

## Build a mass movement to

# END ISRAELI STATE TERROR

## For a socialist solution to poverty and repression of Palestinians

**T**he horrific Israeli military bombardment of Gaza has been relentless for over a week, with terrible loss of life and devastation on the ground. Over 200 Gazans have been killed, over a quarter of them children. Residential buildings have been razed to the ground, and tens of thousands of people displaced with nowhere safe to go.

The tower blocks targeted and destroyed include the tallest in the city, Hanadi tower, and another containing international media offices. The UN reported that 40 schools and four hospitals have been partially or totally wrecked. Power and water infrastructure have been hit, adding to the humanitarian catastrophe.

The Socialist Party utterly condemns this massive offensive of state terror, which is shocking working people across the globe.

The hypocrisy of the Western powers adds to the anger. Spokespeople have called on “both sides to respect international humanitarian law” as if the weaponry and its impact on the two sides is comparable.

It is in Gaza that emergency services are struggling to remove bodies and the maimed from underneath mountains of rubble. It is in Gaza where the injured can’t travel along destroyed, impassable roads when trying to reach a hospital. When they get there, the health facilities are overwhelmed with too many appalling injuries to treat and not enough electricity and other basic resources.

Obscenely, the Netanyahu-Gantz Israeli government said it hasn’t finished, even after Hamas in Gaza requested a ceasefire. More Israeli shelling is planned, and thousands of army reservists have been called into service to threaten a ground invasion. The ground invasion in 2014 elevated the death toll of Palestinians in that war to over 2,000.

Outrage has been expressed in demonstrations across the Middle East and globally. This anti-war movement needs to be built rapidly, demanding an immediate end to the onslaught on Gaza, the blockade of Gaza and the brutal occupation of the Palestinian territories.

Many millions of workers in trade unions around the world can bring their organised strength into the movement - and support action like the general strike action that was called on 18 May across the Palestinian territories and in Palestinian communities in Israel against the war. Italian dockers in the port of Livorno set an example by refusing to load a ship that was taking arms and explosives to Israel. One of their union representatives stated that the port “will not be an accomplice in the massacre of the Palestinian people”.

In Gaza and the West Bank, Palestinians need to build a third intifada, a new mass popular uprising, fully democratically organised under their own control and decisions. This would be a force which could grow to make the occupation untenable, and allow long-awaited self-determination for the Palestinian people.

The pro-capitalist Palestinian organisations and leaders - including Fatah and Hamas - have shown their complete inability over decades to offer a way forward. Ordinary Palestinians can only rely on their own struggle and the building of their own political party - independent of capitalist interests - for a solution, and the support of workers across the Middle East and internationally.

This will inevitably entail adopting a socialist programme, as the only alternative that can end the system which means poverty and repression for the Palestinians - and at the same time set Israeli workers on a road towards breaking from their capitalist class and moving to challenge and remove it.



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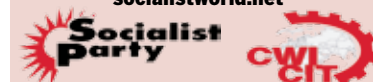
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"The philosophers have only interpreted the world, in various ways; the point is to change it."  
Karl Marx

Socialist Party

WHAT WE THINK

# Johnson's Tories and Starmer's Labour have nothing to offer workers

Coming hot on the heels of the 6 May election results, the Queen's Speech has confirmed the Socialist's election analysis (see 'Hartlepool sums up Labour crisis' at [socialistparty.org.uk](https://socialistparty.org.uk)): the local election and mayoral gains made by the Tories in England will be fleeting, because they will be totally incapable of fulfilling their empty promises to improve the lives of working-class people.

Where is the content to Boris Johnson's vacuous rhetoric of 'levelling up' and 'building back better'? Certainly not in the 25 bills announced in parliament. With the 'skills and education' bill you can undergo training, but only if you are prepared to sink into debt, with no guarantee of a job at the end of it.

The Tories are once again presenting themselves as a party for workers. But it will still be legal for bosses to fire workers and rehire them, having shredded their pay and conditions.

Freeports will mean a green light to drive down conditions to the lowest possible level. The promised legislation on protecting employment rights has been ditched because of opposition within the Tories, voicing the demands of the big business interests they really represent.

The government also plans to grab planning controls from local councils - not to build genuinely affordable social housing for working-class people, but to allow rapacious developers to profit from luxury housing.

And what happened to the 'open ready' plan for social care? Delayed, because the Tories can't agree on how it should be paid for. While they were prepared to do 'whatever it takes', borrowing billions to make sure they and their profit system survived Covid, there are clearly deep divisions over post-pandemic spending and taxation.



**Legislation on protecting employment rights has been ditched because of opposition within the Tories**

Johnson, backed by 'red wall' Tory MPs, is prepared to flirt with limited tax increases on big business and the rich to fund public spending and to try and prolong support from their new electoral base. Others around chancellor Rishi Sunak are opposed to any incursions, however limited, into the wealth of their traditional supporters.

These and other divisions could explode to the surface at any time - shattering the illusion of Tory unity, especially when any post-lockdown economic recovery is revealed to be shallow and ephemeral.

To distract from the hollowness of what is really on offer, the Tories have dished out headline-grabbing bills on voter ID, immigration, 'freedom of speech' in universities, etc (see pages 4 and 12). And to prepare for the inevitable social explosions on the horizon the policing bill is being reintroduced in an attempt at clamping down on the right to protest (see back page).

More 'Kill the Bill' demos are likely. But even if the bill passes in parliament it will not succeed in its aim of curbing protest, such will be the growing anger of workers and young people at mounting attacks on living standards, public services and democratic rights.

As we said in our post-election analysis, Tory wins in former Labour strongholds reflected a haemorrhaging of support from Keir Starmer's 'under new management' Labour rather than a stampede of working-class people enthusiastically transferring their vote to Johnson's Tories. This was crystal clear in Hartlepool, where the Tory vote increased by just 1,200, while the Labour vote went into freefall, with 13,000 former voters deserting them.

The Labour Party under Starmer is no more a party for workers than the Tories are, despite its trade union affiliates. Under Corbyn's leadership, Labour had an already costed and worked-out social care policy that has now disappeared into the ether, along with the rest of the popular



PHOTO PARLIAMENTARY RECORDING UNIT/CC

pro-working class policies in Corbyn's manifesto. The need for mass political representation for working-class and young people, in the form of a new party with the trade unions and organised workers at its core, has never been clearer.

#### Abusive relationship

The trade unions are, in effect, in an abusive relationship with Labour. Starmer has refused to come out in opposition to 'fire and rehire' just as he opposed education workers when they took action over school Covid safety in January.

Ex-Labour leader Tony Blair and his side-kick Peter Mandelson, who increasingly has Starmer's ear, have called for a complete "deconstruction and reconstruction" of the party. For Mandelson this means "hard-left factions seeking to control our largest trade unions should not have a guaranteed place in the governing counsels of the party".

The suspension of Howard Beckett, Unite assistant general secretary and one of the union's representative on Labour's national executive committee, is a sign of what is to come (see opposite).

It's not easy to make the break from an abusive relationship. But following the decision of the RMT transport union's executive that the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) should resume standing candidates in elections, over 300 stood on 6 May.

This marked an initial but important step in giving confidence to trade

**Tory government legislation in the recent Queen's Speech contains further attacks on living standards and democratic rights**

unionists that an independent workers' electoral challenge is possible, and that a mass workers' party can be built in the future if a lead from the trade unions is forthcoming.

We are still at an early stage in this

process. But the number of trade unionists who stood under the TUSC banner, the record applications by workers to get involved in TUSC, and the support that TUSC's electoral challenge and the need for a socialist

political alternative obtained from striking workers on picket lines during the election, are all signs of how pressure will grow within the unions for their leaders to take the initiative in building a new mass workers' party.

## Starmer moves against Unite

### No to attack on Howard Beckett

Howard Beckett, Unite assistant general secretary and Labour national executive committee (NEC) member has - like Jeremy Corbyn and hundreds of others before him - been suspended from the Labour Party.

The formal reason for his suspension was a tweet, deleted after half an hour, in support of the heroic community action in Glasgow to prevent two asylum seekers being deported (see page 13). In protesting against the vicious racism being implemented by Tory home secretary Priti Patel, he tweeted that she "should be deported, not refugees. She can go along with anyone else who supports institutional racism".

As Howard said later, his tweet, for which he apologised, "was never intended to be literal. My intention was to emphasise that racist policies should be rejected" and later, that "no one should be deported".

Patel, of course, should not face deportation, but the trade union movement should build a mass

movement to force her out of office, along with every other member of the Tory government. Just as Maggie Thatcher, the first female prime minister, worsened the lives of women, Priti Patel, acting as a supporter of the capitalist system, is carrying out viciously racist policies.

The real motivation for Howard Beckett's suspension is clear; it is the latest step in the current Labour leadership's drive to annihilate even the memory of Corbynism. Beckett has led the rearguard fight on Labour's NEC against Starmer's successful campaign to make Labour once again a reliable tool for the capitalist elite. As Tony Blair's 'prince of darkness' Peter Mandelson, put it just six days ago, he wants to stop "hard left factions seeking to control our largest trade unions" having "a guaranteed place in its governing counsels".

Beyond trying to remove a thorn in Starmer's side on the party's NEC, the Labour leadership is also trying to have an effect on the Unite general

Socialist Party

## WHAT WE STAND FOR

The Socialist Party fights for socialism - a democratic society run for the needs of all and not the profits of a few. We also oppose every cut, fighting in our day-to-day campaigning for every possible improvement for working-class people. The organised working class has the potential power to stop the cuts and transform society.

As capitalism dominates the globe, the struggle for genuine socialism must be international. The Socialist Party is part of the Committee for a Workers' International (CWI) which organises across the world.

Our demands include...

#### PUBLIC SERVICES

- No to ALL cuts in jobs, public services and benefits. Defend our pensions.
- No to privatisation and the Private Finance Initiative (PFI). Renationalise all privatised utilities and services, with compensation paid only on the basis of proven need.
- Fully fund all services and run them under accountable, democratic committees that include representatives of service workers and users.
- Free, publicly run, good quality education, available to all at any age. Abolish university tuition fees now and introduce a living grant. No to academies and 'free schools'!
- A socialist NHS to provide for everyone's health needs - free at the point of use and under democratic control. Kick out private contractors!
- Keep council housing publicly owned. For a massive building programme of publicly owned housing, on an environmentally sustainable basis, to provide good quality homes with low rents.

#### WORK AND INCOME

- Trade union struggle for an immediate increase in the minimum wage to £12 an hour without exemptions as a step towards a real living wage of at least £15. For an annual increase in the minimum wage linked to average earnings. Scrap zero-hour contracts.
- All workers, including part-timers, temps, casual and migrant workers to have trade union rates of pay, employment protection, and sickness and holiday rights from day one of employment.
- An immediate 50% increase in the state retirement pension, as a step towards a living pension.

