



MAGAZINE

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International resistance



“Unlike most candidates who talk in platitudes about values, integrity, and what they are against, Mamdani has put forward very specific policy goals: Increase the Minimum Wage to \$30 by 2030; Freeze the Rents; No Cost Childcare; Free Buses; City Owned Grocery Stores.”

- Peter Olney, Rand Wilson



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Trump's Military Escalation Against Venezuela Repeats The Iraq War Blueprint

Manolo De Los Santos

The mood in the Caribbean grows increasingly tense, as the United States intensifies its military threats. Beneath the deceptive shroud of the “war on drugs,” the United States is actively executing a blueprint for military intervention in Venezuela, employing lethal force and projecting power in a manner that legal institutions and regional leaders have condemned as a profound threat to international order. This aggression is not a law enforcement operation; it is the negation of law, a neo-colonial revival of the Monroe Doctrine, designed to shatter the sovereignty of Venezuela, seize control of the world’s largest oil reserves, and install a compliant regime.

A license to kill: the precedent of state murder

A chilling adoption of extrajudicial violence has marked the current escalation. The Trump administration has ordered unilateral military strikes against private vessels near the Venezuelan coast, allegedly to stop drug trafficking. To launch these alarming attacks, the US military has deployed a massive naval force of warships, drones, and special operations forces.

These strikes have resulted in the summary execution of at least 27 people as of recent reports. The most recent lethal strike in the Caribbean resulted in the “elimination” of 6 more people. This is not law enforcement; it is extrajudicial murder and a campaign that now stands as part of a war plan against Venezuela. The administration has characterized the victims, without credible proof, as drug traffickers and “terrorists,” a claim that, even if true, provides no legal authority for the US president to execute whomever it decides.

Legal and human rights organizations have been unequivocal in their condemnation of this pro-

found and dangerous policy, which replaces established law enforcement procedures with pre-meditated lethal force. The New York City Bar Association (NYCBA), a key voice on international legal ethics, has strongly denounced these actions. The NYCBA stated explicitly that “Because the recent attacks on Venezuelan vessels and their crews were unauthorized by US law and in violation of binding international law, they were illegal summary executions – murders.” They further argued that these actions violate the fundamental international principle that “No one shall be arbitrarily deprived of his life” under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

The US government possesses ample legal authority for the Coast Guard to interdict and search vessels suspected of carrying narcotics, followed by prosecution in US courts according to due process requirements. However, in the case of the Venezuelan vessels, the Coast Guard’s Congressionally authorized police function was bypassed; instead, the crews were simply targeted and executed by overwhelming military force. Regional leaders, including Colombian President Gustavo Petro, have condemned the extrajudicial killings, highlighting the profound anxiety across Latin America over a return to unilateral US military action under the cover of anti-narcotics policy.

Escalation: B-52s and the threat of war

Beyond the lethal strikes, the US government has engaged in significant military posturing that amounts to a direct challenge to Venezuelan sovereignty. The sighting of US B-52 bombers in Venezuelan airspace, flying in close range, is a significant escalation. This warmongering has nothing to do with the “war on drugs” and everything to do with regime change to plunder Venezuela’s oil. This reck-

less push for war is a criminal act of international aggression.

The Trump Administration's unilateral drone strikes in the Caribbean, combined with the White House's termination of all negotiations with Venezuela, appear as a precursor for a full-scale regime change operation. This is a critical moment. We must sound the alarm: there is a risk of a new, catastrophic conflict in the region.

The US government's own officials continue to escalate the crisis with bellicose rhetoric and actions. Secretary of State Marco Rubio, a key architect of the regime-change policy, has consistently refused to rule out a military option, asserting that the Maduro regime has become a "threat to the region and even to the United States."

Venezuela's response has been one of principled defense of its sovereignty. Ambassador to the UN, Samuel Moncada has repeatedly sounded the alarm on the global stage, arguing that the US military deployment in the Caribbean is a massive propaganda operation that seeks "excuses to fabricate a conflict" to seize the country's oil wealth. Moncada affirmed that, "The United States believes that the Caribbean belongs to it because it has been using the expansionist Monroe Doctrine for over 100 years, which is nothing more than a remnant of colonialism."

President Nicolás Maduro has called on Washington to resume dialogue, stating, "Our diplomacy isn't the diplomacy of cannons, of threats, because the world cannot be the world of 100 years ago," while simultaneously mobilizing national defense exercises to ensure the country is prepared for any direct assault. The NYCBA warned that attacks against Venezuelan vessels and reported threats against the Venezuelan government violate the nation's obligations under the United Nations Charter, with the risk of escalating to open hostilities.

Parallels with the Iraq War: oil, ideology, and deception

The current situation is chillingly reminiscent of

the lead-up to the 2003 invasion of Iraq. In that case, the Bush administration justified unilateral action on the basis of "weapons of mass destruction," but this was a pretext. The true objectives were not limited to oil, but also included achieving profound ideological and political goals – overthrowing a government to reshape Middle Eastern politics and assert dominance.

Washington must learn the lessons of this history. The Bush administration promised a quick victory in Iraq. Instead, the invasions and occupation claimed countless Iraqi lives, resulted in tens of thousands of American soldiers killed or wounded, and destabilized the region. The notion that the US can carry out military invasions into the heart of Latin America without a massive blowback is outlandish.

In the case of Venezuela, the "war on drugs" and the labeling of the government as a "threat" serve as the new rhetorical pretexts. The US interest is multifaceted: it involves securing the world's largest proven oil reserves and achieving the ideological and political goal of overthrowing a socialist government to assert dominance and reshape Latin American politics. The US seeks to dismantle the Bolivarian Revolution and eliminate a major center of anti-imperialist politics in the hemisphere.

The current escalation is not about law enforcement or counter-narcotics; it is about regime change and plunder. While members of Congress from both Democratic and Republican parties, as well as key voices of public opinion, are increasingly speaking up about the illegality of these strikes and the absence of credible information from the administration, this situation requires much more urgency, once the escalation ladder is climbed, there may be no going back. The international community must recognize this aggressive campaign for what it is: a criminal act of international aggression. The world must stand against this threat of a new, catastrophic conflict.

Gunboat Diplomacy In the Caribbean

Mel Gurtov

The Trump administration has now conducted 10 known strikes on boats off the Venezuelan and Colombian coasts that supposedly carry drugs destined for the US. The administration has now amassed a veritable armada in the region—several attack boats, a nuclear-capable submarine, an aircraft carrier strike group, a Marine expeditionary unit, and 10 F-35 fighter jets. In all, around 10,000 soldiers and sailors are involved. It's a rather extraordinary show of force, out of proportion to the alleged problem.

The unknowns in this display of force are substantial, raising questions about the administration's motives and objectives. No proof has been offered that the boats carried drugs or were headed to US ports. No effort has been made to explain why Venezuela, and possibly Colombia, is being targeted for "narco-terrorism" when they are not conduits for fentanyl, the primary drug killer, or for cocaine. (Mexico is the main route for fentanyl, and Colombia, Peru, and Bolivia are the principal coca producers.) No attempts were made to stop and board the boats, as would be normal procedure. No warnings were issued to the boats such as would probably have saved lives—43 so far.

These attacks, in short, reek of illegality, false hyping, and hidden purposes. Clearly, the attacks on the boats raise legal questions, enough to cause the resignation of Adm. Alvin Holsey, head of the US Southern Command. Though he has not said so, he reportedly protested the legality of the boat attacks. But then, this administration gives scant attention to lawful behavior. More relevant are Trump's executive order, which he made public, to authorize CIA covert action in Venezuela and Trump's comment that with control of the sea, "we are certainly looking at land now." CNN reported: "Trump is considering plans to target cocaine facilities and drug trafficking routes inside Venezuela, though he has not yet made a decision on whether to move forward with them, three US officials told CNN."

Gunboat Diplomacy

For now, the administration is content to magnify the problem and threaten action. "Nicolás Maduro, is an indicted drug trafficker in the United States, and he's a fugitive of American justice," Secretary of State Marco Rubio says. The Pentagon's press secretary says the US aims to "dismantle Transnational Criminal Organizations and counter narco-terrorism." Colombia's president Gustavo Petro is, according to Trump, "an illegal drug dealer" and "a low rated and very unpopular leader, with a fresh mouth toward America, better close up these killing fields immediately, or the United States will close them up for him, and it won't be done nicely."

Trump announced that the US is ending all aid to Colombia, and will impose new tariffs, until Colombia stops drug production. Never before has drug interdiction required the deployment of enough firepower to overrun a country!

In truth, every word and action by this administration points to regime change in Venezuela, and perhaps Colombia as well, as its objective. Although the CNN report notes that Trump has not excluded a diplomatic approach to the Nicolás Maduro regime, the deployment of excess warmaking power suggests that Trump is mainly relying on the threat to use force to bring about Maduro's departure. Trump probably wants to avoid a direct assault inside Venezuela, since that would raise some opposition in Congress and, if the US were to suffer casualties, arouse public opinion. If he can squeeze Maduro enough to force his exit without an invasion, so much the better.

Where is Congress?

No administration official has consulted with a Congressman to explain the administration's



policy and procedures. Sen. Rand Paul, who correctly describes the boat attacks as “extrajudicial killings,” has introduced resolutions that would require Trump to obtain authorization from Congress before attacking.

But Trump insists he doesn’t need authorization from Congress even if he decides to invade. “I’m not going to necessarily ask for a declaration of war,” he said. “I think we’re just going to kill people that are bringing drugs into our country. Okay? We’re going to kill them, you know, they’re going to be like, dead.” Spoken like a true Mafia leader. Maybe he’ll notify Congress after the fact, but what if Congress is on shutdown?

Efforts to bring the War Powers Act into force are underway but with virtually no chance of making it through Congress and onto Trump’s desk. The War Powers Act compels consultation with Congress and a 60-day limit on military action without Congressional consent to remove the limitation. When was the last time Trump sought Congressional assent on any foreign policy?

