

# Israel, U.S. tighten grip on Palestine after phony 'peace' deal unravels

By ANDREW POLLACK

"The Peace Process is dead, long live the Peace Process!" This proclamation, of course, is borrowed from the one announcing the death of one king and the accession to power of the next. Its purpose is to make clear there will be no interregnum, no break in the continuity of the monarchical institution.

In the same fashion, the "Peace Process"—the U.S.-moderated negotiations between the Zionist state and the rump of the U.S./Israeli-imposed Palestinian Authority—moves to its next stage once the current round is declared officially dead, a terminus not long off given numerous signs coming from Tel Aviv and Washington.

But just as we need to differentiate between transitions of monarchs based solely on lineage, as opposed to those rooted in war, conquest, or simply skullduggery, so too must we understand the context of the current peace process "failure" and the implications for Palestinian liberation.

We put "failure" in quotes as a reminder of who is bargaining and over what—that is, a colonial-settler state, the junior partner to the world's foremost imperialist power, negotiating the terms of surrender of a puppet body set up to administer a "state" with no defense force and a completely dependent economy on a fragmented fraction of the land of historic Palestine. Such negotiations certainly deserve to fail!

The mainstream media has claimed the talks were derailed by Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's refusal to extend his freeze on settlements—a freeze which, in any case, was documented by the liberal Israeli group Peace Now to have never been seriously implemented. Such liberals, and the Obama administration, worried that the decades-long expansion of such settlements in the West Bank and Jerusalem was making increasingly impossible a two-state solution (while being happy to ignore what such a "solution" meant for the rights of the millions of refugees around the world, and for the democratic rights of Palestinians within pre-1967 Israel).

In fact, the hold of settlements over land in the West Bank has gone so far that openly right-wing figures in



Israel have in increasing numbers put forward their own one-state solution—i.e., the open declaration that Palestinians would be second-class citizens in a "Greater Israel" from the river to the sea.

There's no question that Netanyahu's obstinacy over the settlement "freeze" angered Obama, who had already received his Nobel Peace Prize at least in part in anticipation of a deal that now appears off the table. Of course, Obama wanted to quiet down a global flash point at a time when the U.S. is increasingly sunk in the quagmires of Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Somalia, Ye-

(Above) LifeLine convoy members arrive at Egypt-Gaza border, Oct. 21, in attempt to break through the Israeli blockade of humanitarian aid to Gaza.

men—and soon perhaps Iran and elsewhere.

Israel, by the same token, saw the maneuvering room afforded by Washington's difficulties in the region. It was more than happy to take advantage of those difficulties to satisfy the expansionary needs that flow, as in any capitalist state, from the internal and external rhythms

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## Nov. 6 conference to launch mass antiwar actions

By CHRISTINE MARIE

"Both Democrats and Republicans appear to have decided that talking about the wars is not in their best interest," observed Helene Cooper in her Oct. 28 *New York Times* article, "In 2010 Campaign, War is Rarely Mentioned." Cooper's commentary highlights one of the many painful contradictions of the 2010 election cycle. Despite the fact that the world as a whole is riveted by the horrendous revelations contained in the latest Wikileaks, and newly outraged by evidence that the U.S. government is sabotaging any Iran-Afghanistan antiwar discussions, the U.S. political class, by and large, mum on the wars.

This silence is a slap in the face to

the tens of thousands of rank-and-file unionists and community activists who marched on D.C. on Oct. 2 sporting T-shirts and carrying signs calling for money for jobs and education, not war.

The United National Antiwar Committee (UNAC), the group that hosted a July antiwar conference in Albany, N.Y., that drew 800 participants, is working to counter the electoral embargo on discussion about the war and its impact on working people by organizing a series of campaigns leading to national antiwar demonstrations on April 9, 2011, in New York City and San Francisco.

While the Democratic and Republican contenders have not been eager to address the debacles unfolding in Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Yemen, Palestine,

and other sites of U.S. and U.S.-backed military aggression, important new forces have been eagerly seeking out antiwar organizations for joint activity.

On Nov. 6, at a New York City conference to launch the organizing effort for the April 9 bicoastal demonstrations, UNAC will be joined by leaders of a new formation, the Muslim Peace Coalition-USA. Initiated just in time to endorse the Oct. 2 jobs rally in D.C. by Iman Malik Mujahid, a Chicago civic leader and broadcaster, the Muslim Peace Coalition brings together Muslim organizations from 14 states under the mission to "stand with those who stand with us!"

The formation of the MPC-USA is an indication that a growing number of Islamic leaders in the U.S. recognize

that the best response to Islamophobia includes a good ideological offensive against the so-called "war on terror," accompanied by defense campaigns rooted in the broadest civil liberties and peace communities.

New contacts with the large Muslim-American community have, at the same time, awakened layers of the antiwar movement to the dangerous and growing number of U.S. government attacks known as *preemptive prosecutions*. In the great majority of the cases tracked by Project SALAM, especially vulnerable and victimized targets in the Muslim-American and African-American communities are identified, befriended by

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# Banks fudge housing documents

Justin Sullivan / Getty Images

A man who paid for his house with cash was foreclosed by Bank of America for not having a mortgage. A woman called 911 when JPMorganChase tried to break into her home to change the locks. She was behind on her mortgage, but the foreclosure process hadn't begun.

Bank of America entered a woman's home, changed the locks, cut off the utilities and seized her pet parrot—even though she had not missed any mortgage payments. A homeowner sued Bank of America for seizing his home even though he owned it outright. The bank cut the power, leaving 75 pounds of salmon to rot in his freezer.

There's definitely something fishy about this whole foreclosure business.

But *The New York Times's* what-me-worry kid, Eric Dash, doesn't smell anything rotting. His bottom line: "Oh, get over it, it's just a few missing signatures, and the whiners are deadbeats!"

Says Dash: "Revelations that the nation's biggest banks may have fudged crucial documents in their rush to reclaim tens of thousands of homes have the public in an uproar. Attorneys general from all 50 states announced sweeping investigations."

He admitted that the banks' brief foreclosure suspension was "something of a public relations game." But anyway, "their internal reviews suggested that the problems were not as deep as they feared, giving them the confidence to resume evictions." And why should we doubt their word, right?

Dash admits banks "allowed a single employee to sign off on thousands of documents attesting to information he or she did not know to be true," i.e., "robot-signing."

And forgetting the cardinal rule of computing—Garbage In, Garbage Out—Dash blames the banks' elec-



tronic mortgage filing system. He conveniently doesn't mention that this system was used above all so mortgages could be packaged in speculative securities—for which we paid trillions already through the Obama bailout, and are now going to pay for yet again.

In reply to the question, "Who is the victim here?" Dash replies: "There are few reports that banks have mistakenly foreclosed on a homeowner. In many of these cases, borrowers are more than a year behind on their payments, and do not currently live in the home."

What's worse, in the eyes of Dash and business columnists, is that the deadbeats are endangering the economy by stalling their evictions! "An industrywide moratorium, or lengthy delays, could seriously hamper a recovery of the housing market. ... Homes that sit in foreclosure, especially vacant ones, can depress property values and consumer confidence."

That, in turn, could ripple through the economy. "Banks might pull back sharply on lending, triggering a repeat of the credit crunch. ... That is why the Obama administration wants the foreclosure system back on track—and to stamp out calls for a national freeze."

Sod the paperwork, let's get evictions rolling again!

One real estate lawyer explained to *The Times* how the banks intend to fix their paperwork "lapses": "You can go to the judge in the foreclosure action and say: 'I think I bought this loan but there is one thing missing ... you should overlook this gap because I am the rightful owner.'" "I think I bought it," he says they should plead! Imagine an evictee using such an argument!

An even larger threat to the economy looms because of the fight between the banks and the investors who bought their mortgage-backed securities, now revealed to be based on fraudulent or at least inadequately documented titles. Regardless of who wins this battle, you know who'll pick up the tab. And the fallout from this battle in financial markets could easily deepen the continuing global depression.

The solution, once again, is to make those who caused the crisis pay for it—including by measures that would expose the systemic nature of the crisis. That's the approach taken by the Take Back the Land Movement, a national coalition, which noted that "foreclosure fraud ... is but a symptom of a deeper structural crisis. They put forward a set of what they call "transitional demands," which "can potentially heighten the overall contradictions within the system of capitalist exploitation and appropriation":

- Government take over and administration of loan modification programs, taking the banks out of the process.
  - Restitution for foreclosure fraud victims.
  - Use this crisis to convert residences to cooperative housing units directly governed and administered by the impacted families and communities.
- To win these demands, they call for "concerted direct action of those most affected and those in solidarity":
- Nationally coordinated days of action against banks and government agencies.
  - A nationally coordinated rent strike of those facing foreclosure and eviction.
  - Community occupations of vacant properties and land to transform them into cooperative housing.

— THE EDITORS

## A WORKERS' ACTION PROGRAM TO FIGHT THE CRISIS

We propose an EMERGENCY CONGRESS OF LABOR to discuss and take steps to implement the following demands —

- 1) Bail out the people, not the bankers! Open the account books of the banks to full public inspection. Nationalize the banks to be supervised by workers' committees.
- 2) No foreclosures! No forced evictions! Cancel usurious debt payments, and reduce mortgage payments in proportion to their capitalist-caused decline in value.
- 3) Full employment at union wages! An emergency public works program to employ all jobless workers and youth! Employ people to build what we need — low-cost quality housing, efficient mass transportation, cheap and renewable sources of power, schools, clinics — and to conserve our water, forests, farmland, and open space.
- 4) Immediate and full withdrawal of U.S. troops from Iraq & Afghanistan! Close all U.S. bases abroad! No money for the military — use funds instead for public works! Convert the war industries to making products for people's needs and to combat global warming.

5) Reduce the workweek to 30 hours with no cut in pay, and cut the retirement age to 55. Provide unemployment and retirement payments at the level of union wages and benefits.

6) To combat inflation: A sliding scale of wages and pensions that matches the rises in consumer prices. To combat high medical costs: A free, universal, public health-care system.

7) Immediate citizenship for all undocumented workers. No job discrimination; equal pay for equal work — regardless of gender, sexual orientation, skin color, or national origin.

8) Nationalize manufacturing, big agribusiness, energy, and transportation corporations and place them under the control of elected committees of workers.

9) To mobilize support for the demands it adopts, the EMERGENCY CONGRESS should organize ACTION COMMITTEES in every workplace and neighborhood threatened by the crisis. These committees can draw up more concrete demands than the ones outlined above.

10) To put all these measures into effect, we need a LABOR PARTY — based on a fighting union movement and all people who are oppressed and exploited. For a workers' government!

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# Socialist Action candidate Hutchinson debates his Republican and Democratic opponents for Congress



By DANIEL ADAM

HARTFORD, Conn.—From Oct. 18 to Oct. 26, Chris Hutchinson, Socialist Action congressional candidate for Connecticut's 1st District, joined in four debates with three other contenders for the seat: fourth-ranking House Democrat John Larson; Republican Ann Brickley; and Green Party candidate Ken Krayeske. The debates were opportunities to present working-class politics to a broader public while exposing the politics of the two corporate parties. Hutchinson made an impact that went far beyond the normal electoral sideshow, and was well received by audiences.

A look at the politics of the debates goes a long way to dispel the illusion that there are significant political differences between the two big business parties. Republican Brickley constantly defended the sanctity of the free market and private enterprise—which keep wealth in the hands of a tiny minority. Meanwhile, Democrat Larson made a point to defend the government bailouts that kept the banks and big corporations afloat.

In this, the Republican and Democrat employed a division of labor. Big business demands a “free market,” but it also requires government intervention like the recent

multi-trillion-dollar bailouts.

Larson's major promises to working people in Connecticut revolve around his ability to cut deals in Congress and the corporate world (especially those in the military industry) to pull some investment into the state. Larson's fundamental message is, “Stick with me, and I'll make sure you get bigger crumbs than anyone else.”

Hutchinson often undercut this discourse, and changed the terms of the debate. An article in the *Bristol Press* and *New Britain Herald* on the first debate in West Hartford even claimed that Hutchinson and Green candidate Krayeske “stole the show.”

Hutchinson pointed to the failures of the profit motive itself: “Non-financial companies now sit on \$1.8 trillion in cash, roughly one-quarter more than at the beginning of the recession. Giving the wealthy and their

institutions more money will not create a single job.” He pointed out that the TARP money Larson voted in was used by many companies to eliminate jobs, not save them. With public money GM has even forced workers and new hires to take a 50% pay cut.

Hutchinson argued that, since working people have already paid for the largest banks and corporations several times over, we should place these companies under public ownership and direct investment toward human needs instead of profit. “Working people create all the wealth in the first place. We should decide how it's used.”

In Hartford and New Hartford, Hutchinson pointed to the power of working people: “In 44 days workers of the tiny island nation Guadalupe were able to do what Larson has not done in his entire 12 years in office. They took to the streets and organized a 44-day-long general strike. They won a moratorium on home foreclosures, an emergency jobs program to provide 8000 young people with employment, and wage increases across the board. This victory inspired workers in France to begin the struggle they're waging now against raising the retirement age.”