- Scrap Universal Credit. For the right to decent benefits, education, training, or a job, without compulsion.
- Scrap the anti-trade union laws! For fighting trade unions, democratically controlled by their members. Full-time union officials to be regularly elected and receive no more than a worker's wage. Support the National Shop Stewards Network.
- A 35-hour week with no loss of pay.

#### ENVIRONMENT

- Major research and investment into replacing fossil fuels with renewable energy and into ending the problems of early obsolescence and un-recycled waste.
- Public ownership of the energy generating industries. No to nuclear power. No to Trident.
- A democratically planned, low-fare, publicly owned transport system, as part of an overall plan against environmental pollution.

#### RIGHTS

- Oppose discrimination on the grounds of race, gender, disability, sexuality, age, and all other forms of prejudice.
- Repeal all laws that trample over civil liberties. For the right to protest! End police harassment.
- Defend abortion rights. For a woman's right to choose when and whether to have children.
- For the right to asylum. No to racist immigration laws.
- For the right to vote at 16.

#### MASS WORKERS' PARTY

- For a mass workers' party drawing together workers, young people and activists from workplace, community, environmental, anti-racist and anti-cuts campaigns, to provide a fighting, political alternative to the pro-big business parties.

#### SOCIALISM AND INTERNATIONALISM

- No to imperialist wars and occupations.
- Tax the super-rich! For a socialist government to take into public ownership the top 150 companies and the banking system that dominate the British economy, and run them under democratic working-class control and management. Compensation to be paid only on the basis of proven need.
- A democratic socialist plan of production based on the interests of the overwhelming majority of people, and in a way that safeguards the environment.
- No to the bosses' neoliberal European Union and single market. For a socialist Europe and a socialist world!

Do you agree? Join the fightback!

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Two peas in a pod. Neither Starmer nor Johnson represent the interests of the working class PHOTOS CHATHAM HOUSE/CC



# NHS: Scottish vote shows unions must fight for 15% rise

NHS WORKER

Thursday 1 April should have seen a significant pay rise for all NHS staff. Instead, we have seen further delays and no announcement from the Pay Review Body.

The government has recommended a 1% rise, which is an insult to all those health workers working through the Covid crisis. Some have given their lives due to inadequate health and safety and PPE shortages. The government delayed submitting their evidence to the Pay Review Body by seven weeks.

Throughout the Covid pandemic, NHS staff and those in the care sector have been praised and applauded. Hand claps are not enough, and do not compensate for keeping the NHS going. Many staff have become infected and now suffer with 'long Covid', which could affect their future employment and capacity to return to work in a similar role.

## Exodus

Thousands of nurses are looking to leave the NHS and nursing due to staff shortages, low pay and long hours. Many rely on food banks to survive, while big business and Tory cronies have made millions on PPE and other preferential contracts.

Unison, the biggest health union, led the negotiations in England and Wales. It is calling for a £2,000 rise across the board.

Other smaller unions have called for between 12.5% and 15%. The initial Unison claim called for this to be backdated to December 2020 in recognition of the sacrifices made by NHS workers.

But, in Scotland, after Unison recommended accepting a 4% rise from the Scottish government, a ballot of Unison members voted to accept.

Lower-banded staff will get a rise of just over £1,000, far short of the £2,000 claim across the UK. In contrast, Unison's local government section is calling for a vote to reject their pay offer, which is not that different from the 4% offered to Scottish health workers.



STEVE EASON/CC

The Royal College of Nursing (RCN) and GMB unions have rejected the offer in Scotland. This now needs to be backed up with strike action. The Scottish government is using the Unison vote to try to impose 4%.

Unison claims this is the best that could be achieved under negotiation,

but has made no attempt to mobilise the membership. A big vote to reject could have paved the way to vital industrial action.

The trade union leadership, in the main, has failed to support a campaign for a 15% rise. Before the recent election, Labour was only calling for 2.1%.

The government has announced an increase in NHS funding to allow for cancelled appointments and increased demand following the end of the pandemic, yet no increase for NHS workers' pay.

Trade unions and community campaigns should call a national demonstration, and prepare

for strike action to fight for 15% and for a fully funded NHS.

Unison members have the opportunity to elect representatives to the union's national executive council who are prepared to lead a fight on NHS pay and in defence of public services.

# Unison: Elect reps who will back strike action

NHS WORKER

Ballot papers are being sent out to the 1.3 million members of public sector union Unison to elect the new national executive council (NEC), the highest elected body of the union. The best way to encourage people to vote is to inspire them with what Unison can do to fight for them.

The NEC, along with the general secretary, is the body which has the final say on whether Unison will back industrial action or not. This alone will be a crucial question in the next few months, with pay a vital issue for health, local government and education workers.

It was strike action that won equal pay for NHS workers in Northern Ireland, in one of the first industrial

battles after Boris Johnson was elected. This included RCN, striking for the first time. It is strike action that will be crucial in the battles over pay now.

There has been quite a bit of discussion in the NHS pay campaign Facebook groups. Unison members are rightly angry that so few candidates support the grassroots campaign for a 15% pay rise for NHS staff, which the Socialist Party supports.

Even among the candidates standing for health seats, only one called for a 15% pay rise - Socialist Party member Adrian O'Malley. The response was clear in the comments:

"Then that is where people should be putting their vote IMHO. A record of defending members, fighting privatisation and 15%. Ticks all the boxes." "Yes he's the only one who stood

out to me, calling for 15% and socialist representation."

"He's the one who got my vote too."

Adrian came within 300 votes of winning a seat on the NEC in the last elections two years ago. With the mood for change among many Unison members, particularly after the struggles of Covid and the insulting 1% NHS pay offer, you'd expect him to be elected easily.

But yet again the left is split, risking letting the right in again. Rather than coming to an agreement not to stand against each other in key seats, a left slate headed by Paul Holmes, who ran for general secretary, has insisted on standing against Adrian, and other Socialist Party members. Unfortunately, the Paul Holmes slate is also standing on a weaker, less combative

programme than the socialists they are standing against, which has less chance of inspiring members.

The sad fact is, most members are not that engaged with how the union works, and don't understand the NEC or the role it can play in deciding the direction of the union. Unison activists face a battle to get the biggest turnout possible. In the general secretary election last autumn the turnout was 9.8%.

It is more important than ever to ensure that the left wins a majority on the NEC. We need a fighting, democratic Unison with a socialist leadership.

Current Socialist Party NEC members Hugo Pierre and April Ashley are standing for re-election. And Socialist Party Scotland's Jim

McFarlane has been re-elected unopposed.

- Other Socialist Party standing are:
  - ADRIAN O'MALLEY NATIONAL HEALTH SERVICE GENERAL SEAT
  - NAOMI BYRON GREATER LONDON LOW-PAID RESERVE SEAT
  - JOHN MALCOLM NORTHERN REGION MALE SEAT
  - TOM HUNT EAST MIDLANDS MALE SEAT
  - DAVID MAPLES NATIONAL DISABLED MEMBERS' GENERAL SEAT
- The election runs until 27 May

Rules introduced by Unison to clamp down on democratic debate in the union mean that candidates for union elections cannot 'invite or accept support' in money or kind from any entity which 'is not provided for in Unison rules'. These articles are produced without the authorisation of any of the candidates, in order to comply with these requirements.



## New voter ID laws Electoral fraud: Tory style

DAVE MURRAY ESSEX SOCIALIST PARTY

According to the Queen's Speech, people in the UK will need 'valid' photo ID to be able to vote in person in future elections. Most commentators think that the plan is to have this new law in force by May 2023. The government also plans to abolish the Fixed-term Parliaments Act, in order to give the prime minister the power to call a general election whenever he wishes - May 2023 for instance.

Cabinet Office research found that 9% of UK adults do not have the kind of ID that will allow them to vote under the proposed new law. The vast majority of these people will be poor, and, of course, black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) people will be affected disproportionately. Anyone

whose documents are in the hands of the authorities - for instance, if they are disputing a Home Office asylum or immigration decision - will have special difficulty in voting.

In the last general election, cases of 'personation' - fraudulently presenting yourself at the polling station to take someone else's vote - numbered single figures, according to the Electoral Commission. Even Tory MP David Davis said it was a "solution in search of a problem". The ex-leader of the Scottish Tories was a little more succinct, "total bollocks" is how she described the move.

For a right-wing prime minister whose biography reads as a trail of broken promises, however, there is a very real problem. Even Boris Johnson recognises that his 'popularity' may not last.

As the cost of the government's Covid response comes to weigh heavily on public services, public sector pay, and in and out of work benefits, there will be an inevitable backlash. There is little support for renewed austerity outside of the boardrooms of Britain's vulture capitalists.

This crude attempt at voter suppression must be seen together with the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill, which seeks to limit protest and direct action (see back page). It is part of the Conservative's preparations for a more authoritarian approach to governing the UK.

Given the divisions in the Conservative Party, and the overwhelming opposition in wider society on this issue, it is entirely possible that there could be a U-turn. The organised working class has the power to force this. It must do so as part of a spirited and concerted resistance to renewed austerity.

In this we will have to grapple with a major problem for working-class voters. We do not yet have a mass party of our own advocating a socialist alternative to the hardships of capitalism.

## ● Pouring on petrol

US president Joe Biden has told Israel's Benjamin Netanyahu that he 'favours' a ceasefire between Israel and Hamas - which is actually a step forward compared to Donald Trump's previous position on the Palestinian/Israeli conflict.

But, of course, at the same time Biden fully supports the Israeli government's 'right to defend itself' ie to bomb Gaza into rubble.

To underline this 'right', the American Democrat has approved the sale of \$735 million in precision-guided weapons to Israel. These 'precision weapons' have been responsible for the deaths so far of over 200 Palestinians, mostly civilians, including children.

## ● Revolting Rich

The rich are revolting. Or at least some of them are. The homes of the richest man in the world, Jeff Bezos, have been picketed. Not by low-paid Amazon workers demanding a pay

rise, but by marginally less rich millionaires demanding to be taxed!

The group named 'Patriotic Millionaires' carried placards outside homes in New York and Washington state reading 'Cut the bullshit. Tax the rich'. Clearly this group of exploiters are scared. They can feel the hot breath of working-class anger on their necks and want to throw us a few more crumbs to keep us quiet.

## ● Capitalism's climate criminals

Over half of the 130 million metric tonnes of single-use plastic thrown away in 2019 was produced by just 20 companies. It's no surprise that these multi-billion dollar enterprises prioritise profit over the environment.

The fact that so many of these climate crimes are committed by so few shows that, if these companies were nationalised under democratic workers' control and management, a socialist plan could quickly move towards environmentally sustainable production.

