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# the Socialist

Issue 1271

18-24 April 2024

formerly **Militant**

# SAVE OUR NHS

## Don't accept more of the same cuts and profiteering

### Vote



### Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition



**MARK O'CONNOR**  
NHS WORKER AND WATFORD SOCIALIST PARTY

**Short of staff and underpaid, the experience of working in the NHS currently is depressing.**

Many of my colleagues are forced to rely on our trust's own food bank to make wages stretch. Years of inadequate 'pay rises' have led many to take out payday loans and skip meals to feed their children. Sickness due to stress and a dramatic rise in staff turnover is the outcome. All this affects patients too.

Third-party profiteers are draining the lifeblood out of our NHS. Morale is at an all-time low. Some staff are considering a move to the private sector for a better work-life balance.

Many choose to stay out of loyalty to the founding principles of the NHS - being free at the point of use for all, care based on need.

#### Profiteering bosses

The rot is deep. Private company GSK charges the NHS almost £5 for a small bottle of Lucozade you can buy for less than £2 at any corner shop. There are huge profits for multinationals providing ancillary services, while their staff earn barely above the minimum wage. Not to mention the top-down bureaucratic management, with many senior positions being filled by those from a private health or finance experience.

Trashing our NHS for the benefit of the bosses is what you would expect from the Tories. But Labour's shadow health secretary Wes Streeting plans more private involvement when Labour comes into office. The last Labour government drenched the NHS with debt to the benefit of profiteers through PFI schemes and kept Margaret Thatcher's wretched 'internal market'.

People have asked me: "What's the point in voting, they're all the same?"

That's why I'm standing as a TUSC (Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition) candidate in the local elections; to put forward an alternative to constant underfunding and cuts; to fight for fully funded healthcare, explaining that housing and public transport can be paid for by kicking out the parasites and profiteers - directing resources to where they are needed most, all under democratic workers' control.

279 TUSC candidates are standing across the country in the local elections. We need more workers prepared to take a stand, to call for a new party that will represent us, not the needs of shareholders, big business or private interest at our expense.

● Read more about our local election stand pages 2-4

IRAN STRIKES ISRAEL - MIDDLE EAST CRISIS ESCALATES ►►► P8-9

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Friday before publication, or Monday morning for urgent news, unless otherwise agreed with the editors.

The Socialist goes to press on a Tuesday night. We publish online on Wednesday and in print on Thursday.

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The Socialist is the weekly newspaper of the Socialist Party, the England and Wales section of the Committee for a Workers' International

socialistparty.org.uk
socialistworld.net

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ISSN 1366-9621

Published by Socialist Publications, PO Box 1398, Enfield EN1 9GT
Registered as a newspaper at the Post Office
Printed by trade union labour at Reach Printing Services

Militant issue 1: October 1964
The Socialist issue 1: 7 February 1997

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

TUSC - 100% anti-cuts 100% on the side of workers

Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition - sixth-biggest stand

On 2 May, millions of people will have the chance to express their displeasure with the Tories by voting in the local elections. The Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC), the electoral coalition that the Socialist Party is part of, will be standing 279 candidates - the sixth-biggest stand nationally.

Voting for a TUSC candidate sends a message, not just against the Tories, but in favour of fighting, working-class socialist political representatives - not something on offer from the Tories, Lib-Dems, Greens, Reform, or the rest.

There are at least 52 other anti-cuts, anti-war council candidates standing - from groups such as the Workers' Party and Communist Party of Britain, as well as independents. If they had come together with us under the TUSC umbrella or with a joint description, it would have surpassed the number of candidates standing for Reform - the

right-wing party that is splashed all over the capitalist press.

The Socialist Party is putting the call out to all who want to help build the widest possible workers' stand at the general election, to come together under the TUSC umbrella.

Workers need our own voice. Vote for TUSC on 2 May.