In this vein Hutchinson consistently told his audience



(Above) Chris Hutchinson at a rally for Mumia Abu-Jamal, with Philadelphia MOVE activist Ramona Africa.

that their lives won't be changed by the victor of the Nov. 2 election one way or the other, and that the real question remains whether working people will organize independently to fight back. As a start, Hutchinson urged attendees to join the march against the wars on April 9 in New York and to come to the first regional organizing meeting on Nov. 6.

At every debate Chris was approached with interest and enthusiasm in the politics he expressed. In the two venues where the audience participated, he won a fair share of affirmation with applause and shouts, even though the rooms were largely packed with Brickley and Larson supporters. In Hartford Chris found his warmest reception, receiving a number of ovations. On at least one question the audience gave Hutchinson passionate applause while greeting Larson with dead silence.

For more coverage and video of these debates, go to [www.votesocialistaction.org](http://www.votesocialistaction.org).

## ... Antiwar

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provocateurs, and lured into saying or doing something that allows the government to claim that they could become a “terrorist” threat. Successful preemptive prosecutions and the incarceration of hundreds of Muslim-Americans in 23-hour lockdown units called Communication Management Units, or CMUs, are then used to justify U.S. wars in the Middle East and South Asia, as well as increasingly Orwellian restrictions on civil liberties.

Muslim Peace Coalition spokespeople have been joined in UNAC activities by the women of Desis Rising Up and Moving (DRUM). This group, founded to empower low-wage South Asian immigrants, has been targeted by ICE and Homeland Security for deportation and preemptive prosecution. DRUM activists have been combining the fights against raids, Islamophobia, and social service cuts since before the invasion of Iraq began. In a certain sense, they embody the character of a new antiwar movement in formation, a movement in which activists feel the multipronged impact of the war and economic crisis as low-income workers, as immigrants, as people of color, and as those most vulnerable to the wrenching cuts in social services expected to be proposed in December by Obama's National Commission on Fiscal Responsibility.

DRUM's decision to build the Nov. 6 meeting in New York has the potential to strengthen the peace movement immensely. DRUM activists have encouraged the participation of youth from Vamos Unidos, a group that has been prominent in the fight of Latino youth in



New York City against the DREAM ACT, a piece of legislation that purports to trade permanent residency for military service.

These forces promise to animate the movement to bring the troops and war dollars home now in truly new ways. In that task they will be working together with speakers at the Nov. 6 conference in New York who include Kathy Kelly of the Center for Creative Nonviolence, Mark Johnson of the Fellowship of Reconciliation, Transport Workers Union leader Marvin Holland, Larry Hamm of the Peoples Organization for Progress, Margaret Kimberley of the Black Agenda Report, Nada Khader of Wespac, Pardiss Kebriaei of the Center for Constitutional Rights, Adaner Usmani of Action for a Progressive Pakistan, Teresa

Gutierrez of the May 1 Coalition, Maggie Zhou of the Massachusetts Coalition for Healthy Communities, Marty Nathan of Northampton Bring Our War Dollars Home, Rachel Smolker of the Biofuel Watch/Energy Justice Network, Steff Yorek of Stop FBI Raids, and many more.

Antiwar organizers are finding that the demands approved by the Albany UNAC conference in July are important tools in attracting new forces: Bring the Troops, Mercenaries, and War Dollars Home Now from Iraq, Afghanistan, and Pakistan. No War or Sanctions on Iran! Trillions for Jobs and Education, Not Wars and Bank Bailouts! No to the Racist Attacks on Muslims, Immigrants, and Communities of Color! Civil Liberties for All! End U.S. Aid to Israel! End U.S. Aid to the Israeli Occupation of Palestine!

The latter demands have had particular resonance in the San Francisco Bay Area, where UNAC, along with the UC Berkeley Students for Justice in Palestine, the UCB Muslim Student Association, and the Middle East Children's Alliance, is hosting a Nov. 30 teach-in at UC Berkeley to educate around the interconnected themes of the war, Islamophobia, and the fight for justice for the Palestinian people. The students who led the Berkeley struggle to force the university to divest, whose group is the largest activist group on campus, have voted to build the UNAC-initiated teach-in as part of their struggle to bring the issue of Palestine into the mainstream of the U.S. antiwar movement.

The vote to include a strong Palestine demand at the Albany conference won the approval of allies from the African American community as well. Glen Ford of *Black Agenda Report* described the Albany conference in July as the birth of an antiwar movement that “won't cave to Obama or Israel.” In an article about this year's “Black is Back” Nov. 13 march on the White House to demand an end to U.S. wars in Iraq and Afghanistan and an end to U.S. military aid to Africa, Ford noted approvingly that in the past year the BiB coalition had built “relations of solidarity and mutual respect with non-Black strugglers for social justice and peace.”

Christine Gauvreau, a member of the UNAC Coordinating Committee, was recently invited to speak on the topic, “We Demand Butter, Not Guns!” at the annual Harlem Tenants Council Conference, and shared the stage with Mark Torres of the Coalition to Save Public Education, Dr. Matthew Hurley from the physician's union at Harlem Hospital,

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# U.S. stumbling to disaster in Afghanistan

By GERRY FOLEY

The *New York Times* editorial "Afghanistan Today," in its Oct. 22 issue, is a good indication of the political dilemma of the Obama regime as it tries to expand the war in this Central Asian region: "President George W. Bush short-changed the Afghan fight for seven years. We continue to wonder whether, at this late date, the United States can achieve even minimal success against the Taliban and their allies. The cost of the war is still rising. Nearly 600 coalition forces, including 400 Americans, have been killed there this year."

The *Times* was willing to give the U.S. commanders and the Obama administration more than the benefit of the doubt. It credited them with "mixed results" and putting together a "more coherent plan," but it still found it difficult to believe that they could accomplish their stated objectives. In fact, in previous articles, *Times* writers bent over backward to endorse the Polyanna version of the U.S. war projected by the military commanders.

On the same day *The Times* editorial was published, Derrick Crowe, writing in the *Huffington Post*, took the grey lady of U.S. journalism to task for "hyping" the Afghan war: "*The New York Times* just published a story [by Carlotta Gall] under the headline, 'Coalition Forces Routing Taliban in Key Afghan Region' that could not include more Pentagon talking points if it were written by General David Petraeus himself. In both the broad outline of the story and in the particulars, the *Times* conveys a deceptive picture of the state of the conflict and obscures the continued deterioration of the situation in Afghanistan. The available facts simply do not support the assertion that U.S. and coalition forces are 'making "deliberate progress" and have seized the initiative from the insurgents.'"

Crowe noted that Gall had quoted a local U.S. commander stating that he thought the Taliban in the Kandahar area was "losing heart." "But here's the problem: According to the Afghan NGO Safety Office, armed opposition group attacks all across Afghanistan increased between August and late September.

"And, in Kandahar City, the insurgent attack rate continues to follow a general upward trend: The daily attack rate [in Kandahar] has grown from 0.1 in Week one to 2.8 per day by Week 35 suggesting that the elements of OP HAMKARI undertaken so far are not degrading the AOG ability to conduct attacks. Field reports suggest that the Taliban retain up to 4000 fighters inside the city and continue a wide-spread campaign of intimidation, targeted assassination and the widespread deployment of IEDs against Police and Military targets.

"Further, the area continues to become more hostile for civilians. The International Committee of the Red Cross says that the number of war-related injuries being treated at local hospitals is spiking."

Crowe ridiculed the claims by military officers quoted by Gall that "precise" rockets were devastating the Taliban: "The article lacks any mention of the last time the HIMARS [High Mobility Artillery Rocket System] made the news, back in February, when U.S. forces in Marjah killed a slew of civilians with it, after which the HIMARS was briefly suspended from use in the country."

In an article in the Oct. 20 *Huffington Post*, Michael Hughes referred to a political obstacle facing the NATO campaign to win Kandahar: "The province of Kandahar is purportedly the most critical to winning the war, considering it's the birthplace and spiritual cradle of the Taliban. Yet, thanks to the Bush brain trust's brilliance, it is de facto



(Left) U.S. Marine searches Marjah resident. Eight months after U.S. launched campaign to clear Taliban from the area, the effort has stalled.

controlled by President Karzai's corrupt brother Ahmed Wali Karzai, who runs the region like a kingpin. He has consolidated power in the area and has used CIA resources to knock off rival tribal elders and is infamous for making profit off the opium trade. Ahmed Wali is to this day single-handedly fueling the insurgency in the South."

The recent period has also been marked by another stunning exposure of the corruption of the Karzai regime. The Afghan election board threw out a fourth of the ballots from the latest vote in the country. So presumably, the good news is that the election officials are beginning to attack fraud (of course, the truth of this depends on an analysis of just what votes were thrown out and who benefited; and this has not been forthcoming). The bad news is the admission of the authorities themselves that election fraud remains massive.

In early October, a Senate Armed Service Committee investigation found that the private security companies contracted by the U.S. were in bed not only with corrupt Afghan warlords and drug mafiosi but with enemies of the regular U.S. armed forces. An Oct. 8 article in *The New York Times* reported: "Afghan private security forces with ties to the Taliban, criminal networks and Iranian intelligence have been hired to guard American military bases in Afghanistan, exposing United States soldiers to surprise attack and confounding the fight against insurgents, according to a Senate investigation."

The article noted: "There are more than 26,000 private security employees in Afghanistan, and 90 percent of them are working under United States government contracts or subcontracts. Almost all are tied to the militias of local warlords and other powerful Afghan figures outside the control of the American military or the Afghan government, the report found."

Even the corrupt Karzai regime has become worried about the chaos and social decay fostered by these mercenary gangs. It has ordered them dissolved by Dec. 17. But its big brother, the U.S., is not so squeamish. It is begging Karzai to give the murder-for-hire companies a reprieve. And according to a report in the Oct. 24 *New York Times*, he has begun making concessions.

Of course, since the control of these mercenaries is so tenuous, the U.S. can use them with deniability. It is known that they are using them in Pakistan. But no one knows how many. Now the U.S. government is begging the Pakistani government to allow more CIA agents to operate in its country.

An Agence France Presse story published in the Oct. 23 *Wall Street Journal* reported: "The requests have so far been rebuffed by Islamabad, which remains extremely wary of allowing a larger U.S. ground presence in Pakistan, illustrating the precarious nature of relations between Washington and its wartime ally."

In fact, tensions between the Pakistani government and the American military reached a new high in the beginning of October, when Pakistan closed its border crossing for trucks carrying supplies to U.S. forces in Afghanistan. Pakistan's action was prompted by a U.S. strike on a border post that U.S. pilots had claimed was firing on them. Three Pakistani border guards were killed. Background to the incident were U.S. claims that Pakistani border guards have often covered for Taliban fighters.

During the week that the border crossing was closed, stranded convoys of trucks carrying U.S. supplies were attacked four times by the Taliban. The biggest attack was in the outskirts of the Pakistani capital, Islamabad, in which 20 trucks were burned and four people killed. The Oct. 4 report in *USA Today* did not say who the four were. But in general U.S. forces depend on local contractors who hire drivers at low pay and with zero guarantees.

*USA Today* quoted one: "Trucker Kalam Khan, who has been waiting for five days on his flatbed truck with a container of supplies for the U.S. Bagram Air Field in Afghanistan, said drivers are in constant fear. 'If vehicles for Afghanistan are not safe in Islamabad, we could be attacked any time,' he said."

More than 90 percent of supplies for the U.S.-led occupation army in Afghanistan comes through Pakistan. There are other routes through the former Soviet Central Asian Republics, but they are not necessarily more certain. For example, the recent parliamentary elections in Kyrgyzstan brought forth indications that the new government might at least greatly raise the rent of the U.S. base at Manas.

In one stroke, the Pakistani government demonstrated that it can pull the rug out from under the U.S. occupation of Afghanistan. Of course, the Pakistani government is as subordinate to the U.S. as it can be. But there is no telling what may happen if anti-U.S. feeling continues to grow there. The Pakistani action and the attacks on the trucks carrying supplies to U.S. troops indicates the precariousness of the U.S. position in Afghanistan and the dangers of a widening war.

The revelation in the Oct. 23 *New York*

*Times* that the U.S. client ruler of Afghanistan, Hamid Karzai, has been collecting a big subsidy from the Iranian government is another indication of the corruption of the Karzai government. *The Times* of Oct. 25 confirmed its previous report: "The article in *The Times* said that Umar Daudzai, the president's chief of staff, received between \$1 million and \$2 million every other month from Iran and that the money, effectively a slush fund, was distributed to Afghan lawmakers, tribal elders and even Taliban commanders to secure their loyalty."

