control of the economy and a sustainable relationship with the Earth is the central fight of our time. We need to totally reorganise economic production, reducing harmful and unnecessary activity and focussing on human need not profitability. This will mean a decisive and total shift away from fossil fuels towards renewables, and significant reduction in industrial farming for meat and an end to waste.

Ecosocialism is a revolutionary challenge to the existing world order. We stand for expropriation of business and private wealth, socialising housing and land, ending the market economy, dismantling imperialism, fighting for abolition of borders, militarism and policing, social transformation of

the economy from the ground up. It is internationalist, it challenges all forms of social division under capitalism including racism and nationalism.

Fighting ecocide is a global task, it means having an internationalist perspective. Imperialism and colonialism has under-developed countries across the world and now there is a renewed rush to plunder these areas for rare earth materials for new technologies. Millions languish in slum cities whilst the super rich fly over their heads in private jets. Capitalism cannot develop their infrastructures of industries in a sustainable way because there is no money in it. There is no Green Road to development for these nations outside of ecosocialism.

Our goal is to help build a movement that can end capitalism, democratise our society, decommodify our economy and decolonise the world. Our vision of a better world is one based on universal public services, a massive reduction in the working day and an end to waged labour. We want humanity to be free from the oppression of capitalism to fully explore our potential.

To achieve this revolutionary change means being active in the environmental movement and the workers' movement, in the trade unions, the communities, social movement and our workplaces. It means fighting for reforms in the here and now but always pointing to a future better world. It means solidarity with refugees and immigrants forced to move as the climate crisis makes their lives impossible.

We welcome people who want to join the organising group to help develop this campaign and expand its activities. We want to transform the ideas and theories of ecosocialism into practical action. It means fighting for reforms such as stopping the new coal mine in Cumbria, new oil and gas licences in the north sea such as Rosebank or supporting the Sí al Yasuní! campaign in the here and now but always pointing to a future better world.

We want to build an organising centre for ecosocialist theory, strategy and activity as part of a global

movement. We intend to organise the Ecosocialism Conference as a regular event, expand its capacity and work with other campaigns and organisations to make it an event that helps deepen our discussions and take forward our campaigning. We might not agree on every slogan or theory but we need to build a mass movement in a spirit of unity and hope.

### Actions

- We will develop the website to become a regularly updated space for articles, actions and ideas
- We will join the Climate Justice Network and the Global Ecosocialist Network.
- We will work with others to launch an Ecosocialist Journal with a range of contributors
- Attend the 10th International Degrowth Conference and the 15th Conference of the European Society for Ecological Economics (ESEE) in Pontevedra (Galicia, Spain) from 18 – 21 June 2024.
- We will organise a regular online discussion/reading group to develop our understanding of Ecosocialism.
- We will open the Ecosocialism Conference Organising Group to those wishing to help develop this initiative. The ECOG will aim to meet monthly.



# What is ecosocialism?

By Simon Hannah

Capitalism is causing severe environmental degradation. Every day the news seems to get worse. And it is not just global warming; it is deforestation, forever chemicals, plastics in our blood, acidification of the oceans, and biodiversity loss.

It is clear that the continued existence of capitalism is incompatible with sustaining human society on Earth. Capitalism is 'developing' parts of the global south but only at a huge detriment to the environment.

Ecosocialism is a response to this situation. It starts from how capital exploits people and planet, how it unsustainably extracts surplus value from us and resources from the earth.

Ecosocialism is a new paradigm because it is a criticism of previously 'productivist' socialist economics. Productivism is production for production's sake, which sees capital accumulation, wealth and commodity production as an end in itself. Post-capitalist societies like the Soviet Union, which prioritised expanding production with no regard to the environmental consequences, suffered devastating results; Chernobyl and the destruction of the Aral Sea are the most notable ones. Social Democracy also absorbed the productivist outlook, even in its revolutionary era before World War One. The view that capitalism needed to develop its productive forces to the point where it would create a rupture with the political order, leading to a revolutionary crisis, was one factor that led to a reformist outlook.