In his view of presidential power, Congress is largely a bystander; the President can do anything he wants, as he has said more than once. Thus, Trump has ordered assassinations abroad (Iran), reduced foreign aid to the bare minimum (USAID), conducted secret diplomacy with Putin, made a \$40-billion deal with Argentina, engaged in corrupt real estate and crypto currency deals in the Middle East and the Balkans, and arbitrarily imposed (and withdrawn, and reimposed) tariffs on friend and foe alike—all without the slightest regard for Congressional thinking.

The Greater Danger

The greatest danger from these extrajudicial killings is that the administration might extend them to what Trump calls “the war within.” Gunboat diplomacy might transfer to the home front where, one fine day, military forces in our cities shoot first and ask questions later. We’re already partway there as ICE and other federal goons seize people off the streets without a warrant or explanation.

That is a hallmark of the Trump era: foreign policy comes home.

The Oldest Colony, the Newest War: Puerto Rico as a Launchpad for War on Venezuela

Michelle Elner

When President Trump announced that the CIA had been authorized to conduct operations inside Venezuela, just as U.S. drones struck another small boat off Venezuela's coast, few people in the United States realized that much of this militarization begins on the soil of a land denied its own sovereignty: Puerto Rico.

The island that has lived under US rule since 1898 is once again being used as a staging ground for U.S. militarism, this time for Washington's latest "war on drugs" narrative, masking a campaign of coercion against Latin America's independent governments.

After invading Puerto Rico in 1898, the United States quickly turned the island into a strategic military outpost: the "Gibraltar of the Caribbean," with naval bases in Ceiba, Roosevelt Roads, and Vieques designed to dominate the eastern Caribbean and protect the new artery of empire: the Panama Canal.

From World War I onward, Puerto Ricans were drafted into every major U.S. war, fighting and dying for a flag that still denies them full citizenship rights. Meanwhile, the island's lands and waters were expropriated for bombing ranges, naval training, and intelligence operations.

For six decades, the U.S. Navy used Vieques as a live-fire testing ground, dropping millions of pounds of explosives and munitions, including napalm and depleted uranium. The result was environmental devastation and one of the highest cancer rates in the region. It took a mass civil disobedience movement to finally force the Navy out in 2003.

That victory proved Puerto Ricans' capacity for

organized resistance, but the structures of empire never disappeared.

Two decades later, those same bases and runways are being reactivated. In 2025, Washington quietly expanded military operations on the island, deploying F-35 fighter jets, stationing P-8 maritime patrol aircraft, and rotating Marine and Special Operations units through Puerto Rican ports and airfields. The official justification is "counter-narcotics operations," but the timing and scale point to something far larger: a regional military build-up aimed at Venezuela.

The aggression has now extended to Colombia, where Trump has cut off all U.S. aid and accused President Gustavo Petro of being a "drug leader." The announcement came just days after Colombia's president denounced the U.S. drone strikes off Venezuela's coast, one of which, he warned, hit a Colombian vessel and killed Colombian citizens. Instead of accountability, Washington answered with insults and economic blackmail.

The Trump administration's designation of a "non-international armed conflict with drug cartels" gives legal cover for drone strikes and covert missions far from U.S. territory. Puerto Rico's colonial status makes it the perfect staging ground: a place the Pentagon can operate freely without congressional debate or local consent.

For Puerto Ricans, this militarization is not an abstract issue. It means more surveillance, more environmental risk, and a deeper entanglement in wars they never chose. It also signals a return to the same imperial logic that made Vieques a bombing range: using occupied territory to project power abroad.



Puerto Rico remains the oldest colony in the modern world, a U.S. “territory” whose people are “citizens” but not sovereign. They cannot vote for president, have no senators, and possess only a symbolic representative in Congress. That absence of sovereignty is what makes it so useful to the empire: a gray zone of legality where wars can be prepared without democratic consent.

This is not the first time Puerto Rico has been used as a military springboard. Its bases have served as logistical hubs for interventions across the hemisphere, from the U.S. invasion of the Dominican Republic in 1965, to Grenada in 1983, and Panama in 1989.

Each of these operations was justified through Cold War rhetoric, the defense of “freedom,” “stability,” and “democracy,” while systematically targeting governments and social movements seeking independence from U.S. control.

Puerto Rican born Congresswoman Nydia Velázquez has warned that history is repeating itself. In a *Newsweek* op-ed, she reminded Washington of the lesson of Vieques: that the island’s people have already paid the price for U.S. milita-

rism through contamination, displacement, and neglect.

“Our people have already suffered enough from military pollution and colonial exploitation. Puerto Rico deserves peace, not more war,” she said.

Her call aligns with that of Caribbean and Latin American nations in CELAC, which have declared the region a “Zone of Peace.”

The buildup around Venezuela follows a long-standing pattern in U.S. foreign policy: when a nation asserts control over its own resources or refuses to obey Washington’s dictates, it becomes a target. Venezuela, Cuba, and Nicaragua are punished for exactly that. Sanctions, blockades, and covert operations function as mechanisms of domination to keep the hemisphere open to U.S. capital and military reach.

Puerto Rico’s place in this strategy reveals Washington’s core hypocrisy: it wages wars abroad in the name of freedom while denying that freedom to the colony it still holds. Its people are governed without full representation, its land is used for war, and its economy remains bound to Washington’s dictates. Puerto Rico’s demand for independence is the same demand made by Venezuela, Cuba, and every nation that refuses to live on its knees: the right to determine its own future.

The struggle for peace, sovereignty, and dignity in *Nuestra América* runs through Puerto Rico’s shores. When U.S. drones take off from Caribbean airstrips to strike Venezuela, they fly over the ghosts of Vieques, over the land where Puerto Ricans once stood unarmed against an empire.

Puerto Rico deserves a future of peace, environmental healing, and sovereignty, and Venezuela deserves the same: the right to live free from siege, to defend its independence, and to build its own destiny without fear of U.S. bombs or blockades. To defend Puerto Rico’s right to peace is to defend Venezuela’s right to exist.

Palestine's Past Is Our Present: Why Its Story Matters to Us All

M. Reza Behnam

A new story has emerged out of the ashes of Gaza. It is the narrative of a people who have fought bravely and who have stood firm against the overwhelming military power and genocidal violence of the Israeli and American regimes.

Until 7 October 2023, Israel controlled the narrative. On that historic day, when Palestinians refused to live any longer as prisoners of an illegal, dehumanizing occupation, they broke the stranglehold the Israeli propaganda machine had successfully constructed and entrenched in the West.

Many Americans have begun to awaken from the U.S.-Israeli Svengali-induced sleep. Israel's cruelty and injustice have been exposed, while Palestinian *sumud* (perseverance, steadfastness) has inspired.

After more than eight decades of unimaginable hardship and suffering, the Palestinian people have refused to be removed from their land. The two largest militaries with the most lethal weapons have been unable to enforce, exact submission or end the resistance.

What is uncertain, however, is whether humanities' conscience will be lulled back to sleep, that Gaza will be forgotten, as it was before 7 October 2023, and there will be no accountability for the U.S.-backed Israeli genocide.

The Israeli propaganda network, abetted by the Western media, is currently focused on ensuring that happens, that the world "moves on," and Israel returns as the occupying force that it was on 6 October 2023. Within one day of the "peace summit" in Egypt (13 October 2025), for example, Israel violated the terms of the agree-

ment, killing seven Palestinians and limiting the amount of humanitarian aid into Gaza.

Tel Aviv's propaganda machine was swiftly set in motion with claims that Hamas violated the terms by failing to hand over the bodies of remaining prisoners. This, despite the fact that all sides, including Israel, acknowledged it would take time to retrieve the bodies buried beneath the rubble the Zionists had created.

Since the start of the 10 October 2025 ceasefire, Israel, as is its wont, has violated the agreement numerous times. Within nine days of the "declared end to the war," its forces had flouted the ceasefire 47 times, killing 38 Palestinians and wounding another 143.

For eight decades, Israel has been attempting to erase the history of Palestine, its culture and landmarks. In the last two years in Gaza and currently in the occupied West Bank, it has been mutilating the land to eliminate all that sustains life. Ninety-two percent of Gaza has been turned into 60 million tons of debris, containing the remains of countless innocents.

How can a people who claim they have an historic and biblical bond to the ancient land of Palestine, as Israelis have, completely destroy the "Holy Land" of the West Bank (Israel calls Judea and Samaria) and Gaza, one of the oldest continuously inhabited cities in the world?

The answer is rooted in their perception of and relationship to the land. For Israelis, it is an exploitable resource, a source of potential wealth accumulation. For Palestinians, it is home.

The zeal and ferocity of its destruction can also



be explained by the fact that modern Israel is an imperial-inspired foreign infliction transplanted into the heart of the Arab world.

To establish legitimacy for their political project in Palestine, Israel's European secular founders provided dubious links between past and present. They strategically and selectively used religious narratives and historical connections as tools in building an Israeli national identity and to legitimize the establishment of a Jewish state on alien land; strategies that continue to this day.

Hence, Israel and its American enablers are unable to appreciate that Palestine is the locus of Palestinian nationhood. They will never comprehend that the land has been a living archive of Palestinian history, language and culture for 5,000 years. As an agrarian society, land has provided a shared sense of belonging and foundation for collective consciousness and national identity.

Palestine has been a unifying force, especially since their homeland was recast as Israel in 1948.

Palestinian poets like Fadwa Tuqan, Samih al-Qasim and the late Mahmoud Darwish, regarded as Palestine's national poet, have eloquently expressed the deep rootedness and pain of loss, often through the powerful symbol of the olive tree; as in this moving line from Darwish's 1964 poem, "an alsumud" ("On Resilience"):

*"If the olive trees knew the hands that planted them,
their oil would become tears."*

Olive cultivation, engaged in for thousands of years, has been a vital part of the Palestinian economy, culture and heritage. The ancient, deeply-rooted olive trees, able to survive harsh conditions, are the perfect symbol of Palestinian refusal to be displaced.