## ● Chile: Rewriting the constitution

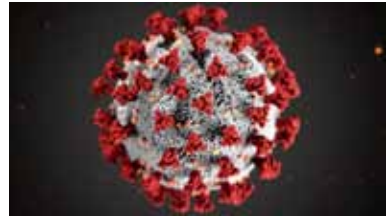
A political earthquake struck Chile after voters snubbed the government's right-wing coalition of President Sebastian Pineria in elections to the constitutional assembly - which is tasked with rewriting the current constitution imposed on the country by the late general Pinochet's dictatorship (see 'Defeat for political caste in Chile' - socialistworld.net).

Out of 155 seats in the assembly, the ruling coalition only won 37, meaning that it fell short of the one-third required to veto any changes, whereas a left-leaning bloc won 52 seats and a further 17 seats were reserved for indigenous groups.

The constitutional assembly was approved in 2020 by 78% of voters. This popular demand to rewrite the constitution was the direct result of massive protests, including a general strike, against austerity and wealth inequalities which erupted in October 2019 (see 'Chile in revolt' - socialistparty.org.uk).

# What's needed to stop more Covid outbreaks? Full pay, nationalisation and more

JON DALE UNITE NOTTINGHAMSHIRE HEALTH SECRETARY (PERSONAL CAPACITY)



Meeting friends in a pub... a family restaurant meal... going to the match - is life about to return to normal? Covid-19 infection rates have fallen to their lowest since last summer.

But as restrictions on meeting indoors are lifted, a dark cloud is growing. Will the new Covid-19 variant, first identified in India, have a similar devastating effect to the so-called 'Kent' variant last autumn?

Without full pay and other support for everyone needing to isolate, another wave of infection is probable as many workers with insecure jobs have no choice but to remain at work.

Even if less severe, it will be the government's responsibility should this occur, again putting business interests before public health. Good quarantine facilities for travellers from India should have been provided on 2 April.

The requirement was delayed three weeks, and some travellers used public transport to get to their quarantine, possibly infecting others. Boris Johnson had a trade trip to India planned for 23 April, cancelling at the last minute under pressure.

Horrorful scenes at Indian hospitals shows the race to vaccinate the world's population is a long way from success. 3% of Indians have been vaccinated. Poor countries, with even fewer vaccinated, are at risk of similar overwhelming outbreaks.

Vaccination should not be dependent on profit-making pharmaceutical corporations. Before the pandemic there should have been a global network of factories ready

to produce vaccines for the world's population.

Corporations weren't interested without profits. But Covid-19 suddenly made vaccines big business.

Astra-Zeneca is supposedly selling at cost price 'while the pandemic lasts'. Its chief executive, Pascale Soriot, has had a pay rise this year. Last year's £15.4million was clearly not enough!

In 2018, he said he found it annoying to be the lowest-paid CEO in the industry. He's moved up the league, but still lags behind Johnson & Johnson's Alex Gorsky's £21million. Johnson & Johnson is currently trying to offload short shelf-life unfrozen vaccines to Latin America.

Meanwhile, Stéphane Bancel, Moderna chief executive, is now 'worth' almost \$5 billion after its shares soared 500% over the past year. Adar Poonawalla, Serum Institute of India chief executive, rents a London flat for £50,000 a week.

Just how many vaccines could be provided to the world's poorest from their wealth alone? Only nationalisation of the global industry under democratic workers' control would allow its vast resources to be planned to meet urgent need.

● Capitalism responsible for stark global Covid vaccine inequality - see page 15

## ● Covid: What kind of inquiry?

Boris Johnson has announced there will be an inquiry into the government's handling of the Covid pandemic. But he's delayed it until next year.

In April, the Socialist Party said: "The Socialist Party is in favour of an inquiry, but we believe that absolutely no trust can be placed in Johnson's Tory government and the capitalist establishment to lead it. We demand that any investigation into the disastrous response to Covid be conducted by the workers' and trade union movement."

See 'Covid inquiry? Workers must decide: Put Tories and capitalism in the dock' at socialistparty.org.uk.

## ● Racism: Tragic anniversary

George Floyd was murdered by the police one year ago on 25 May 2020.

His death sparked a worldwide working-class movement against racism, inequality and injustice.

See 'Capitalism = racism: You fight capitalism with socialism' at socialistparty.org.uk

## ● Crony Cameron

It's no wonder former Tory prime minister David Cameron bombarded government ministers with 45 private messages trying to drum up cash for finance company Greensill. Greensill paid Cameron even more than the 'pennies' he was paid as prime minister. Cameron refused to reveal how much, only admitting it was somewhere between £150,402 and £60 million!

Not shy of further hypocrisy, Cameron said it was "appropriate" for him to call and text ministers and officials directly. But it would be wrong for another prime minister to do the same.





# PCS elections - incumbents win, but solid vote for Broad Left Network



**KATRINE WILLIAMS**  
VICE-PRESIDENT PCS DWP GROUP  
(PERSONAL CAPACITY)

The PCS 2021 national election results were announced on Friday 14 May. On a turnout reduced from just over 10% to 7.5% from the elections which last took place two years ago, the Democracy Alliance slate was re-elected. Significantly, only 13,000 members voted out of a potential of 170,000.

The Broad Left Network (BLN), which contested these elections for the first time, and has mounted the first serious challenge against the Democracy Alliance for twenty years, secured one place on the 35-strong executive body.

Departmental limitation prevented Socialist Party member Dave Semple from making that two. He secured over 4,000 votes, and other BLN candidates missed election by just a few hundred votes.

BLN supporters have gone from four seats to one on the executive. However, these four positions were secured in the 2019 elections before the split in Left Unity. This was triggered after leading Left Unity members, including PCS general secretary Mark Serwotka, refused to accept the democratic election of Chris Baugh as Left Unity's candidate for the assistant general secretary election.

Standing for the first time, the Broad Left Network won a solid vote which provides a firm base to continue to build support for the BLN programme right across PCS. BLN supporters proposed discussions

with the Independent Left (IL) on an electoral agreement that the results show, could have made inroads into the Democracy Alliance majority. However, the IL's lack of seriousness has been revealed by their refusal to properly engage with this.

The current union leadership has moved to the right under the pressure of events. This will continue and will be exposed in the coming period as the onslaught from the Tories increases as a result of 'Covid austerity'.

While the current leadership's move to the right has been clear to the BLN members on the national executive, the deterioration has not yet been experienced by the majority of PCS activists and members. This will change very quickly as the challenges faced by PCS members play out over the next period, and members are potentially forced back into the workplace.

This move to the right has already broken cover. During the ballot period the BLN was attacked on the official union website for leafletting at the DVLA offices in Swansea, with the incredible claim that this undermined the DVLA dispute (see right).

Aside from being without foundation, and without any attempt to establish the facts, this use of official union resources to smear opponents sets a dangerous precedent in PCS - one akin to the election interference routinely practiced by the right-wing leadership of the CPSA, the PCS predecessor union.

Following the announcement of the results, Marion Lloyd, Socialist Party member and BLN candidate for union president said: "This is the

first time the BLN has stood in the national PCS elections. The vote we have achieved is a solid one. And despite all the barriers, we are less than 1,500 votes behind our opponents."

The role that BLN supporters have played on the national executive committee over the last two years, especially during the Covid pandemic, has been fearless. We stood alone against the leadership when they parked our national pay claim last year, and we have continually demanded a far more combative and collective approach to the fight for safe workplaces for our members: one that, if acted upon, could mean a much safer working environment in both DVLA and Jobcentres.

We have built the BLN during this period, we have built support for our programme. This programme will be vital to deal with the attacks the Tories have planned for us.

All those members who want a fighting PCS - join us in that fight.

The Tory government and its big business backers, faced with a massive bill for the pandemic and Brexit, will unleash heightened attacks on us and public services generally. The PCS leadership will be faced with a choice - fight or fold. We must build the pressure to ensure they fight.

The role of the BLN is crucial. Its programme for a fighting democratic union and the increasing levels of support among PCS activists means the BLN can look to the future with confidence.

• To join BLN or get to know what it stands for visit [pcsbln.wordpress.com](http://pcsbln.wordpress.com)

# DVLA workers suspend strike for talks

**DAVE WARREN**  
FORMER DVLA WORKER AND SWANSEA AND WEST WALES SOCIALIST PARTY

The PCS at the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA) has suspended the first half of a two-week strike planned to commence on 17 May. The suspension is to enable talks with management to take place concerning the dispute over Covid safety in the workplace.

Management brought over 2,000 staff back into the workplace last September, leading to an outbreak of around 600 Covid cases during the second wave. Now, with restrictions being eased, they wanted to accelerate the return of more staff to the workplace over a period of two weeks, but have agreed to postpone this to facilitate talks. PCS is demanding that as many workers as possible are given the safer option of working from home.

DVLA management has been intransigent up to now, riding out two

periods of strike action of four days each and refusing to engage in meaningful talks. They even threatened to call the police to clear away a legal, socially distanced picket outside the main DVLA site.

This is the same management that previously complained to the union about leafletting by Broad Left Network (BLN) supporters for the recent elections (see left) outside the DVLA contact centre. Ironically, this resulted in the Left Unity led leadership of PCS also attacking the BLN.

If talks fail to deliver a settlement, PCS plans to go ahead with a week-long strike from 24 May. For the first time in the dispute, this will involve all members - including those currently working from home - a strategy previously advocated by BLN supporters. Using the full strength of the membership, rather than just those required to attend work, is essential to bring sufficient pressure to bear on management and bring the dispute to a successful conclusion.



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# Huge victory at Go North West as Unite defeats 'fire and rehire'

As we got to press, bus drivers at Go North West in Manchester have defeated attempts to fire and rehire them, agreeing a deal which will end one of the country's longest-running industrial disputes.

The deal was presented to a mass meeting of the drivers, members of Unite, on 17 May at the company's Queens Road depot. This was followed by a workplace ballot, where members voted overwhelmingly to accept the negotiated agreement, bringing to a close the 85-day strike.

The company has agreed to demands that it will never use 'fire and rehire' in any form, and the drivers now no longer stand to lose

thousands of pounds in wages every year.

The drivers began all-out, continuous strike action on 28 February.

Unite general secretary Len McCluskey says: "This is a tremendous victory by Unite's members at Go North West who through their dedication, solidarity and commitment have defeated the attempt to fire and rehire them."

"This dispute should also send a clear and unequivocal message to all employers that Unite will never accept fire and rehire for our members - that we will do everything in our power to prevent it, and we will win."

# London Metrolink strike against 'remote sign-on' goes ahead

48 hours of strike action by more than 4,000 bus drivers in London will go ahead on Tuesday 25 May and Wednesday 26 May, to be followed by a 72 hour strike from Monday 7 June to Wednesday 9 June.