Ecosocialism also challenges the Promethean thinking of some on the left. This is the idea that humanity should conquer nature, 'master it' and deploy technologies and productive powers, that nature is just an object for our manipulation. We have seen how such an attitude has led us to the precipice of disaster

There are debates within the left on how to tackle the environmental crisis – some advocate replacing fossil fuel energy production with renewables to maintain the present consumption habits of people in the West, while others argue for a 'degrowth' strategy, reducing economic activity. These debates are essential as part of the discussion around strategy and what a future society might look like - a whole session at the recent Ecosocialism Conference was dedicated to them.

## Our strategy

An ecosocialist strategy starts from a fight in the workers' movement to win trade unions to the idea of a green transition from extractivism and armaments work. It centres campaigns that expand public services and the social wage to shift away from individual consumption towards collective provision. This does not entail finger-wagging at individual workers for buying things. We put forward a relentless criticism of the consumption habits of the very wealthy, the environmental destruction of multinationals, and the sickening waste of the imperialist war machines.

In its place, we focus on building an economy based on democratic planning, which aims to bring human economic activity into alignment with a sustainable relationship with nature. The primary way to do this is to focus on producing things based on their use, not just whether they can be made for profit (abandoning exchange value for use value, to use the Marxist terminology). Economic activity will be judged based on all the factors involved, not just the price of materials and labour. Environmental impact, currently considered an 'externality', will be integrated into democratic decision-making over economic activity. Future generations' living standards will be considered, too.

An ecosocialist strategy in a country like Britain must also seek to build international ties across the world to fight for a revolutionary change that abolishes the distinction between the poorer and imperialist countries. No more can the North keep the global South in economic chains of subordination, seeing their resources as 'ours' to plunder.

Building a revolutionary ecosocialist movement means a relentless fight against the growing conspiracy theories and far-right propaganda that climate change is a 'woke issue' fabricated by leftist scientists. Such arguments present themselves as radical anti-establishment positions, but they are, in fact, just shills for the oil and gas industry, the car industry, the military industrial complex and all the other massive polluters threatening our future. We also reject eco-fascism, which recognises an environmental crisis but seeks to divide us by nationality and erect more militarised borders to keep out refugees or, worse, advocates mass population extinction as if humans are vermin to be exterminated.

Finally, any chance at achieving this future requires mass action by millions of people and a fight for political power – this cannot simply be done through social movements, vital though they are.

**Only by removing the capitalist class and their allies from economic and political power can we secure the changes we need.**

## Free public transport for London

The **Stop the Silvertown Tunnel** coalition of organisations and activists in London has put forward a bold proposal: to make all public transport in the city free of charge. The aim is to drastically reduce greenhouse gas emissions from transport, cut deadly air pollution, and provide relief to Londoners struggling with the cost of living crisis.

Transport is currently London's second largest source of emissions after the built environment. Years of policies favouring private car use have entrenched people's dependency on carbon-intensive modes of travel. The coalition argues that making buses, trains, trams and other public transit free to use, while investing to expand and improve services, is the kind of dramatic policy shift needed to get more Londoners to switch to green ways of getting around.

Evidence shows that ridership surges when cities introduce free transit schemes. Cities like Tallinn in Estonia have successfully combined free public transport with measures to pedestrianise city centres and restrict parking. The result has been cleaner air, reduced traffic jams, and more equitable access to mobility.

There is also a social justice element to the proposal. Lower income Londoners are least likely to own a private vehicle, meaning they stand to benefit greatly if buses and subways become free. This aligns with goals to lessen inequality in one of the planet's most expensive megacities.

The coalition points out that London has already made progress by offering free bus and tram rides to under 18s. Extending this to all age groups is seen as the logical next step. Groups in other parts of the UK campaigning for free national public transit are also supportive.

Of course the big question is how such a scheme would be paid for. The coalition suggests a mix of city and national level policies, from taxing commercial land values to increasing fuel duties currently frozen by the government. They estimate that reversing cuts to bus services could be covered by restoring fuel taxes to 2013 levels.

While costs and political hurdles are substantial, the coalition hopes their grassroots campaign can rally enough public pressure to convince London's mayor and transport authorities that zero fare public transport is an idea whose time has come. The world will be watching closely to see if London can set an example for other global cities to follow.

Hold the date: Saturday 10 February 2024, for a meeting about a campaign for free public transport in London.