Karzai acknowledged receiving the money but he claimed that *The Times* report of it was retaliation for his decision to ban the mercenary security forces. The report does indicate that Iran is not engaged in a covert war with the

United States forces in the Middle East as the U.S. advocates of a military assault on Iran claim. There are of course frictions and mutual probing. (It is an open secret that the U.S. is supporting Baluchi nationalist guerrillas in Iran.) But Iran is also giving substantial toleration to the U.S. occupation of Afghanistan and even of Iraq, although in the latter country Iranian Revolutionary Guards' links with Shiite Islamist armed groups complicate matters.

In the case of Afghanistan, Iran even offers collaboration to the U.S. (Iran no doubt wants to woo Karzai in its own interests, but it must know that he will not survive if the United States withdraws from Afghanistan.) Considering the by now well known support of the Pakistani intelligence service for the Taliban, it would be as easy to claim an element of the Pakistani forces are waging a covert war against the U.S. Would the hawks want a military assault on Pakistan as well?

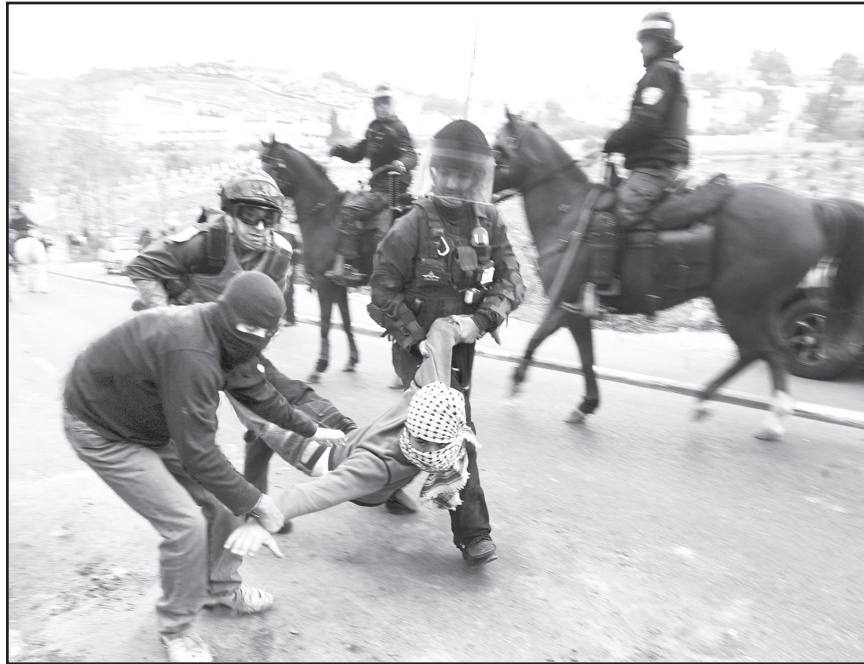
In all, it seems to be becoming harder and harder to tell who is the enemy and who is the friend of the U.S. forces in Afghanistan. And the U.S. is increasingly becoming enmeshed in a tangle of corruption in a region that can become a bottomless pit for American resources.

The Oct. 21 *Huffington Post* describes a vast program for expanding U.S. bases in Afghanistan, citing little-noticed U.S. government records: "The documents reveal plans for large-scale, expensive Afghan base expansions of every sort and a military that is expecting to pursue its building boom without letup well into the future."

Ironically, given the intertwining of big corporations with military, the pouring of still more resources into this area does not necessarily mean that the U.S. government intends to stay there. The contracts are sufficient unto themselves for the companies that fatten off the public purse and their military buyers. If the waste and overcharging are monumental, what do a few more hundred million dollars matter?

However, these plans are testimony to a continued disastrous course of military adventure and economic waste that may lead to incalculable losses for the American people. By now there is abundant evidence that no U.S. administration that serves big business, either Democrat or Republican, is going to do that. Americans have to take the issue into their own hands and demonstrate their determination in the streets to end this course, and not tie themselves down by trusting any politician beholden to big money. ■





## ... Palestine 'peace' deal unravels

(continued from page 1)

of its economy. These needs find both political and military expression (although overlaid with spurious religious justifications).

Of course, the deal desired by Obama was merely Washington's conception of how to end once and for all the struggle for Palestinian liberation. The deal would have Tel Aviv grant slightly more autonomy to the Palestine Authority, and give the PA economic and internal security responsibility over part of the West Bank and East Jerusalem but with little control over its borders, no right to its own military, and numerous other restrictions. Above all, the plan would require the abandoning of the historic rights of refugees and of Palestinians inside pre-1967 Israel.

Washington saw the opportunity to achieve this partly because of the success of illegally appointed West Bank Prime Minister Salam Fayyad in beginning to shape an economy totally dependent on Israel, the U.S., and the IMF and World Bank. This economy might well prove to be more stable, if no less exploitative, of the majority of Palestinians than under Yasir Arafat's regime, whose corruption was so blatant that it proved a hindrance to investors' ability to efficiently exploit the labor of the Palestinian masses.

Dissent against Fayyad's reforms, as well as against PA President Mahmoud Abbas' traitorous negotiating postures, have been crushed with the help of U.S. General Keith Dayton, who has been

arming and training PA security forces (see an account of Dayton's actions in the Oct. 14 *New York Review of Books*.)

Obama never had any intention, despite Netanyahu's intransigence, of cutting a single dollar of the \$3 billion in annual aid given to Israel. And the timing of the end of the settlement "freeze," coming just a month before the U.S. midterm elections, limited Obama's ability to twist Netanyahu's arm, for fear of offending a donor base already shrinking thanks to campaign donor rules significantly loosened by the Supreme Court. And with Republicans poised to make significant gains in those elections, Obama will emerge with even less wiggle room.

In fact, far from pressuring Netanyahu, Obama offered Israel a range of generous diplomatic, security, and financial "incentives," including new F-35 planes, and agreeing to a permanent Zionist military presence in the Jordan Valley, all in exchange for just one or two months more of the pseudo-freeze.

Meanwhile, Netanyahu's government, uniting the "right" (the party of Moldovan immigrant Avigdor Lieberman and allied parties) and the "left" (the Labour Party) with his own Likud, is moving quickly on several fronts to make even more explicit the racist nature of a state founded on dispossession and expulsion.

First is the passage by the Israeli cabinet of the draft of a law requiring anyone seeking Israeli citizenship to swear loyalty to a "Jewish and democratic" state. Coming on top of renewed demands by

Netanyahu—supported by Obama—that the PA recognize Israel's right to declare itself a Jewish state, it is also correctly seen as another way of denying the right of refugees to return—i.e., as an implicit admission that refugees should only expect to find safe haven in a rump Palestinian "state."

Palestinian politicians and organizations have denounced the law as a precursor to more steps whittling down the already-limited civil and political rights of Palestinians in pre-1967 Israel.

In preparation for expected revolts against such measures or a sell-out "deal," Israel conducted training exercises during the first week of October that were described by journalist Jonathan Cook as intended to test "its ability to quell any civil unrest that might result from a peace deal with the Palestinian Authority requiring the forcible transfer of many Palestinian Arab citizens. In the operation, security services established a large detention center in the Galilee region to cope with an 'unprecedented' number of arrests of Palestinian citizens."

Cook reported on a proposal by Lieberman to the UN General Assembly in September, in which he outlined "land swaps that would force many of Israel's 1.3 million Palestinian citizens into a future Palestinian state in return for annexation to Israel of most of the Jewish settlements in the occupied West Bank." Cook noted that Netanyahu, although saying he was not consulted about the speech, did not criticize it.

Meanwhile, the pace of settler violence against Palestinians has escalated, from physical eviction of Palestinians from their homes in East Jerusalem, to the burning of thousands of olive trees during the fall harvest and beatings and shootings of Palestinians trying to protect their land and crops.

Within pre-1967 Israel, the Bedouin village of al-Araqib has been torn down six times since August, as part of an ambitious plan by the Jewish National Fund to drive more Palestinians off their land in the Naqab (Negev). The JNF, which raises most of its money in the U.S. and has tax-exempt status, is covering its theft with claims of "restoring" the land (what environmental groups call "greenwashing").

Liberal Israeli group B'Tselem recently issued a report documenting from 2006 to 2009 the murder by the IDF of, on average, one Palestinian civilian every other day—all with total impunity. This does not include those murdered in such operations as the attacks on Gaza in winter 2008-2009.

In the face of Netanyahu's obstinacy, and Washington's acquiescence to it, PA head Mahmoud Abbas' first response was to get the

(Above) Israeli police attack March 16 protest against plans for additional Jewish housing in East Jerusalem.

(Left) Residents of Umm-al-Fahm, an Arab town in northern Israel, throw stones at Israeli riot police after right-wing Israelis marched through town.

Arab League to issue a statement saying the PA should only return to "indirect" talks—and giving Tel Aviv and Washington another month's grace period to think things over.

In mid-October, *The New York Times* reported another diplomatic pose being struck by Abbas. Now he claims to be seeking recognition of a Palestinian mini-state from the UN, the International Court of Justice, and states signatory to the Geneva Conventions, relying on legal precedents set in past agreements.

This is, of course, just diplomatic posturing. But what's significant about the article are its last two paragraphs: "If the Palestinians were to go to the United Nations Security Council, they might well face an American veto. Therefore, they might start in the General Assembly, where there is no veto and where dozens of countries would be likely to support them."

"While that would be less binding, it would provide a kind of symmetry—dark or poetic, depending on one's perspective—with Israel. It was in the General Assembly in November 1947 that the Zionist movement achieved success through a resolution calling for the division of this land into two states, one Jewish and the other Arab. Israel has long viewed that vote as the source of its international legitimacy."

Palestinian activists have long correctly exposed the illegitimacy of a state relying for its justification solely on a General Assembly resolution, in disregard both of other international laws and institutions, as well as the wishes of the expelled population—a disregard imposed by force of arms at its founding and ever since.

Of course, if the PA seriously thought that any international recognition of its rump state were in the offing, it would hasten to permanently drop any demands for refugee rights or the rights of Palestinians inside pre-1967 Israel.

In the face of all this oppression, repression, and diplomatic puppet shows (pun intended), grassroots Palestinians continue to fight for their freedom in a variety of ways, including in the United States. The U.S. Palestinian Community Network (USPCN) is holding its second Popular Conference as we go to press. On its agenda is an ambitious and politically astute set of workshop and "Palestine Movement Assembly" tracks, addressing the needs of women and students, strategizing about Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) and, most excitingly, seeking to develop new proposals for addressing the civil and national rights of Palestinians worldwide. Look for a report from this conference in our next issue. For more information on USPCN, see [palestineconference.org](http://palestineconference.org). ■

## ... Antiwar

(continued from page 3)

and Chino Hardin of the Institute for Juvenile Justice Reform, a group grappling with the impact of the prison-industrial complex.

Nearly all sections of the antiwar movement, recognizing the way in which the economic crisis and war spending are inextricably intertwined, have also begun to organize under the banner, "Bring Our War Dollars Home!"

Bring Our War Dollars Home campaigns originated in Maine by Bruce Gagnon, coordinator of the Global Network Against Weapons & Nuclear Power in Space, and were led to success in that state by Lisa Savage and Mark Roman. These campaigns are now being taken up by in one way or another by a number of local and national antiwar organizations.

On Oct. 7, after a five-month campaign that involved petitioning, public forums, media debates, engagement with veterans and their families, and city council hearings and votes, the Al-

liance for Peace and Justice was able to celebrate a vote by the Northampton, Mass., city council that called on their senators to oppose "further funding of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan" and "to bring our troops safely home and redirect our federal tax dollars to pressing educational, employment, housing, nutritional, infrastructure, energy, and environmental needs of our city, state, and country."

From Harlem to Northampton, organizers are beginning to consider or experiment with grassroots campaigns designed to engage and empower the victims of the U.S. wars at home.

The potential power of these elements of the newly emerging antiwar movement is clear. If brought together into unified and independent mass marches this spring, the U.S. movement will have gone a long way toward overcoming the period of demobilization and demoralization wrought by the Obama administration's pursuit of endless war.

For more information on the United National Antiwar Committee and the Nov. 6 meeting at St. Marks Church on the Bowery in New York, see [www.nationalpeaceconference.org](http://www.nationalpeaceconference.org). ■



# REVOLT IN FRANCE

By ANDREW POLLACK

*This article is an update of the report that appeared in socialistaction.org on Oct. 26.*

For over a month, France was shaken by a wave of strikes and mass demonstrations on a scale that has not been equaled for decades. Factories and schools were closed down, and transportation of people and goods was severely crippled.

At the end of October, the bureaucratic leaderships of the major union federations announced that the strikes are over. On Oct. 29, the CFDT reported that the last of the oil refineries on strike would soon be re-opened; at one point all 12 of the country's refineries had been shut down by strikers. The CGT said that striking dockworkers in Marseille, who had left about 80 ships stranded outside the harbor, had voted to return to their jobs.