You can fund a workers' alternative at the general election

CALLUM JOYCE
OXFORD SOCIALIST PARTY

"I've just registered to vote. I'll definitely be voting for socialists." That was one of many positive responses we have received recently while canvassing for the upcoming local elections in Oxford, one of 55 local authorities where the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) is standing its 279 candidates.

This year's local elections are likely to be another humiliating blow for the Tories. Some predictions say they could lose as many as 500 council seats. Many workers and young people will relish the chance to give the Tories a bloody nose, before we can finally send them packing in the general election. But will a new Keir Starmer-led government be any better?

Labour's record in power

Simply look at the record of Labour in power in Wales, and in more than 70 local authorities that they control around Britain. 14 years of Tory austerity has been meekly carried out by Labour local authorities, with little to no resistance, and no attempts to mobilise the trade union movement against cuts. Will it be any different on a national scale?

Starmer and his shadow cabinet have already pledged that they will not "turn on the spending taps" for public services, and will not restore

the necessary funding for the growing number of councils that are faced with the possibility of running out of money in the next few years. They have signalled again and again that Labour will seek to defend the interests of big business, and not carry out any spending plans that might upset 'the markets'.

We desperately need a working-class alternative to properly fund our local services, and to fight for the socialist change needed to end war, poverty, and exploitation. We are aiming to fund 30 to 40 Socialist Party candidates to stand in the general election, alongside other socialist and anti-war activists under the TUSC umbrella.

Can you help?

We are appealing for anyone who wants to help build a socialist voice for the working class to donate to our special general election fund. Paying the deposit for standing a candidate will cost us £500; to produce leaflets delivering our socialist message to every address in a single constituency will cost at least another £700 as well. Our target is to raise £50,000.

This year's local elections are an important opportunity to plant a marker for the ideas of genuine socialism, in preparation for the battles that are to come under a Labour government. During and after these elections, many will ask: what next? Preparing for a socialist general

election challenge will be the best way to answer that. Everyone we meet, who will be voting for a socialist candidate in the local elections, should be given the opportunity to do so in the general election as well.

If you're standing as a TUSC candidate this year, or you've helped us campaign, or you're just planning on voting for us, then you can help us fund the next step in the fight for working-class political representation? Can you think of anyone in your community, workplace, or trade union branch that would consider donating as well?

Tories rocked

The strike wave and huge anti-war movement have rocked this increasingly moribund capitalist government. Now let's fight to give a political voice to those movements, and build the next step in the struggle for socialism.

- Email isai@socialistparty.org.uk with your pledge
• Donate now - go to socialistparty.org.uk and click 'Election Appeal'

Help us raise £50,000 to stand 30-40 Socialist Party candidates in the general election



Croydon and Sutton - let down on cuts, let down on Gaza

APRIL ASHLEY
CROYDON AND SUTTON SOCIALIST PARTY

I am standing to fight against council cuts, and to fight for the millions stolen from local government by the Tories.

Croydon Council has been effectively 'bankrupt' three times - serving section 114 notices that limit spending to statutory services only. That has meant savage cuts to community services, and a 21% council tax hike.

Well over 30 councils say that they are close to declaring effective bankruptcy in the next couple of years. The Tory government has cut millions from council grants, leading to a £3.5 billion funding gap.

Shamefully, Labour councils have passed on the cuts to local communities, leading to the loss of libraries, nurseries, youth centres, tens of thousands of jobs, and a crisis in social care.

Labour councils should set no-cuts budgets, and lead the community and trade unions in a mass campaign against the Tories to fight for the funding we need. There must be no cuts to services or council tax rises to fill the black hole in council budgets.

The local community also need homes, as well as jobs and services. So, I am standing for the mass building of council homes and rent controls.

End the war on Gaza

Like the majority of workers, I am completely opposed to the bombing of Gaza, and the slaughter of Palestinian workers and children. Like hundreds of thousands of people, I have been on the mass demonstrations in London.