**The Stop the Silvertown Tunnel coalition invites you to a meeting, to discuss joining with them in a campaign for free public transport in London, on Saturday 10 February 2024, at 10.30 am, at the Waterloo Action Centre, 14 Baylis Road, London SE1 7AA**



# No one is illegal

By Terry Conway

The final weeks of the Westminster parliamentary session of 2023 were dominated by debate about the exact content of the Tory's latest attack on migrants. The Rwanda bill is the latest in a series of bills on migration introduced by the Tories since they came to government in 2010; the Immigration Act 2014, the Immigration Act 2016 and the Illegal Migration Bill 2023, alongside a rather longer list of changes in regulations that affect migrants' status, rights or obligations – or indeed clauses in other bills with a similar impact.

Much media coverage treats the governments' fundamental arguments as unquestionably correct. But these positions are entirely wrong. People have always migrated, including across borders. Sometimes they are motivated by the idea that the new country could provide better living standards or political freedoms or people from their own community can play a role in relocating, particularly in terms of where someone migrates; most people, however, leave their countries of origin because they are forced to. And the compulsions involved – war, repression, poverty and climate change – are becoming increasingly intense.

Governments of most political stripes use the question of migration as a tool to divide the electorate, to divert them from the system's failure to provide what people need. Free movement is apparently acceptable for the rich and powerful, but not for someone from a different country to have a job or a home. It seems easier to resent, even to attack, someone with less resources, and less status than you than to think about how to change the inequity and injustice of the system that denies the needs and rights of the overwhelming majority. These are reasons why, in 2024, we must campaign to raise the loudest possible cries against not only the latest Tory attacks on migrants but the whole edifice of repressive laws and ideas on which they rest. No borders, no nations, no deportations.

## Back to the narrative

In mid-November, the Supreme Court handed down a judgement unfavourable to the government, agreeing with an earlier Court of Appeal decision that asylum seekers sent by Britain to Rwanda were at real risk of *refoulement* – that is, being sent 'to a country where their life or freedom would be threatened on account of their race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, or they would be at real risk of torture or inhuman or degrading treatment.'

The judgment was based on detailed evidence of how refugees were treated by Rwanda –

including those on a not entirely dissimilar scheme with Israel. Since then, more evidence about Rwanda's appalling human rights record has surfaced – including that the UK itself granted asylum to four people fleeing that country last year! But talking about the real people seeking asylum is not what most politicians want to focus on; that could undercut their hateful rhetoric.

Instead, a new treaty with Rwanda was hurriedly signed, and the Safety of Rwanda (Asylum and Immigration) bill was brought before parliament. At the heart of this profoundly reactionary legislation is the extraordinary assumption that Westminster can change reality merely through what the majority of MPs vote for – in this case, that Rwanda is a safe country for refugees – when all the evidence makes clear that it is not.

The debate on the bill was presented as a significant crisis for Sunak, who had pledged that he would 'stop the boats' as one of his five priorities for this year. Media speculation was rife that former Home Secretary Suella Braverman, sacked by the Prime Minister in November 2023, would take her

revenge by rallying the Tory extreme right to defeat his Rwanda bill at its second reading. At one level, such a notion was well founded – Braverman was deeply identified with the idea of offshoring asylum seekers to Rwanda – and while her removal from office was for other reasons – she was unequivocal in her resignation letter that she has no confidence Sunak is ruthless enough to take the necessary steps to reduce all forms of migration effectively. Studying that letter she wrote after she left the Home Office, we see threads that have had less attention – mainly her focus on sovereignty and Brexit. Central to A\*CR's longstanding opposition to Brexit is the understanding that a key part of its dynamic is the whipping up and use of racism – some but not all of which is targeted at migrants.

And there are undoubtedly deep divisions in the Tory party as it continues to fare disastrously in the polls – many of which are related to issues such as 'sovereignty', which in turn relate to the rightwing rhetoric of the Brexit debate. These divides were played out more clearly in the few days before the second reading, with the self-described "five families" of right-wing factions on the one hand and the One Nation caucus on the other.

Ultimately, the second reading was passed comfortably with no government MPs voting against it at this stage – though the PM is far from out of the woods as amendments are threatened at the third reading expected in January.

## Opposition, what opposition

Why is this an issue of concern when 2024 will almost certainly see a general election, and Sunak will most likely be replaced by Starmer in Number 10? Hasn't Labour said they will not send asylum seekers to Rwanda? Yes, they have – but their arguments are not fundamentally different from those of the Tories.