The mass protest movement culminated with a national Day of Action on Oct. 28, the day after the National Assembly had ratified President Nicolas Sarkozy's proposed pension "reform." Over 2 million workers and students marched through the streets to protest this measure and the government's entire program of cutbacks and layoffs. Many marchers shouted loudly: "It's not over yet!"

The turnout of millions in the early mobilizations called by the union officialdom convinced workers that more militant action was both necessary and possible. Shutdowns of oil, transport, garbage pickup, and other services were enforced by roving pickets. Although police reopened some refineries, strikers often shut them down again as soon as the police had departed.

The French bosses began sending tank trucks to Belgium to ferry oil supplies back over the border. But their effort was frustrated on Oct. 26 by Belgian trade unionists who—in a tremendous act of working-class solidarity—blockaded some fuel depots in their country against the French trucks.

An inspiring feel for the day-to-day dynamics of the revolt could be seen in the daily posts on the Marxism e-mail list by self-described "council communist" Daniel Koechlin, an English teacher in France. Koechlin described the gatherings of workers from various industries at roadblocks and refinery gates, and the gathering of hundreds of strikers from various industries to establish or reinforce such choke points. Students often provided reinforcements.

A typical incident from his posts: "This morning, at 4:30 a.m., we were dislodged from the fuel depot we had been blockading by 700 riot police. The workers from the neighboring Renault factory night shift came rushing out but were repulsed by the police and confined to the factory. Attempts are currently underway to re-establish road blocks on the main roads, but the riot police are playing 'cat and mouse' with us.

"We block a point for two hours, the heavily armored cars arrive. We disperse and block another point, etc. Several groups (made up of railway workers, local council workers, truckers, energy workers, students, teachers and auto-workers) are operating in this manner. ... Today, we got the main teachers' union to call on striking teachers to come and help block all the remaining fuel depots."

Koechlin also described the desire of workers from various industries to meet together in order to plan and coordinate actions: "Many workers agree to setting up a General Meeting of all the strikers from every industry every day, to collectively decide on matters of strategy and tactics. Some local union leaders too.

"The problem is exactly the lack of workers' councils. Even though locally strikers are coordinating their activities, a lot of strategic decisions are made by the unions at the local and national level. But many workers are pushing for decisions involving all the workers in the municipality to be taken in general assemblies and then passed on to the local unions. ...

"What is incredible is that despite the fact that there is no more oil available, and therefore that people are blocked at home, a resounding 71% of the population approves of the strike. ... When we block a freeway, drivers honk to support us, give us money, hand us daily newspapers, even though we are effectively blocking them."



(Above) Oct 16 protest in Marseille.

(Left) University students join striking workers at Oct. 26 rally in Paris.



Progressive economist Mark Weisbrot points out that since the current retirement age was last set in 1983, GDP per person in France has increased by 45 percent, far outstripping the pension payouts required by the increase in population size and life expectancy.

Revolutionary socialists emphasized the need to deepen the strike wave nationwide. In an interview in the Oct. 19 *Le Monde*, New Anti-capitalist Party (NPA) leader Olivier Besancenot called for "indefinite general strikes" (i.e. bound neither by time nor industry). The expansion in scope of the strike would match its potential for expanding in substance: "The discontent goes beyond the retirement issue. ... Many workers and many young people are truly fed up with the government's double standards."

In response to a question about an NPA alternative to the "reform," he called for "its abandonment pure and simple. We propose retirement at 60 with full benefits and the return to the contribution length of 37.5 years, for all. To finance this project, we propose to increase the share of employers' contributions to Social Security." He also called for a shorter workweek to eliminate unemployment. And he concluded that because "what we have is a crisis of overproduction in the Marxist sense of the term throughout the major capitalist economies, one day we'll have to invent a new mode of production and consumption that can meet the needs of humanity."

But throughout the struggle, the reformist parties have played their traditional role of trying to weaken or derail the movement. The Socialist Party, while supporting retention of the 60-year benchmark, approved the government's attempt to require more years of work before qualifying for the full pension.

Sandra Demarcq, a leader of the NPA, wrote in the Fourth International's on-line journal: "The SP is also asking the movement to stop mobilizations and wait for the next presidential elections in 2012, while the Communist Party and Parti de gauche (Left Party) and other political forces demand a referendum, turning the class struggle into an institutional question" (see [internationalviewpoint.org](http://internationalviewpoint.org)). The same type of compromise and maneuvering, combined with the absence of a sufficiently large revolutionary party, allowed the reformist parties in 1968 to end a mobilization that had reached a pre-revolutionary stage.

While fighting diversion from its right, the movement must also devote special attention to maximizing the participation of the most revolutionary element of the class: the Arab and African immigrant workers and youth clustered in France's cities. It must not be forgotten that Sarkozy's rise to national fame came as a result of his openly racist policy of police repression against them. And on the flip side, their repeated broad and militant revolts against such policies, as well as against the underlying super-exploitation on the job, higher unemployment rates, and discrimina-

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Yet,

as Koechlin correctly pointed

out, a situation where one part of the working class seemed to be striking on behalf of the rest could not last. Now, the links that workers established during the struggle, spanning different industries and unions, must be consolidated and expanded for future battles.

The upsurge was swelled by youth, first from the lycées (high schools) and then the universities. A BBC report on youth participation was typical both in its mocking of students supposedly just wanting to have their own May '68 (when mass student and worker strikes grew into a prerevolutionary situation), but also unintentionally revealing the seriousness of these youth: "Every morning for the last 10 days, the headmaster at the Lycée Sophie-Germain in the desirable Marais district of Paris has arrived to find a pyramid of rubbish containers piled up against the entrance to the building. Student leaders take it in turns to climb to the top of the pyramid and harangue their friends with talk of strikes and blockades. Those wishing to attend school are turned away."

Karim Boursali, 17, a student at another Paris lycée, expressed the material necessity inspiring their admitted—and appropriate—joy in their newfound collective strength: "If older people have to work for longer, there won't be any jobs left, and we will end up unemployed at the age of 25 and we won't be able to contribute long enough to be able to get a pension." Youths fought running battles with riot police. Police have arrested children as young as 10.

The strikes were about much more than the widely quoted "raising the retirement age from 60 to 62." The figure of 62 is only when one would qualify for a partial pension. To get a full pension workers would have to work until 67, and down the road perhaps even longer, as the government also wants to raise the number of years in which workers must pay into the system before getting full pension. Working for that long is becoming increasingly difficult given the unemployment crisis, and becoming increasingly stressful as job pressures have escalated.

Said one teacher: "I still have to work for another 18 years, and in my industry, I don't think I will be able to work much longer." (That's a sentiment that could be heard from any teacher in the U.S., suffering from the productivity squeezing, speed-up inducing regime of standardized testing!)



By GERRY FOLEY

The end of October has been a very embarrassing time for the U.S. war makers both in Iraq and Afghanistan. In the first place, a new flood of internal documents from the U.S. occupation forces in Iraq disclosed by Wikileaks confirms the atrocities committed by the U.S. military that have earned the enduring hatred of most of the Iraqi people and the Muslim world.

*The New York Times* reported Oct. 23: "But it [the Wikileaks archive] does seem to suggest numbers that are roughly in line with those compiled by several sources, including Iraq BodyCount, an organization that tracked civilian deaths using press reports, a method the Bush administration repeatedly derided as unreliable and producing inflated numbers. In all, the five-year archive lists more than 100,000 dead from 2004 to 2009, though some deaths are reported more than once, and some reports have inconsistent casualty figures."

However, an AP dispatch updated on Oct. 24 reported: "Iraq BodyCount, a private British-based group that has tracked the number of Iraqi civilians killed since the war began, said it had analyzed the information and found 15,000 previously unreported deaths, which would raise its total from as many as 107,369 civilians to more than 122,000 civilians."

*The New York Times* commented: "The documents also reveal many previously unreported instances in which American soldiers killed civilians—at checkpoints, from helicopters, in operations. Such killings are a central reason Iraqis turned against the American presence in their country, a situation that is now being repeated in Afghanistan."

The documents released by Wikileaks represent a new stage in counting the toll of the Iraq war and occupation. The U.S. authorities have been forced progressively to take account of the civilian casualties, but the latest posting is still thousands short of the totals compiled by both Wikileaks and the Iraqi Ministry of Human Rights, which uses death certificates to compile its list.

"This month," *The Times* stated, "the Associated Press reported that the Pentagon in July had quietly posted its full tally of the death toll of Iraqi civilians and security forces ever, numbers that were first requested in 2005 through the Freedom of Information Act. It was not clear why the total—76,939 Iraqi civilians and members of the security forces killed between January 2004 and August 2008—was significantly less than the sum of the archive's death count."

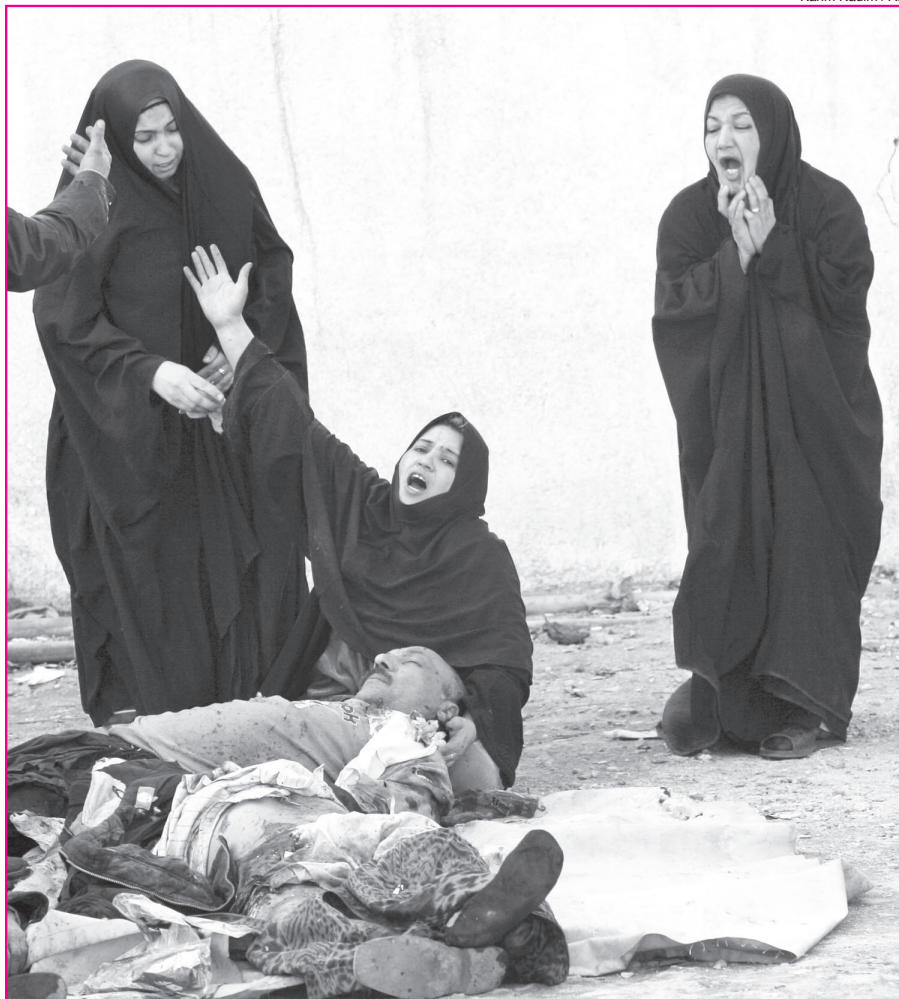
*The Times* noted that the reports on which archive totals were compiled were only as good as the soldiers calling them in: "One of the most infamous episodes of killings by American soldiers, the shootings of at least 15 Iraqi civilians, including women and children in the western city of Haditha, is misrepresented in the archives. The report stated that the civilians were killed by militants in a bomb attack, the same false version of the episode that was given to the news media."

This accounting of the civilian death toll, of course, does not include the civilians, many of them children, who died as a result of the degradation of essential services, such as water, electricity, sewage, and hospitals. Adding those factors would multiply the toll enormously.

*The New York Times* tried to minimize U.S. responsibility for this carnage by claiming that Iraqi fighters were responsible for most of the deaths. But this disregards the well documented reaction of Iraqis who blame the killings on the chaos created by the U.S. attack and the insensitive actions of the U.S. occupation forces and the

# U.S. finds Iraqi deaths have come back to haunt them

Karim Kadim / AP



(Left) Women find body of a relative among victims of a bombing, Dec. 8, 2006. Wikileaks suggests that more Iraqis have died than U.S. admits.

curity forces, and thus the responsibility of the U.S. was only that they tolerated it. Actually the above case suggests a sort of "hard cop, soft cop" collaboration, rather than simply tolerance: "The six years of reports include references to the deaths of at least six prisoners in Iraqi custody, most of them in recent years. Beatings, burnings and lashings surfaced in hundreds of reports, giving the impression that such treatment was not an exception. In one case, Americans suspected Iraqi Army officers of cutting off a detainee's fingers and burning him with acid. Two other cases produced accounts of the executions of bound detainees.