Since 1967, to further humiliate and break the back of Palestinian resistance, the Israeli army has illegally uprooted an estimated 800,000 to over one million Palestinian olive trees. In addition to land appropriation for expansion of illegal colonies, economic control and intimidation, the destruction of orchards and access to them, is the regime's and Zionist squatters' attempt to undermine their connection to the land and to break Palestinian *sumud*.

Palestine is unique in the Arab world. When history began to be recorded in what is often referred to as the Middle East or West Asia, there was no Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Qatar or any of today's Persian Gulf Arab states. But, there was Gaza; there was Palestine.

The recorded history of Gaza spans 4,000 years. Under the administration of various empires, including the Egyptian, Assyrian, Babylonian, Achaemenid Persian and the Romans, Gaza prospered. During the third century, it became part of the province of Palaestina Prima.

After it seized and occupied Gaza in 1967, Israel reduced the Strip to a concentration camp. Palestinians have, since then, been serving life sentences behind the sophisticated surveillance-equipped "iron wall" that surrounds Gaza. For them, the wall is a daily reminder of occupation and that their hopes and dreams for a future are out of reach.

Palestinian journalist, Anas al-Sharif, captured the essence of Palestine in his message to the world written prior to his assassination by Israeli forces on 11 August 2025: "I entrust you with Palestine—the jewel in the crown of the Muslim world, the heartbeat of every free person."

According to the United Nations, by the date of al-Sharif's targeted murder, Israel, determined to suppress the truth, had killed 242 journalists.

From the Balfour Declaration (1917) to Trump's 20-point Gaza "peace" plan (2025), imperial

powers have, for 108 years, manipulated and deceived to control Palestine. They have failed.

The future is uncertain unless the wrong committed a century ago, when an imperious British government technocrat gave away a land he did not own to European Zionists, is made right.

There are no ambiguities. Not only has Gaza revealed Israel's cruelty and lawlessness, it has also exposed the hypocrisy and ruthlessness of the American and British empires as well as the political, economic and military systems that have supported it.

Unless those who have made Israel's modern-day genocide possible are held accountable the global community may find itself living in what the 17th century English philosopher, Thomas Hobbes, described as "war of all against all;" a state of continuous wars, violence and insecurity. Failing accountability and consequences for the perpetrators, inhumanity and lawlessness will become the standard.

Additionally, the international community can no longer accept Israel as it currently is—a violent apartheid settler-colonial entity. It is bound by international law to implement the mandate of the International Court of Justice (19 July 2024) to decolonize the Occupied Palestinian Territory (Gaza, the West Bank and East Jerusalem).

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., in 1968, prophetically spoke to where we are today. In his final speech the night before his assassination, he said that there is "no longer a choice between violence and nonviolence in this world; it's non-violence or nonexistence."

Palestine is more than a geographical place. It is a compelling idea. It cannot be erased just as Palestinians' rightful demand to return home cannot be erased.

The Unvanquished Will: Gaza's Triumph of Spirit Against the Architecture of Genocide

Ramzy Baroud

For the last two years, my social media algorithm has been relentlessly dominated by Gaza, particularly by the voices of ordinary Gazans, displaying a blend of emotions that centers on two core principles: grief and defiance.

Grief has characterized life in Gaza for many years, a consequence of successive Israeli wars, the unrelenting siege, and habitual bombardment. The last two years, marked by genocide and famine, however, have redefined that grief in a way almost incomprehensible to the Palestinians themselves.

Yes, Palestine has endured numerous massacres before, during, and since the Nakba – the tragic destruction of the Palestinian homeland. But those massacres were typically episodic, each distinctively marked by specific historical circumstances. Each is incorporated into the Palestinian collective psyche as proof of Israeli barbarity, but also as a demonstration of their own enduring resilience as a people.

I grew up in a Gaza refugee camp where we commemorated each massacre with rallies, general strikes, and artistic expressions. We knew the victims and immortalized them through chants, political graffiti, poetry and the like.

The war of extermination launched by Israel against Gaza in the last two years has fundamentally changed all of that. On a single day, October 31, 2023, the Israeli army killed 704 Palestinians, and 120 in the Jabaliya refugee camp alone. Single bombs would annihilate hundreds in one strike, often in hospitals, refugee shelters, or UN schools. Massacres were taking place every day, everywhere.

There was no time to reflect on any of these massacres, to pray for the victims, or even to bury them

with proper dignity. All that Gazans could do was desperately try to cling to life itself, bury their loved ones in mass graves, and use their own bare hands to dig out the wounded and dead from underneath the massive slabs of concrete and mountains of rubble. Thousands remain unaccounted for, and about a quarter of a million Gazans have been killed and wounded.

The tally will continue to grow, and the degree of devastation keeps worsening, even now that the rate of killing has subsided. But why, then, does my social media feed continue to show Palestinians openly celebrating their victory? Why are Gaza's children, though gaunt and exhausted due to the famine, continuing to perform traditional debka dances? Why is 5-year-old Maria Hannoun, one of Gaza's many influencers, continuing to recite the poetry of Mahmoud Darwish and sending fiery messages to US President Donald Trump that Gaza will never be defeated?

To say that 'Gazans are built differently' is a massive understatement. I have spent the last twenty years dedicated to academic research on the people's history of Palestine, focusing heavily on Gaza, and I still find their collective will astonishing. They seem to have made a shared, conscious decision: the metrics for their defeat or victory would be entirely separate from those used by the media covering the war.

These measures are rooted in resistance as a foundational choice. Core values like Karamah (dignity), Izza (pride), and Sabr (patience), among others, are the standards by which Gaza judges its performance. And, by these profound standards, the people of the genocide and famine-stricken Strip have won this war.



Image from United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) report "Environmental Impact of the Escalation of Conflict in the Gaza Strip"

Because these values are often ignored or misinterpreted in war coverage, many have found Gaza's response to the ceasefire, one of unbridled joy and celebration, confusing. The scene of mothers waiting for their sons to be released in a large celebration in Khan Yunis, southern Gaza, was particularly illuminating. They cried bitterly, while clapping and ululating all at once. One mother perfectly clarified the paradox for a reporter: the tears were for the sons and daughters killed in the war, and the ululating was for the ones being released.

News media, however, rarely understand the complexity of the Gaza survival paradigm. Some, including Israeli military analysts, have concluded that Benjamin Netanyahu has lost the war because he failed to achieve any of his declared objectives. Others speak of some kind of Israeli victory simply because Israel managed to obliterate nearly the whole of Gaza and a large section of its population.

Each side uses numbers and figures to back up their claims. Yet, Palestinians in Gaza view this situation in a fundamentally different way. They understand that Israel's war was ultimately an attempt to destroy their very peoplehood—to shatter their spirit, disorient their culture, turn them against one

another, and ultimately eradicate the core essence of being Palestinian.

Gazans celebrate precisely because they know Israel has failed. The Palestinian nation has emerged even more deeply rooted in its identity, both in Gaza and elsewhere. The child singing of the martyrs, the civil defense workers dancing the debka for their fallen comrades, and the woman using the wreckage of a destroyed Israeli Merkava tank to air her laundry – all these images speak of a nation unified by its love for life and its fierce commitment to shared values of valor, honor, and love.

Some analysts, trying to find a more nuanced and reasoned conclusion, have resolved that neither Israel won the war, nor were Palestinians defeated. While this balanced approach can be appreciated in terms of the strategic reading of the ceasefire, it is still profoundly incorrect when understood against the backdrop of popular Palestinian culture. For ordinary people, survival, continuity, and self-assertion are the ultimate signs of victory against Israel, a country that does not hesitate to use genocide for temporary political gains. The core of their triumph is simply this: they remain.

The World Confronts the Genocide Washington is Trying to Bury

Medea Benjamin, Nicolas J.S. Davies

On October 4th, 2025, in an interview with Axios, President Trump stressed that one of the main goals behind his Gaza plan was to restore Israel's international standing. "Bibi took it very far and Israel lost a lot of support in the world," Trump said. "Now I am gonna get all that support back."

Under Trump's plan, a supposed ceasefire took effect on October 10th. But Israel only withdrew from less than half of the Gaza strip, and killed at least 93 people in the next two weeks, after killing at least that many per day for the previous two years. Israel has only allowed 15% of the humanitarian aid called for in the plan to enter Gaza, and has kept the critical Rafah crossing from Egypt into Gaza closed. The daily life-and-death struggle to find food, water and shelter carries on unabated for two million people in Gaza.

While the reduction in the daily scale of Israel's mass murder is obviously welcome, this is not a real ceasefire. Like previous Israeli ceasefires in Gaza, as in Lebanon, this is a one-sided ceasefire that Israel violates at will, on a daily basis, with no accountability.

This is only the first part of Trump's plan for Gaza, and there is still no agreement on the other parts, such as the disarmament of Hamas, who provide the only government and police force in Gaza. They now have the added job of protecting their people from Israel-backed criminal gangs and death squads, some with links to ISIS, who prey on them from the Israeli-occupied areas, stealing aid supplies, assassinating local leaders and terrorizing the population.

Hamas is obviously not going to disarm under these conditions, and previously said it would

only surrender its weapons once Palestine has an internationally recognized government with its own armed forces. On the other side, Israel has not agreed to other parts of Trump's plan, such as its withdrawal from the rest of Gaza, nor to any plan for the future of Palestine.

In the United States, where corrupt politicians and corporate media take U.S. and Israeli lies at face value or even repeat them as statements of fact, some may believe that Trump's plan has resolved the crisis in Palestine. The rest of the world is not so naive or easy to manipulate, but many other governments are also beholden to oligarchies that profit from trade, investment and arms deals with Israel, even as the public in those same countries reels in shock at Israel's mass murder of Palestinians and U.S.-backed impunity for its crimes.

Trump's Gaza plan, like much of his foreign policy, cynically exploits the greed and fear of political leaders and their oligarch patrons. Admitting that Israel has "lost a lot of support in the world," he offers a shortcut back to "business as usual" for governments eager to protect—and even expand—profitable ties despite Israel's ongoing atrocities and open contempt for international law.