Interviewed at the time of Labour Party conference in October, Starmer's response was



that the Rwanda scheme was 'hugely expensive' and that he didn't believe it 'would reduce numbers'. In this, as well as the majority of contributions in the Parliamentary debate from Labour MPs, the idea that migration is something of advantage to the host country is not even considered.

It is a vile indictment of twenty-first-century capitalism that criminal gangs make a fortune from desperate migrants, many of whom drown on their voyages, whether it's in the English Channel or the Mediterranean. But the way to deal with people smugglers is to tear down the border walls and fences that allow them to profit from this trade in death – not to talk about so-called 'solutions' that criminalise those fleeing for their lives.

**A\*CR stands shoulder to shoulder with anyone who acts against the impact of the repressive immigration laws in Britain – or indeed anywhere else across the globe – but at the same time, we continue to argue that no one is illegal and believe that campaigning against injustice for migrants and the racism that feeds it needs to be an essential priority for the entire left – whoever is in Number 10.**

**Anti-Capitalist Resistance is a revolutionary Marxist organisation in England & Cymru/Wales.**



The world faces unprecedented, interrelated crises of economic collapse, social decay, inequality, mass impoverishment, militarisation, and creeping authoritarianism. Capitalist liberal institutions and parties no longer sustain the status quo as the profit drive eats at society and deepens a

metabolic rift between people and planet.

Change is urgent. We need mass movements to win victories for democracy and social, climate and economic justice. We support expanding democracy under capitalism, Proportional Representation and abolishing the monarchy and the Lords. We organise for action and reforms now, but also for a global reorganisation of society.

#### **Ecosocialism**

Anti-Capitalist Resistance is ecosocialist; the ecological crisis redefines the socialist project. We are engaged not just in a socialist struggle to end capitalism, but for a viable planet. We fight for a society consistent with human needs and a sustainable relationship to other life and the environment.

#### **Internationalism**

We are internationalist and oppose imperialism, nationalism and militarism. Capitalism is international, so the struggle for socialism must be too, uniting workers of all countries. We oppose imperialism – the subjugation of weaker nations by stronger ones – and support the self-determination of oppressed nations and national liberation. Anti-Capitalist Resistance supports the right of people to challenge colonialism, apartheid and to demand self-determination, including for the people of Palestine. We support a united Ireland, and Scotland and Cymru/Wales's right to self-determination, up to and including independence.

#### **Liberation for the oppressed**

Capitalism divides working class people along sexual, gender, ethnic, national and other lines; the oppressed suffer most. The labour movement and socialists must champion liberation struggles, recognising the right of the oppressed to lead these struggles and formulate their own demands. We support the self-organisation of women, Black people, disabled people and LGBTQIA+ people to combat all discrimination, oppression and bigotry.

We are against racism from the state and in any other form, immigration controls and borders, and support migrant rights.

#### **Socialism**

Poverty, exploitation, oppression and war are products of capitalism, in which a minority ruling class benefits from the majority's labour. The alternative is socialism, where wealth is owned in common, assets such as industry and finance are socialised and democratic planning meets society's needs. Social-democratic parties like the Labour Party no longer refer to socialism and, in practice, support continued capitalism, with occasional minor reforms to offset the worst effects. Neither the USSR nor China under Mao was socialist. Participatory democracy is central to any socialist society and this was utterly lacking.

Anti-Capitalist Resistance is pluralist and internationalist; we learn from struggles across the world. We are democratic revolutionary socialists and oppose the top-down model of 'democratic-centralism'. We encourage convergence with other revolutionary Marxist activists and organisations and we aim to be rooted in working class and oppressed struggles. ACR is committed to debate, initiative, and self-activity.

In the spirit of internationalism we are an observer organisation to the Fourth International.

## **Ukraine: Russian troops out, stop the genocide**

There is no ceasefire in Ukraine, just like there is no ceasefire in Palestine. On 24 February, it will be two years since the brutal invasion of Ukraine. The situation is grim with little gain in pushing back the Russian occupation.