"And while some abuse cases were investigated by the Americans, most noted in the archive seemed to have been ignored, with the equivalent of an institutional shrug: soldiers told their officers and asked the Iraqis to investigate."

Of course, the Iraqis were trained by the U.S. military. And the U.S. has a record of creating ruthless local forces to defend its interests, such as Somoza's National Guard in Nicaragua, or Trujillo's security forces in the Dominican Republic.

## Media plays up ties to Iran

Curiously enough, on *The New York Times* front page, top billing did not go to the atrocities that the U.S. was directly or indirectly responsible for but to revelations about support for Shiite insurgents from the Iranian Revolutionary Guard. But the incidents of Iranian aid to insurgents seemed generally pretty minor, except for helping them with shaped explosive charges that could penetrate U.S. armored vehicles.

Why this should be such a big story is hard to understand. What is surprising is that in general the Iranian government, which suffers U.S. support for insurgents on its territory and is threatened with a major military assault by the U.S., has been so tolerant of U.S. occupation of countries with which it shares long common borders. Iran has the capacity to give the U.S. really big problems in Iraq and Afghanistan, but it has not.

Moreover, since Iran is being threatened militarily by the U.S., it would hardly be surprising if it wanted to probe the possibilities for fighting the U.S. in a neighboring country where the majority shares its religion and culture. The Shiite organization closest to the Iranian leadership, the Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq has been one of the main allies of the United States.

The Shiite faction headed by Muqtada al-Sadr is hostile to the occupation and led a major insurrection against it. Al-Sadr has his friends in Iran, but his group has been quiet, and apparently fading since it opted for participation in the Iraqi government.

On the other hand, the former Iraqi premier, Maliki, is courting al-Sadr's support in order to form another government. He has just been on a political visit to Iran. That arouses U.S. nightmares of seeing Iraq fall into the arms of its Shiite neighbor. Such fears have been expressed for years. And there is a basis for them. At some point, some sort of rapprochement between Iran and Shiite-ruled Iraq seems inevitable,

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## The U.S. has nightmares of seeing Iraq fall into the arms of its Shiite neighbor, Iran.

mercenary military contractors associated with them. The evident fact is that it was the U.S. assault that created al-Qaeda in Iraq, where it had not existed before. And it was al-Qaeda that inflicted slaughter on Iraqi civilians in its attempt to provoke a civil war between Sunnis and Shiites, with the aim of mobilizing Muslim hatred of the "infidel" occupiers and the Shiites who welcomed the fall of Saddam Hussein.

The ruthless and provocative actions of al-Qaeda eventually aroused a backlash among local Sunni leaders that the U.S. forces were able to tap. They promoted the organization of local militias, the Awakening Groups, to fight al-Qaeda. It was these militias that largely marginalized the insurgency and allowed the U.S. to reduce its troop levels and claim victory.

Ironically, in the same week that a more complete picture has emerged about the carnage associated with the U.S. invasion and occupation, a report came out of a trend in the Awakening Groups to return to insurgency.

*The New York Times* reported Oct. 10: "Although there are no firm figures, security and political officials say hundreds of the well-disciplined fighters—many of whom have gained extensive knowledge about the American military—appear to have rejoined Al Qaeda in Mesopotamia. Beyond that, officials say that even many of the Awakening fighters still on the Iraqi government payroll, possibly thousands of them, covertly aid the insurgency."

The article continued: "Awakening leaders and security officials say that since the spring, as many as several thousand Awakening fighters have quit, been fired, stopped showing up

for duty, or ceased picking up paychecks.

"During the past four months, the atmosphere has become particularly charged as the Awakening members find themselves squeezed between Iraqi security forces, who have arrested hundreds of current and former members accused of acts of recent terrorism, and Al Qaeda's brutal recruitment techniques."

Even top U.S. military and civilian authorities acknowledged that the evidence of mistreatment of Iraqi prisoners at Abu Ghraib did immense political harm to the U.S. in the Muslim world. But the new Wikileaks archive demonstrates that such abuses were not an exception, as the U.S. authorities claimed, but a general pattern that continued at least until last year.

*The New York Times* reported Oct. 23: "The archive contains extensive, often rambling accounts of American abuse from Iraqi prisoners, but few were substantiated [how could they be?]. The most serious came during arrests, which were often violent when people resisted. In those cases, investigations were opened. In a case reminiscent of Abu Ghraib, in which guards photographed themselves with Iraqis whom they had posed in humiliating positions, a soldier was censured for writing a mocking slur with a marker on the forehead of a crying detainee.

"The United States took steps to improve its detention system after the scandal at the Abu Ghraib prison erupted in 2004, tightening rules governing the treatment of prisoners and separating the hardened radicals of Al Qaeda in Mesopotamia from other prisoners.

"But the documents show that Americans did sometimes use the threat of abuse by Iraqi authorities to get information out of prisoners. One report said an American threatened to send a detainee to the notorious Wolf Brigade, a particularly violent Iraqi police unit, if he did not supply information."

The U.S. press reports stress that most of the abuse was carried out by Iraqi se-





Canadian officials announce loss of Security Council seat, Oct. 12. (From left) Peter Kent, Sec. of State for the Americas; Foreign Minister Lawrence Cannon; UN Ambassador John McNee.

## Why Canada lost its bid for a UN Security Council seat

By YVES ENGLER

In a stunning international rebuke, Stephen Harper's Conservative minority federal government lost its bid for a UN Security Council seat on Oct. 12. The vote in New York was the world's response to a Canadian foreign policy designed to please the most reactionary, shortsighted sectors of the Conservative Party base, evangelical Christian Zionists, extreme right-wing Jews, Islamophobes, the military-industrial-academic-complex, mining and oil executives, and old cold-warriors.

Canada was among a small number of countries that refused to recognize the human right to water, or to sign the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. Close to the companies making huge profits on the Tar Sands, the Conservatives repeatedly sabotaged international climate negotiations. They angered many in the British Commonwealth by blocking a resolution calling for a "binding commitment" on rich countries to reduce emissions. At a UN climate conference in Bangkok last year, many delegates from poorer countries quit a session in protest after a Canadian suggestion to scrap the Kyoto Protocol as the basis of negotiations.

The Conservatives' extreme 'Israel no matter what' position definitely hurt any chance on Oct. 12. "It's hard to find a country friendlier to Israel than Canada these days," explained Israeli Foreign Minister Avigdor Lieberman, who emigrated from Moldova when he was 20 but still feels fit to call for the expulsion of Palestinian citizens of Israel.

The Conservatives publicly endorsed Israel's 2006 attack on Lebanon, voted against a host of UN resolutions supporting Palestinian rights, and in February Ottawa delighted Israeli hawks by canceling \$15 million in funding for the UN agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA). The money was transferred to Palestinian security reform.

For the past three years Ottawa has been heavily invested in training a Palestinian security force designed to oversee Israel's occupation of the West Bank and "to ensure that the PA [Palestinian Authority] maintains control of the West Bank against Hamas," as Canadian ambassador to Israel Jon Allen was quoted as saying by the *Canadian Jewish News*. According to deputy Foreign Affairs Minister Peter Kent, Operation PROTEUS, Canada's military training mission in the West Bank, is the country's "second largest deployment after Afghanistan", and it receives "most of the money" from a five-year \$300 million Canadian aid program to the Palestinians.

While Canadian 'aid' strengthens the most compliant Palestinian political factions, the Conservatives reject any criticism of Israel's onslaught against the 1.5 million people living in Gaza. Canada was the only country at the UN Human Rights Council to vote against a Janu-

ary 2008 resolution that called for "urgent international action to put an immediate end to Israel's siege of Gaza."

Later in 2008 Israel unleashed a 22-day military assault on Gaza that left 1,400 Palestinians dead. In response, many governments condemned the bombing. Venezuela broke off diplomatic relations. Israel didn't need to worry since Ottawa was prepared to help out. The Canadian embassy now represents Israel's diplomatic interests in Caracas.

While Brazil and Turkey tried to dissipate hostility towards Iran, Harper used his pulpit as host of the G8 to pave the way for a possible U.S.-Israeli attack. A Feb. 17 *Toronto Star* article was headlined: "Military action against Iran still on the table, Kent says." The junior foreign minister explained that "it's a matter of timing and it's a matter of how long we can wait without taking more serious preemptive action."

"Preemptive action" is a euphemism for a bombing campaign. Canadian naval vessels are already provocatively conducting maneuvers off Iran's coast. By stating that "an attack on Israel would be considered an attack on Canada," Kent is trying to create the impression that Iran is planning to attack Israel. But it is Israel that possesses nuclear weapons and threatens to bomb Iran, not the other way around.

Ottawa considers Israel's nuclear energy program a major threat, but Israel's atomic bombs have not earned similar condemnation. The Harper government abstained on a number of near unanimous votes asking Israel to place its nuclear weapons program under International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) controls. In September, the Bloomberg Business News cited Canada as one of three countries that opposed an IAEA probe of Israel's nuclear facilities as part of an Arab-led effort to create a nuclear-weapons-free Middle East.

Ottawa even prioritized the military over aid in the face of the incredible suffering caused by Haiti's earthquake. Two thousand Canadian troops were deployed. But several Heavy Urban Search and Rescue Teams were readied, though never sent. Foreign Affairs Minister Lawrence Cannon explained that the teams were not needed because "the government had opted to send Canadian Armed Forces instead."

Overthrown in February 2004 by a joint U.S./France/Canada destabilization campaign, Haiti's most popular political party, Fanmi Lavalas, has been barred from participating in elections. The Conservatives supported Fanmi Lavalas' exclusion, and congratulated Haiti's puppet government for inaugurating "a period of stabilization" good for "investment and trade." Ottawa backed up its words with deeds, adding tens of millions of dollars to a Haitian prison and police system that has been massively expanded and militarized since the 2004 coup.

Ottawa gave its tacit support to the Honduran mili-

tary's removal of elected president Manuel Zelaya in June 2009. Mexico's Notimex reported that Canada was the only country in the hemisphere that did not explicitly call for Zelaya's return to power. Canadian officials repeatedly criticized Zelaya at the Organization of American States (OAS). The ousted government complained that Ottawa failed to suspend aid to Honduras, which is the largest recipient of Canadian assistance in Central America.

Canada has actively supported the U.S.-led campaign against the government of Venezuela. In mid-2007 Harper toured South America "to show [the region] that Canada functions and that it can be a better model than Venezuela," in the words of one high-level foreign affairs official. During the trip, Harper and his entourage made a number of comments critical of the Venezuelan government.

After meeting only members of the opposition during a trip to Venezuela in January, Peter Kent told the media that "democratic space within Venezuela has been shrinking and in this election year, Canada is very concerned about the rights of all Venezuelans to participate in the democratic process."

One issue mentioned in a number of media reports about Canada's loss at the UN concerns the Congo. At the G8 Summit in June the Conservatives pushed for a major addendum to the final communique criticizing the Congo for attempting to gain a greater share of its vast mineral wealth. Months earlier Ottawa began to obstruct international efforts to reschedule the country's foreign debt, which was mostly accrued during more than three decades of Joseph Mobutu's dictatorship and the subsequent civil war.

Canadian officials "have a problem with what's happened with a Canadian company," Congolese Information Minister Lambert Mende said, referring to his government's move to revoke a mining concession that Vancouver-based First Quantum acquired under dubious circumstances during the 1998-2003 war. "The Canadian government wants to use the Paris Club [of debtor nations] in order to resolve a particular problem," explained Mende. "This is unacceptable."

The mining industry increasingly represents Canada abroad. Canadian miners operate more than 3000 projects outside Canada. Many of these mines have displaced communities, destroyed ecosystems, and resulted in violence. This doesn't seem to bother the Harper government, which is close to the most retrograde sectors of the mining industry. Last year they rejected a proposal "agreed to by the Mining Association of Canada under pressure from civil society groups" to make diplomatic and financial support for resource companies operating overseas contingent upon socially responsible conduct.

Despite countless horror stories suggesting the contrary, the Conservatives claim that voluntary standards are the best way to improve Canadian mining companies' social responsibility.

Finally, the federal Conservatives have knowingly supported torture in Afghanistan and embraced an increasingly violent counterinsurgency war. Apparently, Canadian Joint Task Force 2 commandos regularly take part in nighttime assassination raids, which are highly unpopular with the Afghan population.

Losing the Security Council seat will hopefully cost the Conservatives some votes and temper their more extreme international positions. But those working to radically transform Canadian foreign policy see the consequences of the loss as much greater. There has probably never been a bigger blow to the carefully crafted image of Canada as a popular international dogooder, a mythology that blinds so many Canadians to their state's real role in the world. ■

See [socialistaction-canada.blogspot.com](http://socialistaction-canada.blogspot.com) for a longer version of this article. Yves Engler is the author of "The Black Book of Canadian Foreign Policy" and "Canada and Israel: Building Apartheid". He'll be touring Canada in mid-November to speak on "Why Canada lost its bid for a Security Council seat", including at a Toronto Socialist Action public forum on Nov. 12. He can be contacted at: [yvesengler@hotmail.com](mailto:yvesengler@hotmail.com).