Unite gave Metrolink bosses nearly three weeks' warning to drop its 'remote sign-on' policy because of health and safety concerns regarding its members and the travelling public - or face industrial action.

'Remote sign-on' means drivers do not report to a depot, but meet their bus at an alternative location, such as a bus stop. It forces drivers to start work away from the depot, reducing costs and boosting the company's profits.

The policy raises concerns over lack of toilets and canteens, increased driving hours, and waiting for the bus in unpredictable weather.

# Strikes round-up

## Hovis pay parity strike

Following management's offer of just a 3% pay increase, which was rejected by workforce reps, Hovis workers in Northern Ireland are on indefinite strike. The workers are striking for pay parity with Hovis workers in England, Wales and Scotland.

The workers in Unite and the Bakers' Union have been on all-out strike since 14 May and are fighting for a 10% increase.

## Woolwich walkout

Workers operating the Woolwich Ferry, now run by Transport for London (TfL), are striking for eight days in May and June over the victimisation of a union rep. The first walkout took place on 14 May after Unite's 57 members voted by an overwhelming 97% for strike action. The remaining dates are 24, 28 May and 1, 4, 7, 11, 21 June.

Unite regional officer Onay Kasab said: "It is a sad indictment of the TfL bosses that they seem to be following the same course as Briggs Marine Contractors which meted out some appalling employment practices to the workforce in the recent past. "Our members have returned an overwhelming mandate for strike

action at the Woolwich Ferry in support of their victimised shop steward and over a myriad of other employment issues."

## Thurrock bin workers still out

From 10 May, Unite members working for the refuse service in the Borough of Thurrock have escalated their strike, moving from a position where they withdrew their labour at 9am, to full-time strike action continuing for another two weeks. The bin workers are fighting a pay cut, as management try to abolish anti-social hours payments, potentially leaving workers thousands of pounds out of pocket annually.

## Indefinite strikes in London

The strike at Lettings tech platform Goodlord is ongoing, as talks at mediation service Acas continue. Members of general union Unite in the tenant-referencing department are continuing their indefinite stoppage to restore the London Living Wage.

St Mungo's workers are also still striking in London. The property services workers have been on continuous strike since 22 April demanding an end to bullying and victimisation.

# CWU members' resolve to strike still firm as union enters talks

The Communication Workers Union (CWU) announced on 12 May that the threatened industrial action ballot over compulsory redundancies, site closures and attacks on terms and conditions in BT, EE and Openreach will be put on hold until the

beginning of June as the employers have invited the union into talks.

Despite what many see as prevarication of the union leadership, the resolve among the majority of CWU members affected has remained firm.

The employers should be in no doubt that members feel very strongly about this attack on their jobs and livelihoods.

It remains to be seen if the employers' move is in response to undoubted anger at the attacks on

workers' job security and livelihoods, or whether they are stalling for time, hoping that membership resolve will weaken.

The union should be absolutely clear that the ballot is not just a bargaining chip, but a means to defend the members from predatory employers and will only be scrapped if all of the offending proposals are withdrawn.

**CLIVE WALDER**  
CWU MIDLANDS NO1 BRANCH  
(PERSONAL CAPACITY)



# ISRAEL-PALESTINE CONFLICT

## How can workers end war and secure national and democratic rights for all?

JUDY BEISHON

SOCIALIST PARTY EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

The turn to devastating bloodshed by the Israeli regime has followed weeks of brutal Israeli policing in and around Jerusalem's old city, and a number of planned evictions of Palestinian families from their homes in East Jerusalem.

Palestinian outrage had been particularly raised by the storming of the al-Aqsa mosque - the third holiest site in Islam - by Israeli security forces on 7 and 10 May. Police fired rubber bullets, stun grenades and tear gas into the crowds of Palestinians in the mosque and its compound, causing serious injuries.

Palestinian protests broke out across the occupied territories and in Palestinian areas of Israel itself. Hamas and Islamic Jihad militias in Gaza then intervened by firing rockets into Israel, which was seized on by Israeli prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu to start a horrific war, pounding Gaza with hi-tech weaponry.

A headline on a recent article in the Financial Times illustrated how the war is - for now at least - aiding Netanyahu's own position: "Palestinian conflict resurrects Netanyahu's political fortunes. Nearly dethroned a week ago, the five-time premier is back on top, riding a right-wing wave of anger".

It suits him to pose as a leader who will stand up to the rocket fire as he is presently on trial for corruption and had been reduced to a caretaker role in government, having failed to achieve a majority for a new ruling coalition in each of four successive general elections.

In power for over a decade, he has relied on the religious right in his coalitions and, in the most recent election, crossed a new line by inviting the far right into his bloc.

This gave the far right more status - a factor that contributed towards the descent into war. Over the last month there have been numerous far-right provocations in East Jerusalem.

### Racist incitement

For instance, on 10 May, the head of the Religious Zionist party, Bezalel Smotrich, visited Sheikh Jarrah, the East Jerusalem neighbourhood where the evictions of Palestinians is threatened, and called for even tougher measures against Palestinian protesters there.

New Knesset (Israeli parliament) member Itamar Ben-Gvir also went to Sheikh Jarrah to incite racism. He has been associated with the largely banned terrorist far-right Kahanist movement.

Yet before March's general election, Netanyahu, in an unscrupulous drive for a government majority, helped bring three far-right organisations together in one election list so that

they could pass the minimum voting threshold and take part in his governing bloc. In this way, Ben-Gvir was elected.

Financial Times journalist David Gardner wrote: "Ben-Gvir's behaviour recalls that of Ariel Sharon, the late prime minister and settlers' champion, chaperoned past the Haram ash-Sharif towards Temple Mount in September 2000 by hundreds of Israeli riot police. That lit the powder trail to a second Palestinian uprising, known as the al-Aqsa intifada".

Gardner's warning is one of many from capitalist commentators alarmed at the consequences for Israel of the ongoing occupation and settlement project, which Gardner wrote: "Forecloses on the possibility of a Palestinian state".

The expanding settlements have been reducing the Palestinian areas of the West Bank and dividing them into separated enclaves, destroying hopes for Palestinians of having their own state. Meanwhile, anger and frustration is at boiling point due to the brutal occupation, high levels of unemployment, poverty and lack of services - including, at present, insufficient coronavirus vaccines and treatments.

### 'Peace talks' failures

Time and time again, 'peace talks' have failed, fundamentally because it isn't in the interests of the Israeli ruling class for there to be a viable, independent Palestinian state next to Israel, with a historic claim on its land, and competition for natural resources, trade and inward investment. The only way of realising a genuine Palestinian state, along with peace and security, is not from deals by capitalist elites at the top, but from mass actions at grassroots level.

The failure of capitalist governments across the Middle East, and internationally, to help the Palestinians now includes the new US administration under Joe Biden. He is determined to continue positioning the US as a firm ally of the Israeli regime, regardless of the bombardment of Gaza, and the occupation.

Biden's officials blocked a United Nations (UN) call for a ceasefire, and the US state department condemned only the Hamas rockets as "unacceptable escalation", while absolving Netanyahu's government by saying Israel has "a legitimate right to defend itself". After a week of destruction, Biden meekly said he'd "support a ceasefire" - not actually calling for Israel to stop its bombardment!

This position is not, however, without opposition from a number of left Congress members in his Democratic Party, who are reflecting a decline in sympathy among young people in the US for the Israeli regime.

The repression and protests in East Jerusalem came after months of



PHOTO JUDY BEISHON

## Palestinian struggle

For the struggles of the Palestinians, an urgent task is the development of democratically run local committees to organise their actions and defence. These committees could build further on the recent successes achieved by mass protests. Last month, Israeli security forces erected barriers to prevent Palestinians from congregating during Ramadan next to the Damascus gate into Jerusalem's old city. Palestinian protests led to the barriers being removed.

Then, earlier this month, again following Palestinian protests, a court hearing which was likely to ratify the Sheikh Jarrah evictions was postponed. A third victory was the rerouting and last-minute cancellation of a right-wing Israeli nationalist march which had intended to go through the Arab part of Jerusalem's old city.

Democratic committees, linking up with each other, would be important preliminary steps towards building a Palestinian mass, independent, working-class-led party. Methods for the struggle will

inevitably be debated. A method that is counterproductive in the fight for liberation from oppression is the rocket fire by Hamas and other militias.

For those militias, the rockets suit the purpose of appearing as a champion of resistance against Israeli aggression. Thousands have been fired since the start of this war, with most landing on empty ground or being intercepted by the Israeli air defence system. But others have hit Israeli towns and cities, killing ten people so far - two of them Palestinian residents.

The rockets are not hi-tech enough to be accurately aimed and are striking very few Israeli military targets, but instead hit Israeli civilians indiscriminately.

These attacks draw ordinary Israelis closer to right-wing government ministers, who respond with increased brutality against the Palestinians, and with a vastly greater level of weaponry than the Palestinian militias have. Rather than being alienated from



**Democratic committees, linking up with each other, would be important preliminary steps towards building a Palestinian mass, independent, working-class-led party**

the Palestinian struggle in this way, the Israeli Jewish working class needs to be split from its ruling class and right-wing bigots. The crucial question for the Palestinians is how the Israeli regime is going to be defeated. This will not just be through military means, but through a struggle that can divide Israeli society along class lines - winning as many workers as possible towards supporting a socialist solution for national rights and decent living standards on both sides of the divide.

Successful struggle needs to be based on democratically organised, mass mobilisations of the Palestinian people. As part of this they must have the right to armed self-defence, democratically controlled, to resist Israeli military attacks.

In the Palestinian Authority (PA) areas, the first general election for 15 years had been planned for 22 May, and a presidential election in July, but both were cancelled by the Mahmood Abbas-led PA.

Abbas blamed the cancellation on the Israeli government's refusal to allow Palestinians in East Jerusalem to vote. But, in reality, it had all the hallmarks of him fearing losing the vote. There is increased fragmentation of the political parties. Abbas's party, Fatah, has split into rival lists and faced losing votes to Hamas - which opposed the election cancellation - and to the many other lists that had been declared.

The cancellation will fuel even greater discontent towards Fatah, from an already high level. Over 93% of the PA population had registered to vote and a large majority wanted the elections to go ahead - though not with great expectation of them leading to change.

demonstrations across Palestinian communities in Israel over a lack of measures to tackle poverty-related crime and gang violence in their communities.

Protests took place every week in the northern city of Umm al-Fahm, and in March, around 2,000 people rallied in Tel Aviv. Anger was directed not just at the Israeli government, but also at the Palestinian Knesset members. This was shown in the last general election turnout in those areas, with only 50% voting, down from 65% in March 2020.

It is following that movement that there has now been an even bigger wave of anger across Palestinian communities in Israel, triggered by the East Jerusalem events. Rage erupted onto the streets and was met by heavy police repression, together with rampages by far-right Jewish activists - mainly coming from outside the mixed Jewish-Arab cities to whip up racism and violent clashes (see eyewitness accounts on page 10).