In his first term, Trump brokered the "Abraham Accords," normalization deals between Israel and Bahrain, the UAE, Morocco, and Sudan that included mutual recognition and expanded trade. He now has his eye on the big prize: Saudi Arabia.

But Arab-Israeli relations have long been contested. In the 1949 UN General Assembly vote on Israel's admission, all Arab and Muslim countries

except Türkiye (which abstained) voted against recognizing the state of Israel. Thirty-two mostly Arab and Muslim countries, including some of its closest neighbors, still either don't recognize Israel or have no diplomatic relations with it.

Despite decades of hostility, Trump persuaded Israel and some of these countries to support his Gaza plan with the promise of future benefits from normalization and trade. But there is still a gaping chasm between Israel and these Arab and Muslim countries over Palestine. They say they will not recognize Israel unless Israel recognizes Palestine, with full sovereignty over East Jerusalem, the West Bank and the Gaza Strip.

But the foundational basis of Netanyahu's Likud Party is its plan for a Greater Israel, to be formed by annexing all of occupied Palestine "between the sea and the Jordan." And on October 22, during Vice President Vance's visit to Israel, the Knesset voted in favor of annexing the West Bank.

Trump unveiled his Gaza plan at the very end of the UN General Assembly's annual high-level meeting in New York, where many world leaders spoke out for much stronger international action against Israel. The New York Declaration, which 142 countries voted for, was the result of a conference in July led by France and Saudi Arabia that promised "concrete, timebound, coordinated action" to enforce a ruling by the international Court of Justice (ICJ) in 2024 that the Israeli occupation of Palestine is illegal and must be ended "as quickly as possible."

Trump's initiative temporarily upstaged and marginalized calls for further action at the UN. But on October 22nd, the ICJ issued a new ruling strongly condemning Israel's use of starvation as a weapon of war in Gaza, and ruling that, as an occupying power, Israel must ensure that the "basic needs" of the population are met, including food, water, fuel, shelter and medicine. The court also ruled that Israel must permit UN staff working for UNRWA to do their work in Gaza, after Israel provided no evidence to the court for

its claim that UN staff were members of Hamas or took part in its October 2023 incursion into Israel.

In the wake of the ICJ decision, Norway said it would introduce a resolution in the UN General Assembly to enforce the Court's directives, including ensuring the full amount of aid reaches Gaza. Humanitarian advocates hope that this resolution will be introduced in an Emergency Special Session under the "Uniting For Peace" option, enabling the UN to deliver the "concrete, timebound, coordinated action" it promised in July—potentially including sanctions such as an arms embargo and targeted trade and investment measures that should take effect within days if Israel continues to block aid.

Trump plainly intended his plan to close the book on Israel's crimes—and on U.S. complicity—and to inaugurate a new phase: normalization of the occupation and Israel's diplomatic rehabilitation. Yet even before the ICJ condemned Israel's starvation policy, people worldwide were already mobilizing, urging their governments not to let Israel off the hook.

In Europe, momentum for accountability continues to build. As the British parliament debates a new pensions law, an amendment has been submitted to divest local government pension funds from companies that are complicit in the illegal Israeli occupation of Palestine. Many local councils in the U.K. have already passed individual ordinances to do this, but the amendment to the pensions law would force all of them to divest the \$16 billion that their pension funds still have invested in those firms.

In September, the European Union (EU) announced plans to suspend its 25-year-old free trade agreement with Israel and impose sanctions on extremist Israeli cabinet members and settler leaders. On October 20th, it "paused" these steps in response to Trump's plan, but EU leaders immediately faced strong push-back on that decision.

Over 400 former senior diplomats and officials signed a statement that the EU must take robust action “against spoilers and extremists” who would jeopardize “the establishment of a future Palestinian state,” noting that Trump’s plan only vaguely addressed that goal. International lawyers advised EU leaders that EU policy must comply with the 2024 ICJ ruling that the Israeli occupation is illegal and must be ended as quickly as possible.

Individual European countries, including Belgium, the Netherlands, Slovenia and Spain, already ban imports from illegal Israeli settlements in Palestine, and Ireland is currently debating a similar trade ban in its Occupied Territories Bill, which should get a final vote by January. The original bill would only affect trade in goods, but activists want trade in services included in the ban, while powerful business interests, including U.S. tech firms with European headquarters in Ireland, are lobbying to kill the bill altogether. It should help that Ireland’s newly elected president, Catherine Connolly, is a strong supporter of Palestine.

In stark contrast to much of the world, which is still grappling with the contradictions of Trump’s Gaza plan and Israel’s ongoing unlawful occupation, U.S. officials are already trying to turn the page—moving to fortify and expand Washington’s military alliance with Israel.

This alliance is renewed and updated every ten years in a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the two governments, which would normally be negotiated in 2026, before the previous MOU expires in 2028.

There’s already a bipartisan bill in the Senate Foreign Relations Committee (S.554) to initiate this process, titled “United States-Israel Defense Partnership Act of 2025,” authorizing joint projects with Israel under categories like “countering unmanned systems... anti-tunnel cooperation... (and) war reserves stockpile authority.”

Conspicuously absent from this policy review is any debate over U.S. complicity in Gaza’s destruction—a debate that should come first and set the terms for any serious re-examination of the U.S.–Israel alliance.

On October 20th, Francesca Albanese, the UN Special Rapporteur on Palestinian human rights, released a new report titled “Gaza Genocide: a Collective Crime.” Here is the summary of her report:

“The ongoing genocide in Gaza is a collective crime, sustained by the complicity of influential Third States that have enabled longstanding systemic violations of international law by Israel. Framed by colonial narratives that dehumanize the Palestinians, this live-streamed atrocity has been facilitated through Third States’ direct support, material aid, diplomatic protection and, in some cases, active participation. It has exposed an unprecedented chasm between peoples and their governments, betraying the trust on which global peace and security rest. The world now stands on a knife-edge between the collapse of the international rule of law and hope for renewal. Renewal is only possible if complicity is confronted, responsibilities are met and justice is upheld.”

We urge all members of the Senate and House Foreign Relations Committees to read the UN report and to invite UN experts to testify at hearings on U.S. complicity and participation in war crimes, crimes against humanity, and genocide in Palestine.

To move ahead with consideration of a new MOU or any arms transfers with Israel without first conducting such a serious and objective policy review would only serve to perpetuate the endless wars that all our leaders, including President Trump, keep telling us they want to end.

The Other October 7th

Donal O'Kelly

"History did not begin on October 7th" said Ireland's new President Catherine Connolly on her way to achieving the highest-ever vote share (63.4%) of an Irish Presidential election. She was referring to the date in 2023 lodged into the memory of a large majority of the world's population. The Irish people, many of whom have taken part in hugely-attended protests in Dublin and throughout the country opposing Israeli genocide in Gaza, have given the independent parliamentarian a landslide victory.

Like 9/11, October 7th doesn't need the year appended. 2001. 2023. Almost the same gap as between the Treaty of Versailles and the start of World War II. October 7th and 9/11 are dates driven deeply into our collective human psyche. They are part of the calendrical furniture in there, like our individual birthdays, Christmas Day for Christians among us, and 4th July for Americans.

On 20th September 2023 the last event of Ireland's decade of centenary commemoration of the struggle for independence took place. The commemorative decade 1913 to 1923 was centred around the Easter 1916 armed uprising in Dublin against British rule. The last event marked a century since Ireland's accession to the League of Nations – "when Ireland takes her place among the nations of the world, then, and only then, let my epitaph be written" – Robert Emmet, Irish patriot who led an armed uprising against British rule, hanged and beheaded in Dublin on 20th September 1803, exactly 120 years earlier. A couple of weeks later, on October 7th armed and trained óglaigh of Gaza broke out through the fence restricting 2.4 million Palestinians in the most densely concentrated stretch of land in the world.

In Ireland, the deeply reflective educational process nourished by the decade of centenary commemoration was followed by two years of watching in horror as the state of Israel, the last settler-colonial invention of imperialism, pummelled the people of Gaza

mercilessly with everything the world's military-industrial complex could supply it with. It did so while having its government's perverse statements that it was engaged in war on behalf of civilisation against barbarism amplified by the rich world elites and their media machinery.

Mention of the date October 7th has been used as an excuse for the grossest evil perpetrated on the civil population of Gaza. A galaxy of powerful figures, led by US President Joe Biden and EU Commission President Ursula Von der Leyen, repeated the debunked charges of mass rape, beheaded babies (Biden lied when he said he saw photos of this) and babies baked alive. It is now accepted that nothing of this sort was done by Palestinian rebels on October 7th. It is also accepted that no Palestinian rebel from Gaza was equipped with explosive weapons capable of destroying houses or incinerating cars. The high command of the Israeli armed forces at midday on October 7th imposed the Hannibal Directive that ordered soldiers to kill anyone in danger of being taken hostage as well as those taking them hostage. Israeli Apache attack helicopters were used for this purpose. It's not known how many of the 1154 Israeli people killed that day were killed by Israeli forces or by Hamas rebels. The armed breakout from the Gaza concentration camp on October 7th 2023 was presented by a worldwide propaganda exercise directed by Israeli psy-ops as a genocidal attack on Jews for being Jews in the only Jewish state. The curated media blitz generated enough false pr justification for actual genocide to be perpetrated against the people of Gaza for two years, livestreamed on everybody's phones, including actually burning babies alive and decapitating babies, inflicting mass murder with the full and profiteering backing of the governments of the rich world.

As President-elect of Ireland Catherine Connolly said, history didn't begin on October 7th. Even in the relatively short-term, there was a context in which

the armed breakout from Gaza occurred. There were the series of vicious weeks-long Israeli bombardments inflicted in 2009, 2012, 2014 and 2021 causing thousands of deaths and tens of thousands of casualties, under the cynical but revealing Israeli vernacular 'mowing the lawn'. There was The Great March of Return mass demonstrations close to the fence in 2018, an insistence on publicly laying claim to the land from which the parents and grandparents of many of them were violently expelled by Israel in 1948 and 1967, and denied right of return. That act of collective peaceful resistance mounted by hundreds of thousands of people was answered by Israeli snipers shooting dead almost 200 unarmed protestors including doctors and journalists, and maiming more than 6000 people using explosive bullets. Peaceful protest by the people concentrated in Gaza is verboten by the Israeli apparatus of siege and oppression. That is just a small sample from the recent past of the historical context that preceded October 7th 2023 to which the new president of Ireland alluded.