## ... French strikes

(continued from page 6)

tion in service provision showed the revolutionary potential of the Arab and African communities.

Such alliances against racism are even more needed given the attempt by Sarkozy in September to divert the labor movement with his racist propaganda against Roma residents—which the government followed by mass deportations. The spreading anti-immigrant sentiment in Europe, the growing Islamophobia, and the increase in vote totals of right-wing

parties in several European countries all show that the rulers of the continent will rely increasingly on racist and fascist policies and movements to split the working class.

As the French revolt was spreading in mid-October, the British government announced a package of cuts, including elimination of half a million public-sector jobs and raising the retirement age from 65 to 67.

Workers throughout Europe know, after months of business and government demands for austerity to reduce public debts and deficits, that the fight to save French pensions is only the precursor of fights to save health care, education, housing, and jobs through-

out the continent. They know too that the revolt in France followed on the heels of massive strikes and huge demonstrations in Spain, Greece, Belgium, and elsewhere—and that the French revolt could inspire a renewal of these actions, with coordination on a continent-wide basis.

Perhaps such a revolt across Europe could even break through the bipartisan deficit-reduction scaremongering of U.S. politicians, aided and abetted by the Tea Party-promoting media! All of this makes support for French workers and youth—and, most of all, learning from their example—an immediate and concrete necessity for workers worldwide. ■



By BARRY WEISLEDER

Two recent concessionary labour settlements—one in which the United Food and Commercial Workers bureaucracy agreed to let Loblaw Cos. Ltd. convert more of its outlets in Canada into superstores that will pay up to 30,000 grocery workers lower wages, and another deal in the U.S. where the United Auto Workers consented to General Motors cutting wages in half for about 40 per cent of its work force at a sub-compact car plant in Michigan—prompted a left-leaning *Toronto Star* columnist to write a piece, with a headline similar to the one above, that has activists talking.

The *Star's* Tom Walkom posits that the difference between the 1930s and the present recession is that unions were once “seen as the way forward” and represented the majority, whereas now unions are “viewed as bastions of privilege” and “exist only to protect the lucky few”.

Unfortunately, Walkom points only to a symptom of the problem—the complacency of unionized workers. He does not identify the deficiencies of union leadership that fostered this attitude, and the lack of an alternative that can come only from a class-struggle cross-union opposition to the existing pro-capitalist union leadership.

In both Canada and the USA, unions have never physically encompassed more than a minority of the working population. But under the pressure of an organized militant left wing, and the example of very powerful (though terminally bureaucratized) workers' states abroad, union leaders felt obliged to mobilize the ranks for gains (and to resist concessions). Consequently, bosses felt compelled to give workers some of what we demanded. That is what forced arch-Conservative Prime Minister R.B. Bennett “to belatedly embrace leftist ideas such as nationalization” and why PMs King/St-Laurent/Pearson legislated social welfare measures. They feared a radical socialist alternative.

Unfortunately, over the past 30 years most union leaders put their members to sleep with tales of class cooperation and reliance on ‘fair’ legislation. Unionized workers, for the most part, only followed the lead of their union officials. They focused on bread and butter issues (economism). Some rank-and-file workers who tried to fight for more than bread and butter (i.e.,

## Northern Lights

News and views from SA Canada

### Why have unions failed during the recession?

for international solidarity, union democracy, organizing the unorganized, improving the social wage, winning rights in the work place, and for quality services and justice for all) were red-baited, targeted, penalized, and bureaucratically excluded by union officials.

Now the rank and file, increasingly scrambling for basic bread and butter due to the subservience and shrinkage of the labour movement, which resulted from passivity and acquiescence to the disastrous practices of the labour bureaucracy, can begin to see the need for a change of direction.

Unfortunately, Walkom neglected to address this aspect. Certainly, the seismic shift in economic activity from commodity production to service providing is part of the picture of union weakening, but only part—unless you assume that the working class is merely malleable stuff, which would make its past gains inexplicable.

Without looking at the role of leadership, it's impossible to assess the larger political context, including the retreat of the labour-based New Democratic Party toward bourgeois coalitions (whether in the outgoing Toronto municipal government, or potentially, at the federal parliamentary level). The problem is one of working-class leadership, and the lack of a class-struggle fighting opposition, a left opposition that challenges the right wing in union elections.

Those who argue that the current struggles of working people should not just be about defending the gains of the unionized sector are correct. But if we are to advance respect for the value of public services to us all, along with a belief that a better world is possible, we will succeed only

if the past gains of the unionized sector are defended. Undertaking that simple but weighty task will require nothing less than a radical and sweeping change of the present union leadership at almost every level. ■

#### Toronto left-labour defeat

Many union and progressive folks in Canada's biggest city were stunned by the victory of right-wing populist councillor Rob Ford in the race for mayor. A increased number of labour-haters also captured City Council seats on Oct. 25, possibly enough for a voting majority to implement an agenda of severe social and culture cuts, privatization, and contracting-out measures.

A turnout of 52 per cent of the eligible voters, compared to 39 per cent in 2006, rewarded candidates who promised “change”. Ford received 47 per cent of the votes cast. The chief victim was the deputy mayor Joe Pantalone (backed by the labour brass), who came in third place with 12 per cent. Pantalone helped to steer an informal Liberal Party-New Democratic Party coalition that ran Toronto City Hall for seven years. That regime raised taxes and user fees, reduced services, and forced 30,000 municipal workers into a bitter 40-day strike over wages and pensions. It alienated workers and whetted the appetite of the corporate elite for more concessions.

A stormy period of clashes over the fate of city jobs and services is now in store. If there is effective mass resistance to the corporate agenda, it may hasten the realization that unions must break with the Liberals and fight for an up-front NDP-Labour slate of candidates committed to socialist policies prior to the next municipal vote in 2014. — B.W.

### Aboriginals oppose pipeline

Aboriginal leaders in Canada are lobbying Washington to deny approval to TransCanada Pipeline's application for Keystone XL, a new 2739-kilometre pipeline that would stretch from Alberta to Texas, with a capacity of as much as 900,000 barrels of bitumen a day, more than doubling current U.S. consumption.

“White House policy makers need to know that their appetite for this dirty oil is killing our river and destroying our way of life. The pollutants and heavy metals don't stop at the Alberta border—they run more than 1000 kilometres all the way to the Mackenzie River, deforming the fish along the way”, said Francois Pau-

lette of the Smith's Landing Treaty 8 First Nation in the Northwest Territories.

South of the border, opposition to the pipeline is almost unanimous among Native communities living close to its proposed U.S. route. Marty Cobenais, a Red Lake Band of Chippewa member, acting as the voice of American First Nations at the meetings in Washington, presented resolutions from 12 tribes in Montana, South Dakota, Nebraska, and Oklahoma urging the U.S. government to find alternatives. It's not only a matter of resisting the destruction of Native burial sites for the sake of a few long-term jobs in traffic control.

“The main message we want to get across is that this is the time to start weaning ourselves off oil. Most es-

timates suggest we have maybe seven more generations—about 150 years—before there is no oil left anywhere,” said Cobenais.

In related news, Syncrude Canada has been ordered to pay \$3 million in penalties for causing the deaths of 1600 ducks in a tailings pond at its northern Alberta oil-sands mine. It is “no more than a slap on the wrist,” said Greenpeace spokesperson Mike Hudema.

Syncrude was found guilty on June 25 of breaking provincial and federal wildlife laws when it failed to stop the birds from landing on its toxic waste pond in April 2008. The waste-water ponds contain a poisonous brew of water, clay, leftover bitumen, and heavy metals. — B.W.

### Chicago teachers win victory against firings

By DAVID BERNT

CHICAGO—The Chicago Teachers Union won an important legal victory Oct. 4 when a U.S. District judge ruled that the Board of Education's firing of 1300 teachers last summer was illegal and ordered the district to recall all fired teachers. The Board, under the direction of Chicago Public Schools (CPS) CEO Ron Huberman, had ordered the firings—claiming they were necessary to fill a \$370 billion deficit in the district's budget.

The firings were ordered without regard to teachers' seniority or tenure, in violation of the union contract. Instead, the firings were made at the discretion of principals, who in many cases fired teachers with exemplary ratings and the prestigious national board certification. Teachers have charged that principals, told by Huberman to ignore seniority tenure, selectively fired teachers deemed trouble makers, avoided firing favored teachers, and targeted higher paid teachers to improve their schools financial books.

In one case, documented in an investigative report by the *Chicago Reader*, a tenured, high seniority teacher with national board certification was told that the reason for her firing was the elimination of her art teaching position, only

to find out weeks later that her former school was listing her old position. Other highly rated teachers reported they were unable to find positions in CPS, despite their experience and high marks in their teaching evaluations, fueling speculation that the district has compiled a Do Not Hire register in order to blacklist certain teachers from employment in CPS.

This attack on Chicago teachers is part of a larger offensive against the union from Huberman, Mayor Daley, and the political ruling class of Chicago to bust the Chicago Teachers Union and clear the path for the privatization of public education in the third largest school district in the country. Huberman and his predecessor, current U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan, have pushed through a vast expansion of non-union charter schools and closed down hundreds of traditional neighborhood schools, both aimed at undermining the strength of the Teachers Union.

Obama and Duncan have pushed this anti-union model on a national level, offering school districts that adopt these anti-union policies federal grants.

Huberman announced the firings earlier this year, using the economic crisis as an excuse, and also demanded the union agree to mid-contract concessions, including giving up their annual 4% salary

increase. The Teachers Union, under the leadership of a recently elected reform leadership, refused.

The union noted that Huberman and his bureaucratic cronies in the district's headquarters had taken significant raises themselves. The union also pointed out that at least \$250 million annually in property taxes is diverted into TIF funds controlled by the mayor and could be transferred back to the schools to plug most of the deficit. Huberman later backed off the salary freeze, but the board let stand most of the firings.

The firings are not about CPS saving money; instead they are an attack on teachers' right to due process, an attack that goes to the very heart of what it means to be a union member.

So-called education reformers have raised the volume on their efforts to eliminate teachers' tenure and due process. Backed by billionaires like Bill Gates and emboldened by the White House's embracing of their agenda, education “reformers” have pushed the lie that the problem with public education is bad teachers and the union protections that supposedly tie the hands of principals and administrators. If only principals could fire their bad teachers, they say, the public schools could be reformed.

The truth is that teachers deserve and

need union protection just like any workers. The idea that principals and administrators, if given free rein to fire their teachers at will, would make their decisions based only performance without consideration to personal and political relationships and salaries is laughable in a city infamous for patronage, graft, and corruption.

With last summer's firings, parents, students, and teachers got a taste of what life would be like for teachers in CPS if seniority and tenure rights were eliminated. CTU President Karen Lewis issued the following statement after the court's ruling, “Teachers unions were formed in the first place to protect mainly female teachers from retaliatory actions, political firings, and crony hirings. Nothing's changed.

“The need for strong unions to protect teachers, students and academic freedom, especially in Chicago, is upheld today. Through these illegal firings, the Chicago Board of Education tried to silence our tenured teachers who are the strongest advocates for students' educational rights and the real fighters for better learning environments.

“Chicago Public Schools should stop slurring our teachers, suggesting that those fired somehow were less than exemplary teachers. The court appears to agree—tenure is necessary to academic freedom.” ■





(Left) New death chamber at San Quentin prison.

## END THE DEATH PENALTY!

By REBECCA DORAN

SAN FRANCISCO—The insanity of the death penalty was exposed in September when the state of California maneuvered to lift a nearly five-year ban on executions and delivered a death warrant to inmate Albert Greenwood Brown. The legal wrangling led death-house officials at San Quentin State Prison, which holds California's only execution chamber, to jump into action with a flurry of media interviews and a PR campaign seeking to promote their newly updated death chamber, which they hope will meet new state regulations.

Prison reps pointed out during a media open house that the new death chamber is roomier and brighter than the old chamber, which had been used for two executions by lethal gas and 11 by lethal injection since capital punishment was restored in 1977. Prison officials showed off the modernized witness section and explained that it now allows for segregated seating between the victim's families and the loved ones of the condemned. The new execution chamber cost the state over \$800,000 and was built by inmate labor.

The temporary ban on California executions, which are carried out by a three-drug lethal injection, was the result of the botched execution of Stanley Tookie Williams in December of 2005. Williams, a co-founder of the Crips street gang, became the subject of a worldwide

campaign to stop executions after his personal redemption inspired countless articles, as well as a Hollywood movie.

"Big Tookie" authored a series of powerful children's books that empowered young people to struggle against the violence of poverty and embrace a movement towards peace on the streets. Williams penned the Protocol for Peace, which was used in the early 1990s by Los Angeles gang members to negotiate a peace treaty, and he was a Nobel Prize nominee for peace and literature nine times over.