These elements of civil war are of greater concern to the Israeli ruling class than revolts in the occupied territories, as they bring instability into the heart of Israel. Israeli president Reuven Rivlin called the threat of civil war "a danger to our existence".

From an opposite class standpoint, it is also a danger to the working class. There is an urgent need for trade unionists and other workers to organise together on a local basis against the violence between the far right and Palestinians in towns and cities where this is arising.

The workers' movement can only rely on its own forces against this danger, not on the state forces or pro-capitalist politicians who have laid the basis for the clashes in the first place.

The 18,000-strong Israeli trade union organisation 'Power to the Workers' issued a statement against the violence and expressed pride in the way its Jewish and Palestinian members stand together and protect each other from any threats. A third of its membership is Palestinian, and it organises around a third of the bus drivers in Israel - who have been involved in numerous strikes in recent years.

The social workers' trade union also issued a statement reaffirming that it represents both Jews and Arabs, and calling for unity and an end to the violence.

### Israeli government crisis

It has long been a problem for the Israeli ruling class to have a prime minister whose focus is on using his position to try to keep out of prison. His reliance on destabilising right-wing political parties is also a problem for them.

But he has retained a minority support base in the population - his Likud party still topped the poll in the March general election, recently helped



**The workers' movement can only rely on its own forces against this danger, not on the state forces or pro-capitalist politicians...**

by having presided over the highest coronavirus vaccination rate in the world. It is also the case that the Israeli economy has had a smaller hit than in many countries, contracting by 2.3% during 2020.

Neither Netanyahu's Likud-led alliance of parties, nor the anti-Netanyahu bloc of parties, have managed to put together a new government coalition so far. It is possible that the present war situation will lead to one of the parties switching blocs to give Netanyahu a coalition majority in the Knesset.

Alternatively, a workable coalition of the anti-Netanyahu bloc could still be negotiated into existence, though this prospect has plummeted because the national conflict has added to the disarray of the parties involved, exposing different approaches which they had tried to paper over - not least with the Arab-based parties in the bloc.

Therefore, a fifth general election in three years may be the post-war scenario after an eventual ceasefire. It has been reported that Netanyahu might try to change the election structure so that the new premier will be directly voted on by the electorate - in that way trying to ensure his continuing hegemony.

Through that method, or just as a result of his whipping up nationalism during the conflict, it can't be ruled out that Netanyahu could return to power. The bloc opposing him presents little meaningful opposition on policy and programme. Labour and Meretz, parties nominally on the left, have been part of that pro-capitalist 'anti-Netanyahu' bloc alongside right-wing parties.

This situation underlies why Netanyahu has already been in power for 12 years - and the expected right-wing character of the next government whether it includes him or not.

However, a large layer of the population wants to see Netanyahu removed from office due to many factors, including the corruption cases, rising

▶▶ CONTINUED ON PAGE 10





▶▶ CONTINUED FROM PAGES 8-9

inequality, poor services, and discrimination within Jewish society, as well as that against the Palestinians.

His boost from riding a nationalist wave might turn out to be short-lived, as fear of the rockets and the elements of civil war that have arisen are worsening feelings of insecurity in Israel. This war followed less than two weeks after shock swept through Israeli society at the deadliest civilian disaster in the country's history. A stampede at an event in Mount Meron caused 45 deaths, a tragedy linked to health and safety negligence.

It is also the case that two of the Arab countries that signed a peace deal with Israel last year, Bahrain and the United Arab Emirates, have responded to the outrage in their populations at the events in Jerusalem and Gaza by condemning Israel.

In the coming period, divisions will deepen among leaders and former leaders of Israel's state institutions over what to do about the occupation, the settlements and discrimination. Add into this scenario the fact that Israeli parliamentary 'democracy' is a system in great crisis, as shown by the four inconclusive elections, and their difficulties multiply.

Those election outcomes, in turn, result from the fragmentation of the main pro-capitalist political parties, which stems from increasing disillusionment in them - a process seen globally.

### Israel's working class

Just as the Palestinian working class needs its own party, so does the Israeli working class, to be able to put forward a programme in its own interests.

While Palestinian workers suffer the worst pay and working conditions, a large layer of Israeli Jewish workers also suffer from poverty, financial insecurity and frequent attacks on their pay, conditions and welfare at the hands of their bosses and the government.

Workers' strikes and struggles often break out - a recent one being a 24-hour strike of doctors on 10 May - furious that funding provided for 600 extra doctors during the coronavirus pandemic was threatened with withdrawal. In addition, there have been regular anti-Netanyahu protests



A residential tower block in Gaza City is flattened by Israeli bombs - an unstated form of 'collective punishment' inflicted on the Palestinian population

against corruption, as well as demonstrations on other issues.

Security for the Jewish population will not be achieved by military means, nor will it be achieved by looking to any of the many brands of Israeli pro-capitalist politician for another capitalist solution. Israeli Jewish workers, together with the Palestinian residents of Israel who live and work alongside them or close by, will need to build their own party, completely independent of capitalist interests.

With workers' parties, Palestinian and Israeli, adopting a programme for a socialist Palestine alongside a socialist Israel - as part of a socialist confederation of the Middle East - it will be possible to lay the basis for bringing the capitalist nightmare of cycles of death and destruction to an end.

- **Stop the Israeli military's missile strikes on Gaza**
- **No more brutal force against Palestinians defending their homes and religious sites**
- **Stop the home evictions of Palestinian families**
- **For democratically organised action and defence committees in Palestinian communities**
- **For the immediate withdrawal of the Israeli army from the occupied territories and ending the siege on Gaza**
- **For a mass struggle of the Palestinians, under their own democratic control, to fight for genuine national liberation**
- **For workers and communities in Israeli cities to organise against far-right violence and sectarian clashes**
- **For independent workers' organisations in Palestine and Israel**
- **For an independent, democratic socialist Palestinian state, alongside a democratic socialist Israel, with two capitals in Jerusalem and guaranteed democratic rights for all minorities, as part of the struggle for a socialist Middle East**

## Eyewitnesses in Israel on police repression and right-wing thuggery

**Salma**, a Palestinian woman living in the northern Israel port of Haifa, told members of the Committee for a Workers' International about the sectarian tensions in the city.

"We have had an extremely difficult week because of the incitement between Jews and Arabs in Haifa.

Groups of Jewish youth were bused in by the far right from the West Bank. They were carrying sticks and daggers, shouting "Death to Arabs", and entered the Arab neighbourhoods.

Arabs demonstrated against them. But the police attacked them with tear gas and percussion grenades. My neighbourhood feels like Beirut. It feels like living in a war zone. Police have been using horses and water cannon and rubber bullets to terrorise the demonstrators.

The police have arrested 700 Arab demonstrators. Many have been denied access to lawyers. Medics administering medical treatment to injured demonstrators were themselves beaten by the police.

I saw dozens of Arab youths running into my building to escape the police and tear gas. I have been choking from tear gas in my flat. I could not go out into the stairwell as the gas was so strong hours after the demonstration.

I saw fires in Allenby Street, all the streets around my house. Groups of Jews rampaged up Yitzhak Sadeh Street smashing windows and vandalising cars, breaking into people's houses and beating them up.

They beat up the daughter of the man who's the spokesman of the churches in Haifa. We saw him on television. We heard her and her brothers' cries from our flat. He tried to call the police but the police didn't come.

The police know if someone who's complaining is Arab because of their appearance and accent, and so don't respond. There's no justice.

My son who works as a doctor in a clinic was scared to go to work for three days for fear of being lynched. We don't leave our houses. All the restaurants in Haifa, where I live, are closed.

I've always believed in coexistence between Jews and Arabs in Haifa. And I believe that the hatred will end because people want to live in peace. People want to work and be seen as respectable. I hope all this will end soon and that Netanyahu won't be prime minister and that the right wing will go to hell."

**Haim** lives in the town of Bat

Yam - where an Arab Israeli was dragged out of his car and viciously beaten - and where Arab-owned businesses were attacked or burned.

"These were not people from the neighbourhood - I know everyone round here. They were all wearing the same black hoodies. They chanted "Death to the Arabs" and tried to attack a Jewish/Arab bakery at the ground floor of my building. I yelled at them from my balcony: "Get out of here you scum!"

The police pushed them away, but they went a few hundred yards further north where they torched an Arab-owned kebab shop.

The shops attacked are popular with local people. And the antics of these thugs got no echo from the residents of this normally right-wing leaning neighbourhood."

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# TENS OF THOUSANDS MARCH AGAINST ISRAELI STATE TERROR



Protesters in Liverpool ALEX SMITH

Tens of thousands of people, across dozens of towns and cities in England and Wales, flooded onto the streets on Saturday 15 May to express their outrage and indignation at the horrific crimes of the Israeli state. Similar protests were taking place globally. Members of the Socialist Party joined the protests, putting forward our socialist programme and inviting people to attend our public meetings to discuss the way forward. Our members participated in protests in London, Cardiff, Leeds, Birmingham, Southampton, Newcastle, Liverpool, Manchester, Bristol, Coventry, Oxford and other towns and cities. In all these protests we met people wanting to support working-class unity and a mass, democratic struggle for the genuine national liberation of Palestinians and a socialist Middle East.

## ● London

Thousands of people attended a demo in London on 15 May to show solidarity with the Palestine population experiencing brutality at the hands of the Israeli state. Estimates have put the number of people attending the protest at over 100,000.

The march was full of impassioned chanting, a sea of placards and banners from a range of organisations, and the occasional coloured smoke flare set off. The protest started at Marble Arch before marching towards the Israeli embassy in South Kensington. However, due to the vast

size of the protest, the majority of people had to remain along Kensington High Street.

The Socialist Party had a number of gazebos and stalls at the beginning of the march, as well as joining the demo equipped with a sound system and megaphone. Both before and during the demo, members of the Socialist Party distributed leaflets outlining our analysis and programme, alongside selling placards and copies of the Socialist newspaper.

Chris Newby from Hackney Socialist Party had this to say about the demo: "The streets around Hyde Park were taken over by a lively, mainly young, demo. It was so big that most

protesters couldn't get anywhere near the Israeli Embassy. The demonstrators were keen to hear our socialist message. Our Socialist Party leaflets were snatched out our hands, as were our placards".

The workers' movement has a strong history of supporting struggle internationally, and there were left-wing groups and trade unions present. It was a positive feature that a number of Jewish groups marched alongside Palestinians and others.

Our leaflets explained the need for an independent, democratic socialist Palestinian state, alongside a democratic socialist Israel.