There was another armed breakout through a seemingly impregnable fence perpetrated on October 7th. It was on October 7th 1944. It happened in the Nazi Auschwitz-Birkenau death camp in Silesia, southern Poland. The rebellious outbreak for freedom against the most horrific manifestation of the Nazi "Final Solution to the Jewish Problem in Europe" was carried out by a few hundred Sonderkommandos in the sprawling, throbbing enterprise of organised vicious terror and cruelty presented as civilised progress, honour and efficiency.

These Sonderkommando prisoners worked under SS supervision in shifts round the clock to move the thousands of bodies of recently-arrived mainly Jewish transportees from the gas chambers into the crematorium ovens. For carrying out orders precisely in this vital part of the stopwatch efficiency of the Nazi genocidal process, they received better food and accommodation. Not to carry out orders was of course a suicidal act, which some did, notably a group of one hundred mainly Jewish deportees from Corfu in September 1944.

The Sonderkommando in Auschwitz on October 7th 1944 knew they were doomed whatever they did. In Auschwitz's four-year duration, twelve times the entire Sonderkommando population was exterminated and a fresh complement selected from the constantly replenished supply of prisoners barely staying alive in dire conditions and working slave labour in nearby giant war industry factories such as Buna and IG Farben. On October 7th 1944, the Auschwitz Sonderkommando knew they had nothing to lose. The only weapons they had against German military might were the long metal hooks that they were equipped with to move thousands of bodies per day from the gas chambers to the ovens, and to rearrange them there the quicker to turn them to ash spread as fertiliser on the nearby SS farm.

On October 7th 1944 they employed those long hooks to good effect, with axes and hammers against machineguns. Using explosives smuggled in by four Jewish women factory-workers, they blew up one of the crematoria. They killed an unknown number of SS officers and guards before they themselves were almost completely eliminated. Those who managed to get out through the fence were captured in the succeeding days, and were hanged slowly in a roll-call ceremony. A band was forced to play before speeches by the camp commandants threatening dire punishments for escape attempts.

The rebellion of October 7th 1944 in Auschwitz is not well known, and has never been, in contrast to the October 7th 2023 rebellion in Gaza. The few hundred participants, ignoring a last-minute countermanding order from the underground leadership, and armed mainly with the knowledge they had nothing to lose, are forgotten.

In the summer weeks between May and September 1944, the death-machine of Auschwitz-Birkenau turned almost one million Jews to ash, the largest group being 430,000 Jews of Hungary when the daily rate of human destruction climbed to 12,000. This is the period for which Commander Rudolf Hoess directed the construction of a more efficient mass killing process as presented in Jonathan Glazer's superb 2024 Oscar-winning film *Zone of Interest*. One

of the main works undertaken was the construction from February to April 1944 of a new railway platform inside the Auschwitz-Birkenau complex, eliminating the time-consuming need for lorry transports of newly-arrived deportees to the gas chambers.

Why was this October 7th breakout necessary? Would the Allies not have bombed Auschwitz if they knew what was happening there? Why was the Auschwitz death camp still operating on October 7th 1944? Why, through the summer months of 1944, were trains arriving from Hungary packed with people prepared for a stay in a resettlement city called Kenyermezo (meaning 'bread field' in Hungarian)? How was the secret of the mass killing apparatus kept for so long, inducing almost half a million Jewish people to arrive laden with possessions, only to be directed naked to the showers?

The first two questions taken together can be answered by one unusual word:- extrusion. In his book *Exterminate All the Brutes*, Sven Lindqvist explains that the word exterminate is rooted in the Latin *termino*, meaning boundary. To be exterminated is to be cast beyond the boundary of life. Extrusion is a word I only came across once and it was in counter-reference to extermination. It was in a high-level British Foreign Office wire to the US State Department on March 23rd 1943, more than a year and a half before the October 7th Sonderkommando rebellion.

"There is a possibility that the Germans or their satellites may change over from the policy of extermination to one of extrusion, and aim as they did before the war at embarrassing other countries by flooding them with alien immigrants."

Doesn't extrusion stink of Eton? At that point, the Allies knew full well from numerous intelligence reports that the implementation of the "Final Solution to the Jewish Problem in Europe" was ongoing. Stopping it or even hindering it never rose high on the military priorities of the Allies. Widespread organised murder of people because of their ethnicity was written off as a civilian matter that in wartime couldn't be permitted to interfere with military ob-

jectives. This policy was deeply entrenched in Allied strategy right up to and after October 7th 1944.

The third question concerning the compliant arrival at Auschwitz of hundreds of thousands of Hungarian Jews in the summer of 1944 raises issues about how the secret of Auschwitz's function was kept from so many people for so long. They expected to see the bounteous city of Kenyermezo with which they'd been tantalised. How?

It was during the completion of the in-camp railway platform in Spring 1944 that a successful escape was accomplished by two Slovakian Jews from the small town of Trnava, Rudolf Vrba, aged 20, and Fred Wetzler, aged 26. They had survived in Auschwitz for more than two years. They disappeared from the roll-call on April 7th, a full five months before the Sonderkommando rebellion of October 7th, and escaped on April 10th. They knew that Hungarian deportations to Auschwitz were about to start. Vrba had overheard SS guards joking about looking forward to lots of Hungarian salami. Their reason for escaping when they did, in opposition to the international underground resistance leadership in the camp, was to warn the Jews of Hungary not to board the deportation trains. They set off south towards the Slovakian border 'without documents, without a compass, without maps and without a weapon' as Vrba put it.

After several close encounters with patrols, and with the vital help of (luckily) supportive Polish civilians, they made their way through mountains and woodlands for eighty miles until they reached Slovakia. They made contact with a Jewish doctor who brought them to meet Zionist leaders of the Slovakian Jewish community in Zilina on 25th April 1944.

For three days Vrba and Wetzler gave separate testimonies to spokesman for Slovakia's Jews Dr. Oskar Neumann and Jewish Council member Oskar Krasnyansky who came from Bratislava. Vrba drew an accurate map of the Auschwitz-Birkenau complex, indicating the gas chambers and the crematoria, so that Allied bombing missions could be sent. Both had acted as registrars of their blocks, so they

had accurate figures memorised of the numbers of arrivals. They gave an estimate that between June 1942 and April 1944 1.75 million Jews had been killed in Auschwitz. Vrba felt at first their interviewers didn't believe a word they were saying. It was only when he named a list of people who had been on the train that originally took him to Majdanek concentration camp in April 1942 that they changed their tone. They themselves had drawn up the deportation lists under pressure of the Nazis and their Slovak puppet government. As far as they were concerned the people they listed for deportation were sent to resettlement camps from which they would return after the war. These two young Slovak escapees now confronted them with the reality that, by their official compliance with Nazi diktats, they had sent tens of thousands to their deaths.

Now realising the seriousness of the moment, they spliced together Vrba's and Wetzler's testimonies, taken separately, into one report. Both escapees emphasised the urgency of informing the Hungarian Jewish leadership of imminent mass deportations of Hungarian Jews to Auschwitz. The SS Hungarian salami jokes led them to surmise this was the reason for the construction of the new platform inside the complex, nullifying the need for lorry transport from arrival to gas chamber.

Vrba knew the transports would start any day. Everything was ready in Auschwitz. He told the Zilina men to get the report into the right hands in Hungary immediately. They knew exactly who to contact: Rudolf 'Retzo' Kasztner in Budapest. He was a brilliant lawyer and journalist, the Zionist president of the Hungarian Jewish Council.

Vrba and Wetzler were fixed up with forged papers. Days passed. Vrba asked if there was any word back from Kasztner in Budapest. No, not yet. Then early on the morning of May 2nd Vrba asked the maid why she was crying. "They're deporting the Hungarians. Thousands of them. They're passing through Zilina in cattle trucks." He was told the Zilina leaders were gone to Bratislava, but they had sent sandwiches and milk for the people in the trains passing through.

Sandwiches. Milk.

More than four months and 430,000 genocide victims before October 7th, knowing what they knew from Vrba and Wetzler, they still propagated the Kenyermezo myth.

By then Kasztner read the Vrba-Wetzler report (named The Auschwitz Protocol). At that time, the end of April 1944, he was in talks with Adolf Eichmann, Nazi military commander in Hungary since mid-March. Hungary's Jews had already been rounded up into ghettos. Vrba recounts in his book "I Escaped from Auschwitz", how Kasztner, having read the Auschwitz Protocol, told Eichmann he knew his secret. At that, Eichmann knew he would have to bargain, because under his command he had only 150 SS men to supervise the deportation of one million Jews to Auschwitz.

Kasztner presented as a proposal to Eichmann his encouragement of resettlement in the fictional Kenyermezo in return for a train-load of prominent Jews of his choice to be sent to neutral Switzerland instead of Auschwitz. Eichmann agreed. Like Auschwitz Commandant Hoess, he and Kasztner both knew that secrecy and obscurity of truth was paramount for successful genocide.

While Kasztner consorted with Eichmann in the Majestyk, Vrba and Wetzler were sent to sow their wild oats in the Slovakian mountain resort of Liptovsky Svätý Mikuláš for six weeks. They were sidelined while their report was suppressed in the personal interests of the Zionist leader in league with Eichmann to send Hungary's Jews to their deaths with maximum efficiency – except a select number of his choice. It was, in fact, by now a habitual Zionist political strategy to make common cause with the German Nazis rather than working class, 'assimilated' or left-wing Jews; they had done it since opposing the 1933 international boycott of Germany led by Jewish US veterans, in return for the Ha'avara transfer agreement that allowed special terms for prominent Jews of their choosing to migrate to Palestine with a favourable proportion of their wealth. Kasztner and his Zionist accomplices in the Hungarian Judenrate maintained a strict public

silence about genocide in Auschwitz, and spread the comforting mirage of stepping on a train to a new life in Kenyermezo, thereby generating by outright treachery the myth weaponised by Zionism to this day 'they went like lambs to the slaughter'. The holocaust genocide was based on a massive deceit. Elie Wiesel summarised it as:- "We were taken just two weeks before D-Day (June 6th 1944), and we did not know that Auschwitz existed."