Despite the massive destruction and the huge number of casualties and of refugees, Ukrainians are still "rallying around the flag" and overwhelmingly continue to trust Zelensky. Ukrainians have no choice but to continue fighting for the liberation of their country because Putin's objectives remain the same as it was two years ago, that is to "de-nazify and demilitarise the country". Russia's Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov confirmed this when, just after Christmas, he said that Israel's goals in its war against Hamas in Gaza is "nearly identical to Moscow's in its campaign against the Ukrainian government".

Like Israel in Gaza, Russia is systematically destroying the basic infrastructure of the country, killing civilians and abducting children. The difference is that Ukraine is able to defend itself because it has an army with tanks, artillery and air defence-systems, so the scale of the genocide is not as great as it is in Gaza. That's why Ukraine is not calling for a ceasefire, unlike the Palestinians who are crying out for one. But to prove himself to be loyal to the interests of the West, Zelensky has given his support to Israel in its war on Gaza, something which has been condemned by the left in Ukraine and which has declared its solidarity with Palestinians.

Ukraine could make much greater gains against the Russian army if it were supplied with the weapons it needs. The war is lasting too long and has had an impact on economies. The far-right in the US and Europe are blocking aid packages to Ukraine as they push their nationalist and isolationist agenda. If it is right for Ukraine to defend itself against imperialist intervention, then it should have the means to do so. But the West and NATO, who cynically saw this as an opportunity to rebrand themselves as guarantors of democracy, are now starting to get cold feet. Western imperialism and NATO have always preferred to back brutal regimes like Israel or Saudi Arabia that are loyal to their interests, rather than the people fighting against oppression and for democracy and independence.

In Britain, Starmer has made it clear that if Labour is elected, he will continue down that road when

declaring that "Labour's commitment to NATO is unshakeable". Zelensky understood the cynical role of Western imperialism when he told the Economist a month into the war: "There are those in the West who don't mind a long war because it would mean exhausting Russia, even if this means the demise of Ukraine and comes at the cost of Ukrainian lives. This is definitely in the interests of some countries. For other countries, it would be better if the war ended quickly, because Russia's market is a big one [and] their economies are suffering as a result of the war".

Ukraine could do much better in the war if it adopted a "war-economy" like the US and Britain did in World War Two which put private companies under state control to produce tanks and planes rather than cars. Instead Zelensky has adopted a neo-liberal approach, encouraging "start-ups" to produce drones in small workshops, and preparing the country for integration into the EU. Ukraine has been parading itself at reconstruction conferences where it offers to open up the country to transnational capitalist corporations rather than demanding the abolition of its debt and plan for a socially just reconstruction. Inside the country, the government has been trying to "reform" labour laws and marginalise existing unions. Nevertheless, there have been successful struggles by trade unions and social movements, in particular nurses who have been fighting for the payment of wage arrears.

Ukraine is being destroyed by a brutal imperialist and expansionist regime. Putin can continue to produce weapons at a greater rate than Ukraine is using and to throw soldiers into the meat grinder. It is estimated that 315,000 Russian have been killed or injured, which is close to the 350,000 Russian troops that invaded Ukraine on 24 February 2022. These are dangerous times for the people of Ukraine with whom we should be in solidarity and support their struggle for liberation, in spite of the Zelensky government. There are simple and practical solidarity measures that show that the people of Ukraine have not been forgotten, such as making direct links with trade unions and the left in Ukraine, raising money for medical aid, and campaigning to cancel the debt. As the second year of the war approaches on the 24 February, we still call for Russian Troops Out Now.

*Fred Leplat*

#### **Making Sense of Russia's Invasion of Ukraine by Paul Le Blanc**

In this small book, Paul Le Blanc tries to 'make sense of the Russian invasion of Ukraine'. His starting point is for a victory for Ukrainian self-determination and opposition to imperialism in all its forms. Paul Le Blanc tackles the following themes: What Mistaken Friends Say – and Where They Are Right, Imperialism and Illusion, Which Side Are You On?, Views of Russian and Ukrainian Socialists, Lessons from History on Self-Determination, and Where the Weapons Come From.

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**ANTI★CAPITALIST  
RESISTANCE**



**Two years on from Putin's  
brutal invasion we say...**

**DEFEND  
UKRAINE!**

**Victory to the  
Ukrainian resistance**

**Solidarity with the anti-war  
movement in Russia**