**BEN GOLDSTONE**  
WEST LONDON SOCIALIST PARTY

## ● Southampton

Hundreds of people filled the streets of Southampton to stand in solidarity with those living and dying under the Israeli occupation of Palestine. We marched from Bargate to the Guildhall in a long column, chanting "Free free, Palestine!", and "One-two-three-four, occupation no more! Five-six-seven-eight, Israel is a terror state!"

There were speakers from many different groups and individuals, and Socialist Party members were there handing out flyers, placards, and selling the Socialist newspaper. We marched behind our Young Socialists banner.

Protests just like this one were happening across the country, including actions obstructing Elbit facilities, an Israeli-based company that manufactures and deals weapons including drones, surveillance satellites, and 'electro-optics systems'. The British government cannot wash its hands of this situation, nor pretend to be 'impartial' when it continues to allow Elbit to operate in the UK.

We cannot rely on capitalist governments to act in the interests of the Palestinian masses. We need to continue to build an international movement in solidarity with mass protests in Palestine.

**DANA KING**  
SOUTHAMPTON SOCIALIST PARTY

## ● Birmingham

On Tuesday 11 May, a protest was called outside of Waterstones in the heart of Birmingham's shopping district to address the ongoing atrocities in Palestine. While this demonstration was called with little notice, a contingent of Socialist Party members was able to attend with leaflets and petitions.

The protest itself pulled a large crowd, managing to block almost the entire street in a flurry of flags and placards, which only grew as the

event went on. Throughout the protest there was a continuous stream of impassioned speakers with powerful messages.

**RICHARD GINGELL**  
BIRMINGHAM NORTH SOCIALIST PARTY

## ● Liverpool

"Palestine will be free!" and "BBC shame on you!" were the slogans chanted by the more than 500 people who rallied in Liverpool city centre against the most recent round of attacks on Palestinian civilians by the Israeli army.

The largest and most youthful demonstration in Liverpool in support of Palestinians for some time, the march was adorned by banners, flags and placards demanding an end to the Israeli-state slaughter in Gaza. As we marched through the city centre, protesters received a warm reception from the general public.

Our Socialist Party stall, which we set up earlier in the city centre, saw many people sign our petition and show an interest in our material.

At the end of the march, an open mic rally allowed anti-war voices - including a member of Liverpool Trade Union Council, and a representative from a Palestinian trade union organisation - to express support for Palestinians, and fury with the Israeli regime and the imperialist governments who have helped to arm it. These speakers urged all present at the rally to take the fight for Palestinian liberation into the trade unions.

Speakers who advocated joint protests of Jews and Arabs against the Israeli regime - including joint action and another Intifada to end the occupation - received particularly warm reactions. As did those who highlighted the bias in the BBC's reporting on the conflict. It did not go unnoticed that no one from the BBC bothered to come out to report the rally.

**ALEX SMITH**  
LIVERPOOL SOCIALIST PARTY



Protesters in London SENAN





PAUL MATSSON

## Spycops inquiry continues to expose historic attacks on democratic rights

LOIS AUSTIN AND CLARE WILKINS

A second round of hearings in the supposedly 'public' Undercover Policing Inquiry took place from 21 April to 13 May, covering the period from the anti-Vietnam war protests in 1968 to the Anti-Nazi League in 1977.

Undercover police from the Special Demonstration Squad have been granted anonymity to protect their 'right to a private life', but the activists and families they spied on have had intimate details of their lives reported on and kept for decades. They have now been interrogated by lawyers in the hearings about the details in the police reports - that the officers "can't recollect" writing.

The inquiry is important, both historically and to expose the tactics of the capitalist state. These tactics are still going on; the Police and Crime Sentencing and Courts Bill, if passed into law, will make protest illegal and spycops activities legal!

### Sickening interrogation

While watching the inquiry it was sickening to see activists interrogated about their activism. They were grilled on whether they wanted to cause public disorder, engage in 'criminality' (including flyposting and obstruction) or violence, even though the police reports clearly stated that they did not!

Two days were spent hearing witnesses from the Anti-Apartheid Movement and the Stop the Seventy Tour campaign. The lawyer that questioned these activists, and the police involved, acted as if protesting against the South African apartheid regime was still not OK, despite the vindication of history.

It became normal practice for the Special Demonstration Squad to use the identities of dead children as cover, and even get information from local Special Branch about those children's lives. One of the officers interviewed was entirely dismissive of the effects their actions had on families. Some had tricked women activists into sexual relationships. Asked if he had any feelings for one of the women, one officer said: "Well, I got a lot of information out of her".

This same undercover police officer contacted the Troops Out Movement to ask if there was a branch in South east London. One was set up

afterwards. He then climbed through the ranks of the organisation until he was part of the national leadership, using sexual relationships to help him do this. He found new people to come to events and demonstrations and then spied on them.

Police spied on the justice campaign of Celia Stubbs - partner of murdered anti-apartheid activist Blair Peach. They sent twelve undercover police to his funeral, and continued to spy on the campaign to prevent the police involved being held to account.

### Turning point

'Madeleine's' evidence about being tricked into a relationship by 'Rick Gibson' was powerful, but the cross examination by the inquiry QC was intrusive - in the worst traditions of victim blaming. The questioning proved to be a bit of a turning point in the inquiry's attitude to the police witnesses, from this point there was far less banter and a tougher questioning of the spycops.

The undercover police consider what they did to be correct. Most had been in Special Branch, and some said that quite a lot of their work was directed by the security services. One said that subversion was "whatever the security services said it was." Supposedly it was carrying out, or planning to carry out, public disorder in order to undermine parliamentary democracy.

When asked about why the police did not bother much with the National Front or the far right - only one organisation of the far right was infiltrated between 1973 and 1982 - they said they did not need to! When asked to give instances of violence, several spycops described violence from the National Front or from police officers.

The bosses are threatened by what can be achieved by the working class in struggle. That is why the state was, and still is, used to attack democratic rights. It is why the Tories want to attack the democratic right to protest today, and why we need to fight to defend it (see back page).

The next round of hearings is not scheduled to take place until 2022.

● **For more information, including how your trade union branch can affiliate, visit [campaigning/policesurveillance](https://www.socialistparty.org.uk/campaigning/policesurveillance)**

## Students and unions must resist misnamed 'free speech' bill



BEA GARDNER  
SOCIALIST PARTY UNIVERSITY AND COLLEGES  
UNION CAUCUS

The Tories are attempting to position themselves as defenders of free speech in their new Higher Education (freedom of speech) Bill. The reality is they have no interest in allowing genuine freedom of expression, as evidenced by the current attacks on the right to protest in the police and crime bill (see back page).

Rather, the freedom of speech bill represents an attempt by the government to reassert authority within universities, particularly over left-wing students who are increasingly critical of big business influence in education.

The government is overstating the influence of so-called 'cancel culture' in British universities to justify the measures introduced by the bill, which includes a "free speech condition" universities must meet to receive public funds. It will also create the role of "freedom of speech enforcer" to oversee a new complaints scheme, with powers to issue fines.

Critically, student unions must adhere to the condition and be held liable to financial penalties for freedom of speech "breaches" and if they do not "actively promote" freedom of speech. If passed, it will be the first time the Office for Students will have regulatory powers over student unions, and represents a significant attack on student democracy.

The catalyst for the bill was when the former home secretary, Amber

Rudd, was cancelled as an international women's day speaker at Oxford Student Union, following student protests that highlighted her role in the forced deportations revealed in the 'Windrush scandal'.

The government has used that case to argue that censorship and silencing are rife. Yet research by the Office for Students, the regulator overseeing the bill's implementation, found that in 2017-18 less than 0.1% of external speaker requests were rejected by universities or student unions.

### Tory bans

Meanwhile, the government's record on this matter speaks for itself. Last year, the government banned schools using resources from anti-capitalist organisations because it is an "extreme political stance". Just last month, Gavin Williamson tweeted that he would instruct the Office for Students to suspend funding to institutions that do not adopt the controversial IHRA definition of antisemitism.

In reality, the government is exaggerating university 'cancel culture' as a tool to strengthen right-wing, pro-capitalist ideas in universities, as well as to try and shore up a section of its electoral base.

Historically, universities have been one way in which the ruling class has established and promoted its ideas. This bill is an attempt to assert this ideological control, particularly within student unions, and is part of a broader strategy to direct research and teaching in the interests of big business.

However, the idea that universities are left-wing institutions is a farce. Their actions during the pandemic attest to this. The real threat to freedom of speech comes from the current funding model, which the bill does nothing to address.

Research funding is highly competitive, and is increasingly dictated by capitalist interests, with little funding for critical theory or research questioning the status quo. Research should be funded to meet the genuine needs of society, including for culture, not the narrow economic interests of big business.

Furthermore, the running of universities like a business has resulted in the sector becoming one of the most casualised. Precarious contracts have stripped academic staff of the right to speak and research freely for fear of losing their jobs. Trade union reps have been targeted for redundancy at multiple universities in blatant cases of trade union victimisation. But the bill does nothing to address these issues which, in some cases, are costing workers their jobs.

Genuine freedom of expression, debate and discussion in universities can only be guaranteed through the participation of university staff and students in elected committees within a publicly funded university system, free from capitalist interests.

Student unions and campus trade unions must resist this bill, which is narrowly focused on the freedom of speech for the bosses and their defenders.



SOCIALIST PARTY SCOTLAND

## Glasgow mass action defeats Home Office deportation attempt

*Thursday 13 May will go down in Glasgow history. Attempts by the Home Office to detain two Indian men - chef Sumit Sehdev and mechanic Lakhvir Singh - prior to deportation provoked a massive community mobilisation. For eight hours the men were held in the detention van, surrounded by protesters blocking the vehicle from leaving. After a prolonged standoff the men were freed. This was a massive victory against the racist immigration laws and practices of the Tory government. Andrew, a member of Socialist Party Scotland, who attended the protest reports.*

At approximately 10am on Thursday 13 May the Home Office called for the police to help to complete a raid on the home of two Indian men living on Kenmure Street, Pollokshields, Glasgow. Neighbours had intervened, with one man lying under the immigration enforcement van to prevent it leaving - he would continue to do this for another eight hours.

Word quickly spread through the neighbourhood and on social media and the crowd grew. Within an hour what had started as a small-scale standoff with immigration officials

had developed into a fully fledged demonstration, with an estimated 200 protesters by noon.

Initially, the van was guarded by 20 officers from Police Scotland, but they were gradually accompanied by an extensive caravan of riot police and horses posted on standby in the various adjacent streets. Likewise, the protest grew, doubling and tripling in size into the evening.

Local residents, as well as some anarchists, were distributing soup, water and apples to prepare protesters for the long haul. However, at around 6pm, Police Scotland eventually capitulated, citing Covid safety, and released the two men to cheers of triumph and the waving of Palestinian and red flags.