In Auschwitz, the summer months went by, with several trains arriving daily from Hungary, disgorging their passengers onto the platform while their luggage was brought to their quarters; but first a shower.

Eventually, the Vrba-Wetzler report was surreptitiously circulated by enough outraged people with enough outraged urgency to circumvent the Kasztner suppression. Its content was reported on BBC, it reached the Vatican forcing the Pope to condemn the deportation trains, and once a copy was read by Hungarian Prime Minister Horthy he was forced to stop the trains on July 10th 1944, by which time more than 400,000 had been exterminated. Horthy was deposed by the fascists of the Arrow Cross movement shortly thereafter. They reimposed the deportations of Jews, but this time on foot to Vienna for forced labour on defence infrastructure. Through the worsening weather, many thousands died by the wayside. By then, Rudolf Vrba had joined the Slovakian resistance to fight for the defeat of Nazi totalitarianism forever.

In the immediate aftermath of October 7th 1944, four Jewish women were hanged for smuggling into Auschwitz the dynamite used to blow up a crematorium, and all Sonderkommando rebels were slaughtered as a deterrent once their breakout was foiled. Primo Levi, in 'If This Is a Man', his memoir of his ordeal in Auschwitz, recounts being forced to stand with the entire camp watching the ceremonial slow hanging of one of the recaptured Oct 7th escapees, with band accompaniment. Meanwhile Kastner was continuing talks with Eichmann's successor as Nazi negotiator, Kurt Becher, in Budapest. He departed in an SS car to join his wealthy friends in Switzerland on October 27th 1944, where they waited in comfort until they could travel to Palestine. The chosen ones.

In 1946 Kasztner would write a defence affidavit for Becher at the Nuremberg Trials. As a result, Becher avoided not only the gallows but even a jail sentence, and went on to become a multi-millionaire businessman in West Germany and die of old age in 1995. Eichmann spoke highly of Kasztner, giving an interview from Argentina to a Dutch Nazi journalist in 1955 in which he spoke of negotiating with Jewish political officials in Budapest:-

"One man stood out among them, Dr. Rudolf Kastner, authorized representative of the Zionist movement. This Dr. Kastner was a young man about my age, an ice-cold lawyer and a fanatical Zionist. He agreed to help keep the Jews from resisting deportation and even keep order in the collection camps if I would close my eyes and let a few hundred or a few thousand young Jews emigrate illegally to Palestine."

Along with many of the select 1,684 Special Train passengers, Kasztner settled in Israel on its establishment by the violent Nakba that forced 750,000 Palestinians to flee their homes in 1948, and he became a junior minister for Ben-Gurion's Labour Party and a government spokesman. As Holocaust survivors streamed into Palestine turned into the Jewish state of Israel, many Hungarian Jewish refugees had developed an extremely dim view of Kasztner. This all played out, it must be remembered, in the context of a brutally violent ethnic cleansing of the Palestinian population, a context often omitted from otherwise meticulously researched historical accounts. Kasztner was accused of Nazi collaboration in a political pamphlet, and the government pressurised him to sue for libel. The trial turned into a damning public indictment of Kasztner. The pamphleteer was found not guilty, which meant by default Kasztner was found guilty of collaboration in the Holocaust. He appealed to the Supreme Court, but before it could deliver its verdict (a carefully curated not guilty majority) he was shot in Tel Aviv on March 4th 1957, less than a year before I was born. It's not that long ago.

The Holocaust has left deep psycho-political scars on human society we don't perceive fully or heed. And 'it', the recurring human societal habit of imposing genocide, even allowing for the accompanying

profound dread of it, didn't come out of nowhere. It's historically based, in Namibia with the almost total annihilation of the Herero and Nama people by the Germans in 1904, in Congo by the Belgians, in Tasmania by the British, in Peru by the Spanish, in Molucca by the Dutch, in Niger by the French, in Ireland by the British, in Armenia by the Turks, in East Timor by Indonesia, tumbling, tumbling out of my mind into ovens, into troughs in the earth, in Argentina, in Algeria, in Guatemala, in Rwanda, in The Canaries, in Massachusetts and Maine, in Sudan, in Hispaniola, in Bosnia, more, lots more, relentless, but also, the steadfast resisters to genocide, unheralded, unnamed, uncredited, the risk-taking helpers of genocide's escapees, the urgently outraged who take action, in those times past against genocide and slavery, and here, right now, for Palestine, for the people of Gaza, sailing on laden flotillas, attacking compliance with genocide, unsettling collaboration with genocide, smashing the Kenyermese myths of Gaza Riviera, collapsing the revered false idols dressed in civilisation garb, boycotting the commercial interests supporting the military onslaught on defenceless civilians, derailing the business-as-usual profiting from infliction of misery, cutting the wire, plugging the works, staunching the flow, changing the course of history set at present on repeat.

Rudolf Vrba opposed and derided the Zionist state of Israel. For his exposure of Kasztner and his cronies, he was studiously airbrushed out of Holocaust history, including and especially by Yad Vashem, and by the revered high priests of Israeli historians, even though he and his accomplice Fred Wetzler escaped to create the Auschwitz report that saved half a million Hungarian Jews from extermination by a grand deceit eased, amplified and facilitated by the Hungarian Zionist leadership.

The book 'Escaping Auschwitz' by Haifa University Emeritus Professor Ruth Linn, published by Cornell in 2004, is highly instructive in how tradition and collective memory is invented, shaped and weaponised in the service of the Israeli state and nation. One of the strategies used is the obstruction of translation into Hebrew of any work that counters the prevailing Israeli orthodoxy, which itself has

swung spectacularly from time to time especially with respect to Holocaust commemoration. Vrba's book 'I Escaped from Auschwitz', published in 1963 in English, and translated into many languages, was only translated into Hebrew by Ruth Linn herself in 1998. The classic textual account of the Holocaust, Raul Hilberg's *The Destruction of European Jews*, published in 1961, has never been translated into Hebrew, because it's perceived by the keepers of the Israeli historical canon as hostile, in that it gives what they perceive as undue emphasis to Zionist and Jewish Council collaborative activity with the Nazi Final Solution, which is, nevertheless, historically factual and supported incontestably by available archives. On the opposite end of the spectrum, there are brash propaganda exercises widely disseminated such as Anna Porter's *Kasztner's Train* (2007), with the embarrassing subtitle 'The True Story of an Unknown Hero of the Holocaust'.

A vast gallery of Israeli prime ministers and cabinet ministers have used biblical story narrative and Holocaust commemorative iconography as political artillery in support of the Greater Israel project, which has been the grand deceit half-hidden by the flimsiest of rhetorical and political veils since the utterly and horrifically honest real-politik genocidal Zionist writings of Jabotinski and Weizmann in the early 20th century. Ben-Gvir and Smotrich are just the latest say-it-as-it-is (just in Hebrew if possible) demagogues in the front row of a massive choir of fanatical Zionists (as Eichmann admiringly described Kasztner) joined in recent weeks by the corporate evangelical equivalents of the mid-19th century Holy Land gospel-clutchers Palmerston and Shaftesbury, the AI tech-heads of Palantir, Gloo, Stripe, Intel and too many others to mention, ranged behind Witkoff and Kushner, all slaving to continue feasting even more intensively on the genocidal horror they've made of the city given teeming life by the Palestinian refugees forced to shelter from the foundational violence of the state of Israel.

Gaza.

History did not begin on October 7th.

MAMDANI WINS!!! –Now the Hard Work Begins!

Peter Olney, Rand Wilson



On November 4, New York City voters delivered a resounding YES vote to elect Zohran Mamdani as mayor of the largest US city. The final results (yet to be certified) gave Mamdani 50.4% of the vote to Andrew Cuomo's 41.6% and 7.1% for Republican Curtis Sliwa.

To a great extent, the election was over after Mamdani smashed the Democratic Party establishment

by trouncing disgraced New York ex-Governor Cuomo in the June 24 primary: Mamdani 56% to Cuomo 43%

Mamdani's primary campaign benefitted from "Ranked Choice Voting" which enables candidates to endorse one another in a coalition to eliminate a candidate perceived as a danger to their shared values. In the June primary, five candidates, led by Mamdani, united to defeat the corrupt Cuomo. In particular, the cross endorsement of Mamdani by NYC Comptroller Brad Lander, who is prominent in the Jewish community, helped to deflect attacks accusing Mamdani of antisemitism.

The 34-year-old Mamdani projected confidence, discipline, and a sense of humor. When he called for a rent freeze in January, he welcomed the New Year on a Coney Island beach by plunging into the freezing ocean. Mamdani was fully clothed in his signature blue suit and tie! Videos of this stunt went viral. Since then, he has produced hundreds of short, punchy social media posts throughout the primary and final election push.

The most compelling aspect of Mamdani's campaign has been his platform's bold specificity. Unlike most candidates who talk in platitudes about values, integrity, and what they are against, Mamdani has put forward very specific policy goals:

- Increase the Minimum Wage to \$30 by 2030
- Freeze the Rents
- No Cost Childcare
- Free Buses
- City Owned Grocery Stores
- Make the Rich Pay!

Mamdani's platform has been attacked by the elites

as fiscally impossible. He has proposed paying for the increased costs of services by raising the corporate tax rate, and levying a 2% tax on the wealthiest 1% of New Yorkers; those earning above \$1 million per year annually.