Supporters of Williams filled the streets around the world to protest the 2005 execution and gasped in horror upon learning that executioners fumbled over a fully conscious Williams for nearly 15 minutes to find a vein to inject the lethal cocktail. Death came for Williams approximately 35 excruciating minutes after he was strapped to the gurney.

One month after the execution of Stanley Tookie Williams, California botched another execution. On Jan. 16, 2006, the state executed Clarence Ray Allen, an elderly deaf and blind Native American who was crippled from diabetes and had recently suffered a heart attack. Executioners failed to inject a sufficient amount of the lethal cocktail into Allen's veins and struggled with a second injection, which eventually stopped his heart. Allen's execution fell on his 77<sup>th</sup> birthday and the national Martin

Luther King Jr. holiday.

In February 2006, a federal judge ordered a halt on executions after defense attorneys for death-row inmate Michael Morales, pointing to the Williams and Allen executions, argued that the current lethal injection protocol is cruel and inhumane.

Since the 2006 ban was ordered, a state-appointed task force has been busy rewriting the lethal injection protocol, responding to legal arguments that the three-drug sequence used in executions may have exposed inmates to unconstitutional cruel and unusual punishment while masking the pain by paralyzing the inmate. The three drugs used in lethal injection executions in California are sodium thiopental, which is intended to make the inmate unconscious; pancuronium bromide, a paralyzing agent; and potassium chloride, which stops the heart.

A Superior Court judge blocked the state's first attempt at restarting the death penalty on the grounds that the new protocol was written without public participation. After that ruling, the California Department of Rehabilitation and Corrections redrafted the protocol and submitted it for public examination. A state office approved the new protocol in July of this year.

With that obstacle out of the way, California attempted to move forward with its first execution by petitioning the state Supreme Court to accelerate an appeal deadline in a state lawsuit filed by Michael Morales and one other inmate. However, the court's seven justices unanimously agreed, "No compelling reason appears why this court should, by extraordinary means, remove an obstacle to Brown's execution by denying" the normal appeal time in a case filed by two other inmates.

While the state was attempting to overcome the final obstacles to restart executions, it faced another major issue. San Quentin's only supply of one of the drugs used in executions, the sedative sodium thiopental, had expired. Because of a national shortage, executioners do not expect to obtain more until early 2011.

Soon after the ruling, state lawyers officially dropped their appeal and cancelled the execution. The cancellation, however, should not give anti-death-penalty activists a reason to breathe easy. Since executions have been on hold, the population of California's death row has swelled to over 700. As a sign that the state intends to increase the use of capital punishment, Governor Schwarzenegger has approved \$356 million to build a new death-row facility at San Quentin.

If the state is not challenged, at least five men, including innocent death-row inmate and anti-death penalty activist Kevin Cooper, could face the execution chamber as soon as the state's legal obstacles are removed.

The time to organize against the death penalty is now! Contact [rebecca\\_doran@yahoo.com](mailto:rebecca_doran@yahoo.com) for information on how to get involved. ■

## Antiwar activists build movement to fight FBI repression

By DAVID JONES

MINNEAPOLIS—"In an action registering a significant response to the widespread and growing opposition to the Obama administration's latest assault on rights of free speech and political expression, grand jury subpoenas issued to 14 antiwar activists whose homes were raided by the FBI on Sept. 24 have been withdrawn.

Picket lines at a score of FBI offices across the country were organized almost immediately after the raids, including a protest of 500 in Minneapolis. Especially significant in light of the fact that many of the raid victims were union activists, resolutions condemning the FBI and Department of Justice harassment have been adopted by a growing number of labor organizations. On Oct. 14 the Duluth AFL-CIO Central Labor Body unanimously adopted a resolution of support for the Midwest antiwar activists, characterizing the raids and subpoenas as "a dangerous assault on free speech and association."

Earlier, on Oct. 1, the state convention of AFSCME Council 5, representing 46,000 Minnesota state employees, unanimously passed a resolution noting that four of the raid victims were associated with AFSCME Local 3800 at the University of Minnesota and expressing "our grave concern that these raids may be the beginning of a new and dangerous assault on the First Amendment rights of every union fighter, international solidarity activist or anti-war campaigner."



Paul Beatty / AP

(Left) Sept. 27 protest at Chicago FBI offices, sponsored by Committee Against Political Repression.

Chicago Teamster Local 705 passed a resolution on Oct. 17 condemning the raids and noted that among those subpoenaed were "Teamster Brother Mick Kelly from Minneapolis, as well as our Brother Joe Iosbaker, Chief Steward of SEIU Local 73, who has walked our ambulatory picket lines for the 'Pain Ice Strike' at University of Illinois-Chicago."

Other labor federations, including the San Francisco Labor Council and the Troy Area Labor Council in upstate New York, have also passed resolutions supporting the targeted antiwar activists.

Most recently, 62 members of the Minnesota state legislature signed a "Dear Colleague" letter addressed to President Barack Obama, U.S. Senators Amy Klobuchar and Al Franken, and the Min-

nesota congressional delegation. The letter states, "Minnesota's elected officials have frequently gone on record in defense of trade unionists and others to educate, mobilize, and organize for the legitimate goals of peace, justice, and solidarity with all working people..."

Jess Sundin, one of the targets of the FBI raids, stated, "Minnesota legislators recognize us as leaders of this state's peace movement and they know we have the support of the labor movement and their other constituents. Today many of them went on the record to stand up in defense of our rights to dissent and expressed their concern about FBI harassment of well-known community leaders. We will carry their support with us as we call for action at

the federal level to stop this attack on our rights."

On Oct. 23, President Obama's campaign stop in Minneapolis was met by picketers who protested his administration's attempt at repression of antiwar activity. On Oct. 30, Obama was faced with more pickets at a campaign appearance in Chicago.

Activists are planning fundraising events across the country to help those targeted by the FBI raids pay what will surely be enormous legal bills. In Chicago activists are preparing for a hip-hop concert fundraiser in late November headlined by local artist Rebel Diaz.

It is obvious that in the face of this impressive and growing solidarity the withdrawal of the subpoenas represents at least a temporary retreat by the government as they review their options.

There is, of course, no guarantee that subpoenas will not be re-issued or that indictments of the raid victims and others could be forthcoming from the grand jury. But the government has already failed in what was certainly one of its primary objects—to divide the antiwar movement and intimidate activists.

And the response, both by the victimized activists and supporters, has set an invaluable precedent for future attempts by the capitalist government to silence opponents of its reactionary and criminal wars. ■



By GAETANA CALDWELL-SMITH

*"Inside Job," a documentary film directed by Charles Ferguson, narrated by Matt Damon.*

Charles Ferguson made one of the best antiwar documentary films, "No End in Sight," a couple of years back, which I reviewed here. Now he has come up with another winner.

"Inside Job" tells chronologically how the biggest banks, mortgage companies, insurance companies and other behemoth financial institutions like Lehman Bros and Goldman Sachs screwed everyday, ordinary working people like you and me—taxpayers—in a Ponzi scheme that makes Bernie Madoff's rip-off look like kindergarten. It took white-collar crooks, with the backing of the U.S. government, 30 years to pull it off, starting when Reagan deregulated financial institutions. The head honchos raked in billions, leading, on Sept. 18, 2008, to the biggest financial collapse since 1929.

Many books have been written on the subject, such as interviewee Charles Morris's "The Trillion Dollar Meltdown," yet few are willing to pour through these seemingly dry tomes about finances and economics. So, here's this movie where you can sit down in front of a giant screen with a bucket of popcorn and a mega cup of fizzy, to watch and listen as the story unfolds in a straightforward, lucid but scary manner, narrated by the measured tones of Matt Damon.

Ferguson utilizes easy to grasp graphics not only to explain terms such as profit-making CDOs (collateralized debt obligations) and CDSs (credit-default swaps) but also to show how "money" moves around, enabling these company heads to walk away with millions of their investors' cash.

For interviews, director Ferguson was well armed. He did his homework. He studied, read documents and the books we didn't want to. Watching interviewees sweat, squirm, tap dance, and backpedal is satisfying—though not as satisfying as seeing them in orange jumpsuits and handcuffs.

He interviewed Lehman Brothers' head, Dick Fuld, and others who did lose their jobs and/or companies, yet still made millions. Refusing his requests for interviews were former Treasury Secretary Hank Paulson and head of Goldman-Sachs; Alan Greenspan, and Ben Bernanke, as well as some of the investment-bank executives who made millions from CDOs.

Ferguson tracked the careers of Larry Summers, Ben Bernanke, Timothy Geithner, Hank Paulson, and Alan Greenspan; he included clips showing them working in or with the U.S. government and/or presidents in some capacity or other since Ronald Reagan.

Ferguson also interviewed economics professors from noted universities, some who warned early on of the imminent collapse. As early as 2005, Raghuram Rajan, the chief economist of the IMF, spoke of the danger to an audience that included honoree Alan Greenspan, retiring as chairman of the U.S. Federal Reserve, and Larry Summers. Of course, he was ignored and criticized. Some academic economists were paid hundreds of thousands of dollars to write articles in financial rags declaring that shaky companies were actually solvent, while teaching students economic models that showed otherwise. Ferguson asked if they

# Crime Pays — Big Time



(Left) Former construction worker Steven A. Stephen in "Inside Job."

didn't see a conflict of interest.

The collapse went global. Ten million Chinese workers lost their jobs, exports collapsed. "They fell off a cliff." Ferguson includes film clips of shuttered factories and the desperation of the thousands of unemployed in many countries who now have no means with which to feed, clothe, and house their families.

Remember those real estate company TV ads showing happy couples—usually Black and Latino—expressing joy when signing papers that would make their American Dream of owning a home come true? Now, all those thousands of homes have been foreclosed, and for tens of thousands of men, women, and children that dream has become a nightmare. When the bubble, which grew from \$30 billion to \$600 billion in just 10 years, burst in 2008, Alan Greenspan and good ol' "W" told the world it was because too many unqualified people had signed mortgages for homes they couldn't afford. They couldn't pay their loans, and mortgage companies couldn't lend any more money (Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac ran out), so those first-time homebuyers were "responsible."

Ferguson shows a clip of a tent city in Florida for affluent-looking white people who lost their homes and their jobs, yet the head of bailed-out insurance giant AIG receives one million a month in retirement pay. We taxpayers had to fork over \$700 billion so Bush

costs in "phony expense chits."

Spitzer feels these underlings could possibly testify against their bosses—one way to get them to "pay." However, he demurred, he might not be the most appropriate person to suggest such a course.

Today, as the wars grind on, some predict they will end up costing some trillions of dollars. Unemployment numbers continue to rise; state and federal government cuts funding for public housing, services and education; businesses and factories close; more people are now or soon will be poor—and homeless.

Even when there are no jobs, the rich still get rich, and the poor get even poorer. It's prison or the military—or the streets. So far, no one has been prosecuted or arrested for the Wall Street crimes; the wrong people are in prison.

Though Obama promised in his inauguration speech to clean house, he retained all the criminals left over from the Bush administration and replaced Greenspan with Bernanke. As Matt Damon narrates: "The men who caused the crises are still in power."

Ferguson ends his film with a shot of the Statue of Liberty and Matt Damon's voiceover assuring us that Americans are strong and full of hope; these crimes will not go unpunished—or some such drivel. I felt like throwing my empty bucket at the screen. ■

## ... Mumia Abu-Jamal

(continued from page 12)

the iceberg in regard to the legal atrocities that have been committed to keep this innocent man on death row. His is a case study in the use of lying witnesses, falsification of evidence, manipulation of the crime scene, witness intimidation, police lying, exclusion of evidence proving innocence, and a myriad of constitutional violations including rejection of the right to act as one's own counsel, Mumia's physical exclu-

sion from a majority of the trial proceedings against him, the racist exclusion of Black jurors, a racist judge who ruled against more than 100 motions presented by Mumia's defense team, and more.

Mumia's freedom would represent a victory for all people struggling for freedom and equality. All out to Philadelphia, Nov. 9! Stop the execution! Free Mumia now! ■

For further information contact: International Concerned Family and Friends of Mumia Abu-Jamal, (215) 476-8812 or The Mobilization to Free Mumia Abu-Jamal, (510) 268-9429, freemumia.org.

## ... Iraqi deaths

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and it is the supreme irony that the biggest military adventure of the United States since the Vietnam war threatens in the end to strengthen its major enemy in the Middle East.

Fear of the reaction of the Shiites in Iraq is probably already a major factor discouraging the U.S. from an assault on Iran. But the play the big press has given to the reports of Iranian support for Shiite insurgents in Iraq threatens to be an encouragement for U.S. leaders edging toward a military confrontation with Iran.