Activists and residents shouted chants through the day of "Let them go!", "These are our neighbours", "Cops go home" and "Refugees are welcome here". Speakers contrasted the response of their working-class community with the Tory Westminster government's 'hostile environment' policy.

The recent revelation, that it is very possible that neither men were breaking any kind of law - immigration or otherwise - just demonstrates how needless and soulless the policy is. It is nothing short of systematic

intimidation of migrant workers, on no other basis than their being foreign workers.

Many of the speakers attempted to express an 'inclusive nationalism' and spoke about how this situation proved the need for an independent Scotland. The demand that the Scottish parliament either takes or is granted powers over immigration from the Home Office - with their standing orders from Westminster Tories - is very popular.

But policing is already a devolved power in Scotland, and plays a key role in immigration enforcement! Even in an independent Scotland - if it was still a capitalist state - repressive policing and laws would be used against the working class. That's why socialist policies, including democratic trade union and community control of the police, are essential.

The events in Pollokshields were an inspiring example of the power of working-class communities when they come together to defend their own. It points to the type of mass action that can achieve victories and cut across racism in society. We cannot let up in the fight to remove all racist immigration laws and practices. We must continue to fight for a socialist society to end such barbarism and guarantee a decent future for all.



## Readers' opinion

### ● 'Mini umbrella' tax abuse

Thousands of workers have been recruited by firms which have been found to be using mini umbrella companies (MUCs) to avoid tax. MUCs qualify for Employment Allowance - which allows employers with a small number of employees to reduce their annual national insurance costs by up to £4,000.

They are also able to benefit from the flat-rate VAT scheme, also intended to help small businesses. This 'slicing and dicing' to avoid taxes is a fraud that has been identified by HMRC and involves organised criminals.

According to a recent BBC radio 'File on 4' programme, 48,000 MUCs have been set up since 2015. This is tax abuse on a gigantic scale. Complex supply chains involving MUCs have been used by out-sourcing companies to recruit workers to roles in teaching, Covid testers, and test-and-trace workers, for example.

This fraudulent activity has the whiff of the Greensill supply-chain scandal, both involving financial manipulation to enrich unscrupulous bosses and stealing from the public purse.

Tory cuts to civil service tax officer budgets have made the job of tracing these tax-avoiding companies even harder. But this fraud has likely cost the taxpayer hundreds of millions in lost tax revenue a year.

THEA EVERETT

SOUTH EAST LONDON SOCIALIST PARTY

### ● Capitalism kills

The link between poverty and child deaths is as glaringly obvious as Boris's brand-new John Lewis wallpaper.

According to an NHS England-funded report, about 700 child deaths could be avoided each year in England by reducing rates of social deprivation.

I see this link every day in the eyes of a tired child who hasn't had a good night's sleep because of overcrowding in their home or having to share a bed with mum or dad because they are in a single living accommodation.

I see children who don't spend enough time with even one parent because of double shifts. Children are exposed to the daily struggles of debt-riddled parents and the effects of zero-hour contracts.

There isn't any certainty with this government which is happy to swipe away school meals during the holidays like Thatcher did with our milk in the 80s.

Children in deprived areas don't have access to the same cultural experiences as privileged children, and learn early on that life for them is about struggle and survival. They see too much, too young, and some pay for it with their lives, having never stepped foot in a museum or a walk at the seaside.

Like their parents they are born into poverty and a cycle of debt and despair,

with a growing lack of services to help lift them out.

RACHEL LYON

EDUCATION WORKER, WALTHAM FOREST

### ● Planning bill will not solve housing crisis

The demand for housing is ever-present in Southwark in south east London where I live. An estimated 7,000 plus are on the housing list while, according to the latest available figures, 'affordable' housing has slumped to a three-year low of 21%.

This fails to meet the meagre 35% set out in the council's own policy. Shockingly, research has shown that as many as one in 24 homes lie unoccupied in the borough. The proposed changes in the Queen's Speech to move to a zonal housing development system, under the guise of 'removing red tape' from the planning process, will do nothing to improve this situation.

Described as a 'radical overhaul' of the planning system, power will be further removed from local councils to grant planning permission according to the needs of their constituents.

The Tories also failed to set out any plans for a social housing bill. Working-class people who have been waiting for the basic right of safe and secure housing for as long as two decades may never be housed.

The term 'affordable housing' is now splashed across council documents as a way of making it appear as though genuinely affordable and council-run housing is being built. In fact, housing marked 'affordable' can cost tenants 80% of market rents.

Only the Socialist Party's demand of mass council house building programme will begin to resolve the problem of homelessness and insecure housing in the capital and across the UK.

ELLEN KENYON PEERS

SOUTH EAST LONDON SOCIALIST PARTY

### ● No to antisemitic attacks

The antisemitic attacks on Jewish people in North London on Saturday 15 May were disgraceful. These need to be condemned by all sections of the working class.

Jewish people in London are not responsible for the atrocities committed by the Israeli state. Many, myself included, took part in the huge protest in Hyde Park.

Capitalism threatens to plunge us into intercommunal civil war. It is socialism or barbarism. We need a party of the working class which raises the socialist alternative.

AMNON COHEN

NORTH LONDON SOCIALIST PARTY

**WHAT'S YOUR VIEW?**  
editors@socialistparty.org.uk



# Brighton marches to defend Moulsecomb Primary School

JOE MOTT  
BRIGHTON AND WEST SUSSEX SOCIALIST PARTY

Saturday 15 May saw teachers, parents, pupils, trade unions and socialists march together to show that the forced academy takeover of Moulsecomb Primary School in Brighton will not be allowed to happen.

Moulsecomb has been within the capitalists' sights for years now. Education bosses are determined to move the school out of local authority control and away from oversight of elected school governors, to transform it into a less-accountable academy - with more scope for profit to be made delivering services. Three times the staff and families have had to fend off academisation attempts, and thrice they have sent the academy bosses packing. Now the enemy has returned.

In 2019, the school was given the

worst possible rating by Ofsted inspectors. Among the inspectors was Timothy Rome, who is also the Regional Director of The Pioneer Academy. The same academy chain that now wants to take over Moulsecomb!

Staff in the National Education Union, and Unison and GMB unions took two days of strike action in April in opposition to the plans. Further strike dates could still take place.

While the constant attacks on the education service are as depressing as they are relentless, the fightback from the community is inspiring. When Lee Mason-Ellis, the CEO of Pioneer came to inspect his latest acquisition, the parents - with support of Acorn community union - locked the gates.

For three hours Mason-Ellis waited outside, calling in every authority that he could think of, including the

police. When that didn't work, Lee returned during the evening - and he would have gotten away with it too, if it weren't for that pesky personalised number plate. He was then boxed in by cars, and his lovely white Mercedes Benz was decorated with flyers for a march to oppose the academisation.

Our Socialist Party banner marched proudly alongside those who have fought in this campaign. One protester remarked: "Who better to march with than the Socialist Party?" We must continue to fight against individual attempts to privatise our children's education, and to end the spread of academies - supported by both the Tories, Labour, and the Green minority council in Brighton. Education must be fully funded and run with the democratic oversight of the community, staff and parents.



## Help fund our bold socialist presence in the struggles to come

The Socialist Party has a target each quarter to make sure that we have the steady finances and resources needed to take our socialist ideas into the movements, protests and struggles that take place. Smashing the previous quarters' fighting fund target meant that we were ready with hundreds of placards, thousands of leaflets, dozens of collecting tins, and a handful of card readers - to participate in the massive protests against the Israeli state bombing.

Our colourful placards with the slogan 'Build a movement to end Israeli state terror', and our programme of building a united struggle of workers and youth in Israel and Palestine, stood out. We have unshakable confidence in our ideas, and in the working class to get rid of this rotten

capitalist system that fuels war, terror and misery.

With the continued financial support of our members and supporters, we can have a big, bold presence in the movements, and be able to reach a broader layer of society with socialist ideas.

The current fighting fund quarter ends on 1 July and we are on 57% of our £25,000 target. If you are a member of the Socialist Party and want to help raise money for the party, contact your local branch organisers. If you are a supporter, you can donate by visiting [socialistparty.org.uk/donate](http://socialistparty.org.uk/donate).

Help fund the fightback  
**DONATE**  
[socialistparty.org.uk/donate](http://socialistparty.org.uk/donate)



SOCIALIST PARTY FIGHTING FUND						
AREA	£ RECEIVED	£ TARGET	Q2: APRIL-JUNE 2021			DEADLINE: 30 JUNE 2021
Northern	1,168	750				156%
South West	2,485	1,800				138%
Southern & SE	2,043	2,350				87%
London	3,213	4,600				70%
North West	723	1,150				63%
Wales	1,323	2,300				58%
Yorkshire	1,244	2,550				49%
East Midlands	690	1,850				37%
Eastern	296	1,200				25%
West Midlands	573	2,600				22%
Other	422	3,850				11%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>14,179</b>	<b>25,000</b>				<b>57%</b>

## Mulivaikkal Remembrance Day 2021 Remember the dead and fight for the living

AKHALYA  
BIRMINGHAM SOCIALIST PARTY

The atrocities that took place towards the end of the brutal war by the authoritarian Sri Lankan state, that ended in the massacre of over 100,000 Tamil civilians in Mulivaikkal in 2009, are marked by the annual Mulivaikkal Remembrance Day.

On Monday 17 May, the Tamil Solidarity campaign co-hosted an online event in Tamil and English, with the recently formed youth organisation Young Revolutionaries in Solidarity (YRS).

Naveen from New Socialist Alternative, the Indian section of the Committee for a Workers' International, spoke first about the ongoing restrictions on people's lives in Sri

Lanka, especially in the north and east where Tamils predominantly live. There are no real alternatives being put forward to fight for better conditions by the opportunist Tamil politicians looking to line their own pockets.

Prasad, from the United Socialist Party (CWI Sri Lanka), spoke on the terrible conditions oppressed communities face in Sri Lanka today. He explained how the Sri Lankan government is using Muslims as scapegoats for the first Covid wave, and that forced cremations of Covid victims are being carried out - undermining the religious practice of burial by Muslims and Christians in the country.

Trade unionists Hugo Pierre and April Ashley from Unison, and

Martin Powell-Davies from the National Education Union, spoke in a personal capacity about the attacks that subsequent UK governments have made on black workers, including Tamil workers, and the need to be organised in trade unions.

Mark Best from Youth Fight for Jobs explained the oncoming assault on jobs threatening mass youth unemployment; so far the government's answer is to introduce exploitative unpaid training schemes.

Tamil Solidarity and YRS reiterated that for true accountability to the war crimes committed, and to succeed in the Tamils' fight for the right to self-determination, we need to fight alongside our real allies; trade unions, youth organisations and the international working class.