While Mamdani's proposals clearly resonated with New York voters, winning elections takes more than a specific program: it requires a strong organization and cadres out in the field knocking on doors. In Mamdani's case, he had 45,000 volunteers in the primary, with grassroots enthusiasm expanding for the final election to 87,000 volunteers. It's the largest grassroots campaign in New York City's history. At the core of Mamdani's support are members of the New York's Democratic Socialists of America (DSA) chapter. Mamdani has been an active member of the chapter and won his election to the New York Assembly with support from the group.

The labor movement with a few exceptions played it safe in the June primary and supported the traditional Democrat, Cuomo. But Mamdani's smashing victory caused a quick pivot among NYC's most powerful labor organizations – Teachers, municipal employees, Teamsters and service workers. Mamdani's campaign now lists 22 union endorsements.

As Mamdani's election began to appear very tenable, the attacks magnified. Trump and the billionaires ran a full range of attack ads accusing Mamdani of anti-Semitism for his unflagging support for Gaza and bashing him as naïve and inexperienced because of his populist and "unreasonable socialist" program.

With Mamdani's victory comes the challenges of governing and delivering on his ambitious platform. While it's unlikely that New York's billionaires will all relocate to Texas to avoid higher taxes, it's very likely that there will be strong political resistance among traditional elected Democrats in New York's state government, which has purview over NYC taxation and spending decisions. That is why Mamdani has made it clear that the army of campaign volunteers cannot be demobilized. They must remain ready to attack any locally elected state rep-

resentatives who try to thwart Mamdani's agenda in the state legislature.

Viva Mamdani! Viva New York

Mamdani's win stands as an example in the midst of the rising anti worker, anti people authoritarianism of New York native Donald Trump. While New Yorkers are generally considered very liberal, the fact that Mamdani's message of taxing billionaires to make life affordable for the 99% reverberated so well with New York's struggling working class is an important lesson for other aspiring Democrats. A winning candidate that calls out our broken/rigged economic system (just like Bernie Sanders) sets the stage for more "paycheck populists" in the 2026 Congressional midterms.

A second lesson for Democrats is that the Mayor of the second largest Jewish metropolitan area in the world (after Tel Aviv) is an outspoken critic of genocide and a practicing Muslim progressive!

Finally, this election creates an opportunity for unions in NYC to grow. Will Mamdani's explicit endorsement of labor translate to using his municipal power to reinforce union power? Will New Yorkers see T-shirts inscribed with "Mayor Mamdani Wants You to Join a Union!"? Especially challenging will be if his policies could help bring justice to the enormous number of misclassified workers in the "gig" economy.

Mamdani will have a four-year term as mayor. Every Republican and corporate Democrat will do everything possible to ensure he fails to discredit his socialist platform. Any success he achieves as mayor will be due to the strength of the movement that prevailed in the primary and continued to grow for his election in November. If that movement stays mobilized, continues to grow, and delivers for New York's working class, it will be an inspiring political model that our labor movement should support and attempt to replicate in other US metropolitan areas.

Workers Strike at Coca Cola Germany

Thomas Klikauer

Coca-Cola Deutschland [Germany] has an almost 100-year-long history. It was first bottled in 1929 by the Vertriebsgesellschaft für Naturgetränke [Natural Drinks Company] – even though, apart from water and sugar, not much is natural in Coca-Cola.

In the first year, a whopping 5,840 crates of Coke were sold, and by 1939, 50 factories were in operation in Germany, selling 4.5 million crates of Coke.

To challenge the stratospheric rise of Coke, Karl Flach introduced a German version called Afri Cola on June 26, 1931, with headquarters in Cologne.

In the 1930s, Flach ran an advertising campaign against the market leader Coca-Cola, using Germany's widespread anti-Semitic attitudes in Hitler's Reich.

From a U.S. factory tour, Flach took bottle caps stamped with the word “kosher” in Hebrew script – merely indicating that Coke was kosher.

Yet, Flach presented them in Nazi Germany as proof that Coca-Cola was a Jewish company. It was factual nonsense but effective propaganda.

In the Coke vs. Afri Cola advertising war, it worked: Coke's market share declined, and even the Nazi Party headquarters hastily cancelled their Coke orders. The damage to Coke was severe.

Meanwhile, Flach's propaganda and anti-Semitic rumors that Coke had Jewish owners continued to circulate for years in Nazi Germany, where propaganda masterminds fueled conspiracy fantasies.

Meanwhile, Coke's German boss, Max Keith, maintained a good relationship with the Nazi regime. However, the Nazis – unsuccessfully – demanded the removal of a Jewish member from Coca-Cola's supervisory board.

Yet, nothing captures Coke's history in Germany – its ties to Nazism and post-war developments – better than Billy Wilder's utmost exquisite 1961 English-language – “James Cagney” – film *Eins, zwei, drei*.

Fast forward to today's Berlin, where Coke workers in Germany have gone on strike. Workers want to bottle the “brown gold” – water, sugar, and great marketing that leads to handsome corporate profits – for a fair wage.

In October 2025, workers and their trade union, NGG, began strike action at Coca-Cola's production site in the East German town of Genshagen, just outside Berlin.

According to Coca-Cola's management, there had already been a wage increase in 2025. However, there is considerable “displeasure” among Coke workers at the site. Unsurprisingly, the conflict centers on wages – a livelihood for workers but a mere business expense for management (read: to be reduced).

The resistance from management forced workers and their union, the NGG (food industry and hospitality), to call a one-day mini-strike to make it clear that workers would not accept the company's offer in collective bargaining negotiations.

In the nationwide negotiations, the NGG is demanding a wage increase of €150 (\$175) per month, plus an additional 5% increase for 2025 – most workers in Germany are paid monthly. The allowance for apprentices should increase by €120 (\$140) per year of apprenticeship. The new agreement would apply retroactively from September 1, 2025, for one year.

The noted “displeasure” of the workforce stems from Coca-Cola's rather offensive salary downgrades for its workers. Worse, Coca-Cola's management does



not envisage any wage increase for 2025 and only wants to offer a meager 1.5% in 2026.

While workers and the NGG call this a blunt provocation, no wage increase effectively means a 2.5% loss, as Germany's "official" inflation stands at 2.5%. With no raise, workers cannot even keep up with the cost of living – they go backwards.

In other words, Coke's management wants workers to have less money. And this is aside from the fact that any wage increase should be based on three elements:

Inflation – to maintain purchasing power;
 Productivity – since productivity gains are only possible through workers' labor, they should share in the benefits;
 Robin Hood principle – taking from the rich to give to the poor. With inequality and a CEO-to-worker pay gap of 632:1 (the so-called "CEO Pay Machine"), perhaps it's high time to reverse this ever-growing divide.

For workers, it was particularly reprehensible that compensation for trainees – already earning meager wages – should not increase. Not surprisingly, work-

ers in Genshagen, as elsewhere in the country, are finally demanding appreciation and fair pay.

A Coca-Cola manager, unsurprisingly, disagreed, claiming that wages had already increased by 3.5% or €170 (\$197) since March 2025. The union, however, argues that its wage demand is economically viable – and indeed, Coca-Cola is making plenty of money [solide Gewinne].

According to Germany's foremost business daily, Handelsblatt (October 2025 business data), Coca-Cola's net profit rose sharply by 17% to €244 million (\$260 million). Management is confident it will increase sales by 7% for the full year and achieve an operating return on sales of just over 29.5%.

Coca-Cola Deutschland has 13 factories and 6,500 workers. Yet despite these strong results, management prefers to talk about a "challenging economic situation" – while sales and profits continue to climb.

The increase in profits is only possible because fewer and fewer workers are doing more and more, with stagnating wages and rising costs. To boost profits

further, the company announced last year that it would cut 500 jobs in Germany.

Five locations – including Berlin-Hohenschönhausen – were to be closed to “position the company more cost-effectively in a persistently competitive market environment,” as management put it.

In other words, Coke Germany is not outsourcing – production remains in Germany. Rather, it’s automation that drives job cuts. Coca-Cola fills up to 60,000 bottles per hour, with 95% of machinery sourced domestically. It’s a production boom alongside job losses: fewer people, more output – the capitalist wonderland.

At Genshagen, about 180 people work surrounded by machines, filling large PET bottles. For the strike, around 100 workers turned out – the entire early and late shifts – including employees from production, administration, drivers, and trainees.

This was only the beginning; further strikes are planned in Berlin. By the end of October 2025, Coca-Cola locations across Germany were on strike. On November 10, the union and Coca-Cola will resume collective bargaining in Hamburg. Meanwhile, the union plans further strikes at the German headquarters in Berlin-Friedrichshagen.

Union officials remain confident, saying: “If Coca-Cola does not move in negotiations, workers will extend the strike until a fair and decent offer is on the table.”

Meanwhile, in East Germany, striking workers stopped the entire morning shift – nothing was running at the plant that day. According to management, 80 employees participated across both the early and late shifts.

In short, no Coke was produced during the strike, and several deliveries were postponed. With their action, workers showed they would not accept management’s previous (non-)offer in wage talks.

Coca-Cola is not planning any wage increase in 2025 – only a measly 1.5% next year. Management empha-

sizes that wages have already increased by a total of €670 (\$780) per month since 2023, including a 3.5% raise in early 2025.

While denying any increase and forcing workers to fall further behind, management still claims that in “recent successful years, we have recognized our workforce’s achievements with high salary qualifications.” They add that they “bear these higher wage costs permanently” – in other words, wages are treated merely as costs to be minimized.

Despite this deceptive corporate language, workers saw the planned wage stagnation [reduction] rather differently. It led to strikes at several sites in Germany to increase pressure in the Berlin-Brandenburg region – still trailing West Germany in pay levels.

Coca-Cola workers have already gone on strike at several other sites: Bremen, Hildesheim, Lüneburg, Mölln, and near Stuttgart. There are 24 Coca-Cola locations in Germany, including 13 production plants and around 6,500 employees.

At Bad Neuenahr, 250 Coca-Cola workers shut down the plant in a 24-hour strike that began with the night shift on Sunday. The action took place amid the ongoing wage dispute.

With strong participation, the production sites in Halle and Weimar were also shut down – all shifts joined, and production and bottling stopped completely.