The British *Guardian* published an analysis of the U.S.-Iranian hostility Oct. 21 under headline: "Dread juggernaut of conflict with Iran is drawing closer." This comes at roughly the same time as increasing hostility to the U.S. in Kyrgyzstan and Pakistan is beginning to threaten the U.S. supply lines for its war in Afghanistan.

A more reasonable conclusion from the reports of Iranian activity in Iraq in the Wikileaks archive is that the U.S.

was threaten to expand and that if they do, it would be beyond the capacity of the U.S. to control the entire region.

At the same time as exposing the human cost of the U.S. war in Iraq, the Wikileaks exposures revealed the basic ineffectiveness of the new privatized U.S. forces (including private security forces built up by huge corporations, which have now reached numbers comparable with the regular U.S. military.) The growth of these "murder for hire" outfits is an important factor in allowing the U.S. to make war without resorting to a re-imposition of the draft.

An article in the Oct. 23 *New York Times* analyzed the information in the Wikileaks archive relating to the performance of the mercenary outfits: "The documents sketch, in vivid detail, a critical change in the way America wages war: the early days of the Iraq war, with all its Wild West chaos, ushered in the era of the private contractor, wearing no uniform but fighting and dying in battle, gathering and disseminating intelligence and killing presumed insurgents."

The article continued: "The archive, which describes many episodes never made public in such detail, shows the multitude of shortcomings with this

new system: how a failure to coordinate among contractors, coalition forces and Iraqi troops, as well as a failure to enforce rules of engagement that bind the military, endangered civilians as well as the contractors themselves. The military was often outright hostile to contractors, for being amateurish, overpaid and, often, trigger-happy.

"Contractors often shot with little discrimination—and few if any consequences—at unarmed Iraqi civilians, Iraqi security forces, American troops and even other contractors, stirring public outrage and undermining much of what the coalition forces were sent to accomplish

"But despite this evidence, the authors of the article, James Glanz and Andrew W. Lehren, conclude: "Even now—with many contractors discredited for unjustified shootings and a lack of accountability amply described in the documents—the military cannot do without them. There are more contractors over all than actual members of the military serving in the worsening war in Afghanistan." Moreover, the effective legal impunity of these hired killers has just been reconfirmed by the dropping of cases against operatives of the now

renamed mercenary outfit, Blackwater. U.S. attorneys found that they could not effectively prosecute them because of immunity deals made in the field.

Thus, the Wikileaks disclosures not only discredit the leadership and policy of the U.S. war but also the structure of its military machine. So, it is not surprising that the presiding genius of Wikileaks, Julian Assange, has become the object of one of the most massive international persecutions since the Stalinist regime's persecution of Trotsky.

The U.S. government is pressuring all countries where he might find refuge to deny him a safe harbor. He is being subjected to a campaign of personal vilification with the connivance of the Swedish police. The big press is playing up examples of Wikileaks employees that have turned against him. They may be sincere, but under such pressures, renegades are to be expected.

Whatever weaknesses Assange may have or whatever mistakes he may have committed, he has made an immense, inestimable contribution by exposing a massive machine of murder, corruption, and demoralization. All those who defend the values of civilization must come to his defense. ■



By **JEFF MACKLER**

Supporters of death-row inmate and innocent political prisoner Mumia Abu-Jamal will mobilize outside the courthouse in Philadelphia on Nov. 9 at 12 p.m., as the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Third Circuit meets, for a second time, to decide whether Mumia is to be executed post haste or granted a new trial.

The Third Circuit announced its decision to hear the case almost immediately following the circus-like spectacle orchestrated by Philadelphia's Fraternal Order of Police, its district attorney and mayor, and a host of other blood-thirsty would-be Mumia executioners. They and their associates rallied last month to the premier showing of Tigre Hill's twisted new film, "The Barrel of a Gun," which promised to reveal critical evidence proving that Mumia was the killer of Police Officer Daniel Faulkner on Dec. 9, 1981.

While Hill's film showing made the front page of the *Philadelphia Inquirer*, neither that paper nor any other in the country could bring itself to affirm Hill's unsubstantiated conclusions. Indeed, Hill's thesis that Mumia had participated in an ambush of Faulkner was never offered by the prosecution itself during Mumia's trial.

This did not deter Philadelphia's current DA, Seth Williams, from declaring to the media that he would seek the death penalty. Nor was it a coincidence, in this writer's view, that the Third Circuit followed Hill's film premier with an announcement that it would hear the case on Nov. 9.

The last time that the Third Circuit heard Mumia's appeal, in 2008, it affirmed the decision of Federal District Court Judge William H. Yohn that the instructions given to the jury by "hanging judge" Albert Sabo in Mumia's discredited 1982 trial were fundamentally flawed and in violation of the famous 1988 U.S. Supreme Court decision in the case of *Mills v. Maryland*.

The *Mills* decision made it more difficult for juries to execute people found guilty of murder by making it clear that a majority, as opposed to unanimity, was sufficient to consider the weight of each and every mitigating circumstance necessary to negate a death sentence. Citing *Mills*, both District Court Judge Yohn and the Third Circuit voided Mumia's death sentence and ordered a new sentencing trial.

But last year's decision of the U.S. Supreme Court vacated the Third Circuit's *Mills* ruling and instructed it to reconsider in light of its January 2010 new interpretation of *Mills* rendered by the Ohio case of *Smith v. Spisak*. Frank Spisak was a member of a neo-Nazi group who confessed to the killing of three people. Spisak's death sentence, like Mumia's, had been voided due to a *Mills* violation.

Pennsylvania officials filed a friend-of-the-court brief in support of the Ohio prosecutors' appeal, realizing that a Supreme Court reversal or new interpretation of *Mills* could be used to reinstate Mumia's death sentence. That is precisely what happened, and that is what they are now seeking on Nov. 9.

Rather than being compelled to organize a new sentencing trial in which new and old evidence demonstrating the racist frame-up of Mumia during his 1982 trial could be presented, they would much prefer an immediate order by the Third Circuit to reverse its previous decision and replace it with a new sentence of execution. If this turns out to be the case, Pennsylvania Governor Edward Rendell has pledged to sign yet a third warrant for Mumia's execution.

Should the Third Circuit order a new sentencing trial, however, the jury is *not* permitted to find Mumia "not guilty!" While the proceeding itself must include Mumia's right to introduce evidence of innocence, the jury will nevertheless be limited to determining Mumia's sentence—that is, life in prison or execution.

Even if the jury should believe that Mumia is indeed innocent and that he has proven his innocence "beyond a reasonable doubt," the peculiarities of the "law" in capitalist America preclude a reversal of the guilty verdict of the previous jury. In this instance as well as others decreed by the Supreme Court in recent decades, "innocence is no defense." In its "wisdom," and to limit endless appeals by the innocent, the courts today operate on the thesis that "innocence is trumped by timeliness." If an innocent person does not submit evidence of innocence within whatever statutory guidelines are set by each state, the evidence is worthless!

Further, the Anti-terrorism and Effective Death Penalty Act (AEDPA), signed by President Clinton, also designed to hasten the murder of the innocent, declares that federal courts today must grant a "presumption of correctness" to the findings of fact of state courts.



**The jury is *not* permitted to find Mumia 'not guilty.' ... The Supreme Court has decreed that 'innocence is no defense.'**

Previously, the criteria employed in federal court appeals, habeas corpus, was based on the presumption of innocence. That is, defendants had the right to challenge the "findings of fact" of state courts.

The AEDPA was passed by Congress and signed by Clinton because a full 40 percent of all state court convictions in murder cases were reversed on appeal to the federal judiciary. Why? Authoritative studies demonstrated that the state court convictions were often based on ineffective assistance of counsel, police falsification and planting of evidence, intimidation of witnesses, withholding of evidence of innocence, etc. AEDPA was designed to affirm racist state court decisions and to make them "effective," that is, carried out swiftly without serious recourse to federal courts. Scapegoated Blacks and Latinos were the major victims.

Mumia's case was riddled with all of the above inherent racist and classist practices, yet the vast majority of the points raised in his federal appeals were rejected, with Judge Yohn citing the AEDPA. The findings of fact of the racist Judge Albert Sabo, the same Sabo who stated in his antechambers before entering the courtroom to judge Mumia's case, "Yeah, and I'm going to help 'em fry the nigger," had to be presumed correct.

To expect that the Third Circuit will on Nov. 9 uphold its previous ruling that voided Mumia's death sentence is to be naïve at best. This is the same Third Circuit that in 2008 violated its own precedents and the U.S. Supreme Court decision in the famous case of *Batson v. Kentucky*. The *Batson* decision voided murder convictions in which Blacks had been excluded from juries. In Mumia's case, 11 of 14 Black jurors were excluded by racist preemptory challenges of the prosecution.

Mumia asked for a re-hearing on his *Batson* claim, this time before the whole panel, or nine judges of the Third Circuit, as opposed to the original three-judge panel. Maybe, some thought, the whole court would remember that one of their own, Justice Alito, now sitting on the U.S. Supreme Court, had written the decision and had sharply noted that the exclusion of even one juror on account of race, voided the trial result. But the Third Circuit, with nine judges participating, rejected Mumia's request for a re-hearing, without comment.

To be fair, one judge, Donetta Ambrose, did dissent, stating that the "core guarantee of equal protection,

ensuring citizens that their State will not discriminate on account of race, would be meaningless were we to approve the exclusion of jurors on the basis of ... race. ... I respectfully dissent."

With the Supreme Court's *Spisak* decision in hand and with the same court's having vacated the Third Circuit's ruling that had previously voided Mumia's death sentence, it's not unreasonable to expect these "prestigious" jurists to bend once again to carry out the decisions of those in power who seek to justify their corrupt criminal "justice" system and silence one of its most prominent critics.

But this may not be the end of the "legal" struggle. There may be still be some extra innings left in this 30-year game, innings that allow Mumia's supporters to strengthen a movement that is working to make the political price of the execution and incarceration of the innocent Mumia Abu-Jamal too high to pay and to win Mumia's freedom.

A recent *CounterPunch* article by David Lindorff, author of the book, "Killing Time: An Investigation into the Death Row Case of Mumia Abu-Jamal," points to the fact that when in 2001 Judge Yohn, citing the AEDPA, ruled against Mumia on most of the 29 points in Mumia's federal appeal, he did rule in favor of Mumia on one point, citing *Mills*, and voided the death penalty. In so doing, Yohn declined to rule on four other points in Mumia's brief, declaring them essentially moot because they dealt with the sentencing aspect of Mumia's trial and he had already voided Mumia's death sentence.

Should the Third Circuit now reverse itself and Yohn, these previously mooted (set aside as no longer relevant) points could be expected to once again come into play. Mumia's attorneys would, of course, appeal any negative Third Circuit decision back to the Supreme Court for yet another ruling. If Mumia lost there once again, Yohn's mooted points might still see the light of day.

Here's a summary of Lindorff's account of the four points that might allow further litigation and therefore delay any effort to execute Mumia: "The first unresolved appeal claim goes to the heart of a defendant's right to representation and a fair trial. Abu-Jamal's attorney, Anthony Jackson, testified under oath at a Post-Conviction Relief Act hearing in 1995 to the obvious truth that he did absolutely nothing to prepare for the sentencing portion of the trial. He called no witnesses to testify to Abu-Jamal's character, an astonishing lapse which left the prosecutor free and unchallenged in portraying Abu-Jamal as a cop-hating terrorist.

"A second line of appeal, also mooted, was a claim that Abu-Jamal's first, fourth, fifth and fourteenth amendment rights were violated when Prosecutor Joseph McGill improperly used Abu-Jamal's membership, as a 15-year-old boy, in the Black Panther organization, in trying to portray him as a vicious cop-hater.

"Third, McGill told the jury: 'Ladies and gentlemen, you are not asked to kill anybody. You are asked to follow the law. The same law that I keep on throwing at you, saying those words, law and order. I should point out to you it's the same law that has for six months provided safeguards for this defendant. The same law, ladies and gentlemen, the same law that will provide him appeal after appeal after appeal. ... The same law, ladies and gentlemen, that has made it so because of the constant appeals ... nobody at all has died in Pennsylvania since 1962 for an incident that occurred in 1959.'

"Again, the courts at all levels—in Pennsylvania, in the Third Circuit, and the U.S. Supreme Court itself—have all overturned death penalty sentences based upon just such statements having been made to juries at trials.

"Finally, there is a fourth avenue of appeal ... the claim that the prosecutor knowingly withheld evidence in police files which showed that Abu-Jamal had no criminal record and no propensity for violence."

The "appearance" of justice is important in "democratic" America but the state power is finding it increasingly difficult to maintain this illusion or appearance, hence the passage in 1996 of the AEDPA, the Patriot Act of 2001, the frame-up, absurd and abhorrent 10-year re-sentencing of Lynne Stewart, the massive persecution of Arabs and people of Islamic faith, the recent FBI raids and Grand Jury subpoenas and the associated and daily infringements of civil and democratic rights that are justified in the name of pursuing the government's "war on terrorism."

Mumia's ongoing persecution represents the tip of

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