## Socialist Party black and Asian members discuss the history of black and Asian struggle in Britain

ISAI PRIYA  
SOCIALIST PARTY BLACK AND ASIAN GROUP

The Socialist Party Black and Asian group met online on Sunday 16 May. Hugo Pierre introduced the main discussion on the history of black and Asian struggle in Britain, a history not taught in schools and colleges as the capitalist class tries to hide it from the working class and young people.

As Hugo said in his introduction: "When you look into the history, it makes it clear how racism was first used, and how it has developed. Racism is a tool for class oppression and, when you go through history, it couldn't be clearer that is exactly what it is.

"It has been a tool that has been used by the ruling class in Britain, in particular, as an imperialist power,

to divide workers and to allow the ruling class to super-exploit especially blacks - first as slaves, then as workers."

Hugo's introduction also outlined how mass movements have changed social attitudes, and how we can build a united movement to smash racism; that the only way to end racism is by finding a way to bring about working-class unity through a socialist programme, and for that united working class struggle to overthrow capitalism.

The meeting discussed key historical events that demonstrate the power of united working-class struggle including; the Chartist movement, Mangrove, Notting Hill, Bristol bus boycott, Grunwick dispute, the mass movement following the killing of Stephen Lawrence, the shutting

down of the British Nationalist Party headquarters, and more.

We also discussed the most recent example of mass action to win a victory - the marvellous mass protest in Glasgow which stopped the deportation of two Indian workers (see page 13). Parallels were drawn with the anti-poll tax movement by Socialist Party members who took part, showing the strength of united mass action.

The Black and Asian group agreed to discuss 'South Africa: from slavery to the smashing of apartheid' at the next meeting in July. We plan to organise and build for a public meeting for Black History Month in October.



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# CAPITALISM RESPONSIBLE FOR STARK GLOBAL COVID VACCINE INEQUALITY

NICK HART

BLACK COUNTRY SOCIALIST PARTY

**T**he pandemic hasn't just exposed the class divide here in the UK. It's also brought many tensions and inequalities between nations in an already fractured world to the surface.

If the rapid spread of the virus across the planet owed a lot to the globalised nature of modern capitalism, then the 'vaccine nationalism' that's followed is a symptom of individual capitalist governments straining at the economic and political ties which bind them together.

While vaccination programmes are well underway in the UK, USA, and other developed capitalist nations, it's a different story in many of the world's poorer countries. So far, roughly one in four people are vaccinated in wealthier countries, while in the neocolonial world the figure is just one in 500.

Meanwhile, those governments in the neocolonial world who have been able to obtain vaccine doses have often found themselves spending more than their wealthier counterparts. Bangladesh and Uganda, for example, are paying more per dose for the Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccine than the EU. This is for a vaccine that had its development 97% funded through UK and US government money!

Once vaccine doses have been supplied they then have to be administered to the population, which is made all the harder in countries where health services are under-resourced due to decades of governments being crippled with punitive debt repayments to the likes of the International Monetary Fund. African governments are now spending 50% more on servicing debt than they did pre-2020.

As a result, most African countries are not predicted to reach majority vaccination until mid-2023. And

while India has been the world's largest producer of Covid vaccines, many states are now reporting shortages of doses, despite the government having imposed a ban on exports in late March.

While only a minority of the population is vaccinated in any one country, the ground will be prepared for future outbreaks there, causing further deaths and severe health problems as hospitals become over-stretched. The continued presence of the virus there can also lead to mutations developing and spreading beyond its borders, as can be seen with the recent detection of an Indian variant in Britain.

Recognising these issues, the USA, EU, UK and others set up the Covax scheme to fund the purchase of vaccines for the developing world. While Covax hopes to have distributed 238 million doses by the middle of this year, it's estimated by that time that the US alone will be sitting on 300 million unused doses!

In Cuba, where the government has developed its own vaccines, the process has been hindered by the US trade embargo and blockade.

In many parts of Eastern Europe, the Caribbean, Asia and Latin America, China and Russia are plugging the gap by supplying their respective vaccines at a discounted price and helping set up local production facilities. Taking a leaf out of the British and American textbook for supplying humanitarian aid, this has been done with the aim of extracting economic and political favours from the governments of these countries at a later date.

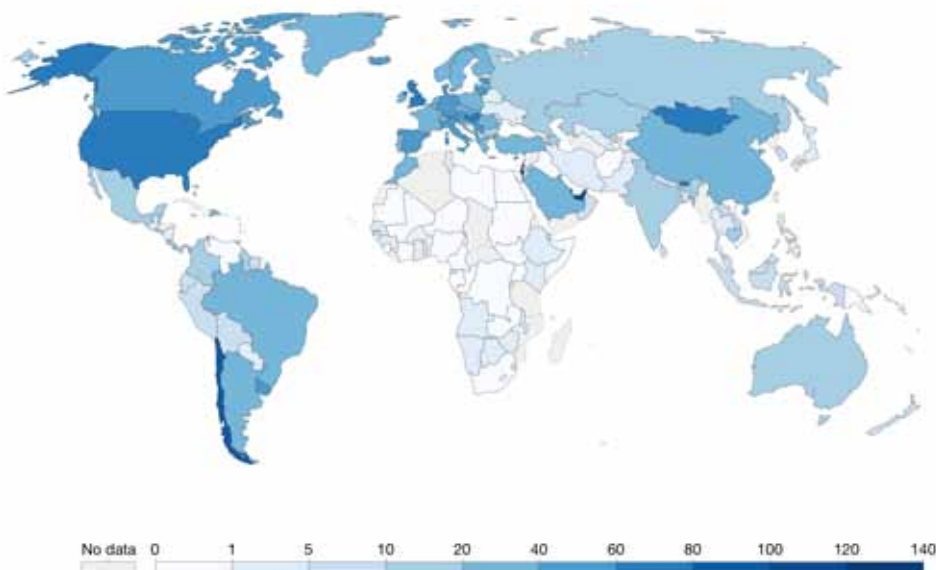
In a bid to stop the US losing influence relative to its rival superpowers, the Biden government has now backed calls for patents to be waived on Covid vaccines. But this would only partly solve the problem.

After Biden used the Korean War-era Defence Production Act to follow



## COVID-19 vaccine doses administered per 100 people, May 10, 2021

Total number of vaccination doses administered per 100 people in the total population. This is counted as a single dose, and may not equal the total number of people vaccinated, depending on the specific dose regime (e.g. people receive multiple doses).



the EU's lead in imposing export bans on the component parts and packaging used in the manufacture of vaccines, there are limits on how quickly production can begin in those parts of the world that don't currently have vaccine-manufacturing facilities. The Pfizer vaccine, for instance, includes 280 components from 86 suppliers based in 19 countries. As a result, the pharmaceutical companies are able to point the finger at individual governments hoarding vaccine doses and raw materials while they themselves guard their intellectual property 'rights' over the method for creating the different vaccines available with equal jealousy.

Even if the World Trade Organisation uses its powers to force the pharmaceutical companies to give up their patents on these vaccines, it could still take months for new factories to get up and running. During this time, the virus will be able to spread, mutate and claim lives in many countries currently under-equipped with vaccine doses.

Thanks to the pharmaceutical companies hoping to extract a handsome profit, and governments hoping to extract political gain, many of the world's poorest people will be left exposed to Covid for potentially years to come.

For all the capitalists' talk about their system being the most efficient way of producing and delivering goods for a global market, in times of crisis the barriers between competing private companies and nation states are inevitably thrown up.

Under a socialist society, the incredible research of scientists in developing Covid vaccines in record time wouldn't be treated as a private asset to be exploited for profit but as public property to be used as part of a global plan to get vaccines produced and delivered to where they're needed most. That's why it's vital we replace the dysfunctional capitalist system with a socialist one that genuinely puts the health of the whole world's population above the greed of big business and the modern-day imperialist powers.

**1 in 500**  
have been vaccinated in the neocolonial world compared to one in four in the developed nations

## Covid-19 was preventable

The Covid-19 pandemic was preventable says an independent review panel set up by the World Health Organization (WHO). The report criticises the WHO itself, saying it should have declared a global emergency earlier.

"The situation we find ourselves in today could have been prevented," said co-chair Ellen Johnson Sirleaf. "It is due to a myriad of failures, gaps and delays in preparedness and response."

The month following the WHO's declaration was "lost" as countries failed to take appropriate

measures to halt the spread of the virus, the report says. And that when countries should have been preparing their healthcare systems for an influx of Covid patients, much of the world descended into a "winner takes all scramble for protective equipment and medicines."

This has been repeated in the vaccination process too. In contrast, a socialist internationalist approach would see big pharma and all healthcare systems taken into public ownership and run democratically by working-class people in the interests of people's health, as part of a socialist reorganisation of society.



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# the Socialist

Issue 1134

20-26 May 2021

formerly **Militant**

# We will not pay the cost of Covid!

# DEFEND THE RIGHT TO PROTEST



**AMY SAGE**  
BRISTOL NORTH SOCIALIST PARTY

**D**espite the public outrage it's sparked, the government is ploughing on with the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill - which would seriously impede our right to protest.

It's ironic that a bill designed to stifle protests has sparked countless demonstrations across England and Wales, and is likely to again if the Tories attempt to push it any further.

There is no doubt about their motives

behind the bill. It is a pre-emptive strike against the anger that is likely to explode onto the streets in the coming months: anger against the government's appalling handling of the pandemic, rising unemployment, austerity, sleaze and corruption.

The right to protest is an inalienable one. Without mass movements, the working class would not have managed to secure many of the rights we benefit from today. The right for women to vote, the right of non-property owners to vote, the eight-hour working day and five-day working week, and more besides, were all secured through mass protests and

struggle. Taking away our ability to protest is a threat to every aspect of our lives.

The Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill is also part of a broader attempt by the Tories to use the Covid pandemic as an opportunity to expand the powers of the state and undermine our democratic rights. Another proposal in the Queen's Speech is to introduce a photo ID requirement for general elections. This requirement could risk hitting older, disabled and homeless voters disproportionately as they are less likely to have such documents (see page 5).

However, rather than strengthening its

position, such proposals simply highlight the weakness of the Tory government and its capitalist supporters. Johnson and Co. are clearly afraid of the opposition they will provoke as they attempt to make us pay for the cost of this pandemic.

Even if this bill passes, the working class will not stay silent in the face of austerity, unemployment and homelessness. We will not sit back and allow the ruling class to erode our democratic rights.

Since the start of the pandemic, the government has made U-turn after U-turn; let's use our right to protest to force another one!

**A SOCIALIST RESPONSE TO THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC CRISIS**  
▶▶ [socialistparty.org.uk/coronavirus](https://socialistparty.org.uk/coronavirus)

**WHAT WE STAND FOR: THE SOCIALIST PARTY'S MAIN DEMANDS**  
▶▶ see column on p3

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