Coca-Cola’s “zero increase” offer was met with zero acceptance among workers. The strong strike support will surely make management think twice. If management remains stubborn, workers will escalate.

A nationwide strike wave is sweeping through Coca-Cola. In East Germany, the Genshagen site in Brandenburg has already seen action. With the next bargaining round scheduled for November 10, 2025 – and management determined to make workers fall further behind – more strikes are likely to follow this winter at Coca-Cola Germany.

Human Rights Beyond Liberalism: Öcalan's Call for a Democratic Alternative

Yavor Tarinski

The allegedly free individual of capitalist individualism, who has been provoked into being at odds with society, essentially lives a life of abject slavery.

~Abdullah Öcalan

For many years a human rights discourse has been the main point of reference for the Western-type liberal republicanism. What distinguishes the regimes of this kind from others, according to their supporters, is their respect for civil freedoms. However, with the recent rise of authoritarianism around the world, civil liberties have come increasingly under threat everywhere.

But reality is that even before that, liberal theories have showed limited understanding of civic freedoms, which has allowed such systems to abuse human rights through the construction of legal justifications for abuses and other dubious policies.

The problem that liberalism has in regards to civil liberties is that it views them through its individualistic lens, thus making it myopic to the collective dimensions of individual rights – those being social, economic, gender, cultural, etc. realities. This political myopism has prevented Western-styled systems from successfully dealing with human rights abuses by state institutions or dominant actors.

Each and every society determines certain norms, freedoms, boundaries, and duties to its individual members and to itself as a whole, thus advancing certain ways of life while limiting others. The fact is that despite all the talk of “rule of law”, the real sovereign in any hierarchical system are the ruling elites. Social ecologist Modibo Kadalie under-

lines that organizational forms based on hierarchy contain within themselves the preconditions for abuses of freedoms and liberties, suggesting that:

“Anytime you have a hierarchic organization, you’re going to have racism, you’re going to have gender [inequality], and you have big problems of people thinking they’re better than other people, people thinking they know more than other people. So, you have to be aware of all of that. The basis of it is hierarchy which is held into place by a state, be it national, local, or inter mediate.”

Of course, there are major differences between political configurations based on multi-party parliamentarism and ones based on totalitarian non-pluralism. The problem is that even the most liberal of Western republics, where there are some checks and balances on those in power, is still based on the logic of domination. They are still based on the logic of the social contract as envisioned by Thomas Hobbes – a reality that views people as hopelessly individualistic, and thus, in need of an extra-social guardian. This role is given to the State, a bureaucratic top-down entity that rules over society in a soulless manner, whose very existence ensures the persistence of power discrepancies in society. Thus, this worldview outright begins with the acceptance that not all people can be equal – some will assume the role of shepherds, the rest that of the sheep. The bureaucratic State’s elevated detachment from the social base is underlined by Hobbes’s choice of name for it – the biblical monster Leviathan – with which he emphasizes its extra-social character. This worldview embodies hierarchy – a word that comes from Ancient Greek and literally means “rule of the holy” or “rule of the high priests”.

Needless to say, in such a social configuration, where the stratification of the people into rulers and ruled, there cannot be real equality no matter how much checks and balances are introduced. For freedom and justice to persist, what is needed is a substantial and equitable decentralization of power among all members of society. And here comes the worldview, advanced by the democratic tradition.

Jean-Jacques Rousseau also advances the concept of a social contract, but his starting point is the innate equality of all human beings, stating that “man is born free, but is everywhere in chains”. He negates the supposed necessity for extra-social hierarchical entities, insisting instead that it’s up to people themselves to set the norms and boundaries of their life in common, insisting that, “to renounce freedom is to renounce one’s humanity, one’s rights as a man and equally one’s duties”.

Trinidadian thinker and activist CLR James, one of the great voices of the democratic tradition from the 20th century, underlines the profound revolutionary implications of this approach by noting that:

“Rousseau says the contract is not in regard to any government at all. He says the contract is between us, as people, to form a society; but we have no contract with any government; the contract is strictly between us...”

Despite dynamic social struggles and several revolutions directed at claiming democratic rights, it was the two world wars and the prolonged cold one that cemented the State form as the only political entity compatible within the framework of capitalist globalization and the only arbiter in regards to human rights.⁸ Thus, the scales were tipped against the grassroots, which push for more empowerment and liberties, and in favor of ruling classes that strive at any cost at sustaining their privileged and exploitative position within society.

Within one such situation there seems to be no viable solution beyond the dominant two options: a future that seems to be in the grip of authoritarian leaders who would treat their subjected populations as they please; or a past and present that offers nothing but a precariousness in regards to people’s freedoms. Thus, a need for a third alternative arises, advanced by social movements around the world. One of them is the Kurdish freedom movement and its leading voice – the imprisoned Abdullah Öcalan.

Since his abduction in 1999 by an international conspiracy, Öcalan has called for a dialogue on the perspectives of a stateless and non-capitalist direct democracy in the Middle East and around the world. Through his plethora of books, an attempt is made at analyzing history and different aspects of social life through the lens of the democratic tradition. Among the concepts at which he has made a significant contribution is that of human rights, offering a reconceptualization that goes beyond the individualistic perceptions of State-centered ideologies.

Öcalan rejects the dominant purely individualistic notion of rights, insisting instead that they bear meaning only within communal contexts of democratic empowerment, social justice, gender equality and ecological balance. As he writes, what is individual is also social and that what is social is also individual; the one bears the other within itself, Individualism means nothing if there is no sociality.

Like Castoriadis’ social and individual autonomy, for Öcalan individual liberties are interwoven within the broader political architecture that determines the management of public affairs. Without people being able to directly and meaningfully participate in decision-making that concerns their collective coexistence, they can never really be free as individuals. And the same goes the other way around – no society can claim to be socially just if it does not guarantee freedom for its individual constituents. This is the pluralist essence of direct democracy in a nutshell.



For Öcalan there is no abstract citizen identity that is detached from a communal and democratic context – from spaces of collective action, decision-making, and shared identities. And this is particularly true for human rights, as they have been won through hard and continuous collective struggles, rather than by lone individuals or handed from above by benevolent rulers. In this context Öcalan underlines that:

“The concept of an abstract citizen is nothing but liberal babbling. The citizen can gain a concrete meaning only by belonging to a group, community, or civil society.”

In our current political context there supposedly are guaranteed and non-negotiable human rights, but despite that there are constant abuses of them, with no clear solution within the dominant societal architecture. And with liberal societies rapidly descending into fascism, the precarity of the liberal rights-centered discourse is even more

evident. If we pay attention to Öcalan’s analysis, we can begin to understand why this is so, and why our liberties remain in precarious condition as long as our societies are managed in a top-down manner by bureaucrats and capitalists. He insists that:

“Affirming individual rights but not collective rights and in fact the total rejection of collective rights is a fascistic approach. Recognition of individual rights and freedoms is worthless in the absence of recognition of collective rights and freedoms.”

Because of these conclusions Öcalan proposes a radical alteration of the way human rights are perceived – shift away from both liberal individualism and authoritarian communitarianism. His democratic alternative aims at blending together collective participation with societal pluralism – a type of optimal equilibrium. As he suggests:

“The primary goal should be to attain the optimal equilibrium between sociality and individuality. In the final analysis, social freedom not based on individual freedom is as doomed to failure as individual freedom not based on social freedom. Fundamental human rights can attain more value without attacking the right to be a society, knowing that they can only exist with a society and by not succumbing to extremely individualistic, irresponsible, and antisocial tendencies.”

This logic has serious revolutionary implications for the way our societies are being run, implying paths that must be avoided, or altogether abandoned, as well as other roads that might take us forward. Using this analysis as a compass, Öcalan suggests that the organs and institutions that belong to the tradition of domination not only cannot offer help in people’s struggle for individual and collective rights, but that they are actually an obstacle. Thus, the State, the capitalist market, and other bureaucratic structures must be abandoned. Because of this Öcalan offers the following principled compass:

“Not focusing on the State must be a point of principle. Societal freedom stands in contradiction to the state-focused work. State-focused work can only be carried out on behalf of the dominant power. For social forces whose goal is freedom, it is entirely obvious that their focus must be on democracy as a “non-state” policy, because they have a fundamental duty to oppose domination rather than be associated with it.”

The basis of a renewed conception of human-rights should be based on the features of the democratic tradition that advance the equality, yet uniqueness and invaluableity, of each and every human being. This has also implications on the specificities of a certain institutional approach that can allow for human rights to be fully exercised by all. Following from this, Öcalan insists that individual rights and freedoms can become meaningful only within a democratic society.

The logical conclusion of these thoughts is that the political environment from within which a real respect for, and expansion of, human rights can emerge is the one of genuine equality. In this type of setting individuals, in their role of active citizens, take active part in the self-management of public affairs through grassroots institutions such as communes and public assemblies, which in turn are coordinated by councils and people’s congresses of revocable delegates. Within one such political architecture there is a radical decentralization, such as the establishment of confederations of communes, that sustain and respect individual and communal traits, rather than aiming at their (often violent) homogenization into one single nation, as is the case with the Nation State. Öcalan puts it in the following way:

“In contrast to a centralist and bureaucratic understanding of administration and exercise of power, confederalism poses a type of political self-administration where all groups of the society and all cultural identities can express themselves in local meetings, general conventions and councils. This understanding of democracy opens the political space to all strata of the society and allows for the formation of different and diverse political groups. In this way it also advances the political integration of the society as a whole.”

In conclusion it must be stressed that the struggle for human rights cannot be left or channeled through the very institutions of domination that are so prone to abuse them. It must be an affair of the grassroots, stemming from democratic organs of the people like communes, assemblies and other expressions of political empowerment. For far too long have the same ruling class that oppress and exploit us, claim to be the guarantee for our freedoms and rights. It is in the here and now that the democratic tradition urges us to abandon the bureaucratic systems of domination, such as the State and the capitalist market, and return to the essence of humanity, based on grassroots action, on collective decision-making, and on coexistence on an equal basis. It is from this basis that we can create a world where people are equal and unique.