Many people are shocked by the stance of Labour, tail-ending Tory warmongers supporting Israeli state terror. Labour, still following the Tories, are only now calling for a ceasefire after 32,000 deaths.

I stand for the withdrawal of the Israeli army from all the occupied territories, including the West Bank. Only a mass democratic struggle of the Palestinian people for self-determination and socialism can liberate the Palestinian people.

Unfortunately, as we can see from the actions of Keir Starmer's Labour Party, they are not standing up for

workers in the UK or internationally. That is why I am standing, to help build a new mass workers' party against the pro-cuts and pro-war agenda of the Tories and Labour.

April Ashley is the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) candidate for the Greater London Assembly (GLA) in the Croydon & Sutton constituency. She is an elected member (personal capacity) of the National Executive Council of public service union Unison.

Croydon - developers paid public money to profit from overpriced flats

Socialist Party member Ben Goldstone is the TUSC candidate for the Park Hill and Whitgift council ward by-election in Croydon on 2 May. He said:

If you need social housing in Croydon, many people are waiting over ten years. Brick by Brick, the council-owned housing company, was funded by a £200 million loan from Croydon Council - Labour at the time - to build on council-owned sites. It only managed to deliver 751 residential units, of which 385 were supposedly 'affordable', and the rest private.

The council is expected to write off around £68 million from this unpaid debt from the now-defunct Brick by Brick, which will no doubt be passed on to residents in further cuts to services. All the while, Croydon Council is allowing high-rise eyesores to pop up across the town, built by private developers, with minimal affordable flats for residents, and instead overpriced apartments being the norm.

Local councillors have made the working class of Croydon pay for the council's mistakes, especially with the 21% council tax hike. The Tories voted it through, whilst Labour abstained.

What we need in Croydon is councillors and GLA candidates who are going to stand up for the working class. That means fighting for affordable housing, well-paid secure jobs, and properly funded accessible services.



Socialist Party and TUSC supporters campaigning with Nadia (second right)

Southampton Labour - silent on Gaza, doing Tory dirty work on cuts

Vote for TUSC candidate Nadia Ditta in Bevois

NICK CHAFFEY
SOUTHAMPTON SOCIALIST PARTY

Labour councillors have represented the Bevois ward for decades. But what have they done for us?

Carried out cuts to our local services, closed our youth centres in Graham Road, and the Venny, cut funding for Sure Start, while putting up council tax, rents and charges. They have failed to fight Tory cuts. They are trying to make us pay for a crisis we didn't cause.

Families are choosing between feeding their children or paying the council tax, for fear of the bailiffs being sent from the council, by a Labour council.

Bevois is the poorest ward in the city. Life expectancy here is ten years lower than in the richest areas.

While we watch in horror at the massacres in Gaza, and join anti-war protests in Southampton, Bevois councillors remain silent. The community has had enough.

They have a candidate

We have knocked many doors in the last few weeks to build support for an anti-cuts, anti-war alternative to Labour. Many want to protest in this election, and are enthused to hear they have a candidate.

We think it is possible we could win. But to do that we have to convince many who don't usually vote to seize the time and make a difference.

We have already shown that when we stand together and oppose the cuts, we can win. We led

the campaign to save our local community's St Mary's Leisure Centre. That campaign mobilised hundreds to protest against the then Tory-led council.

Labour accepted the closure. But we fought on. The Tories lost power locally, and we demanded that the new Labour council reopen the centre. And they were forced to. If you fight, you can win.

Our candidate, Socialist Party member Nadia Ditta, is a fighter. She helped to organise the successful campaign to save the Venny playground.

Send a message

We appeal to every voter in Bevois to use your vote to send a message to the council. We will not accept more cuts.

We want investment to get our streets clean, to reopen youth services, and restore support for families in our community. We say no to increased council tax, rent, and charges.

We say fight for the £510 million cut from the city by the Tory government, so we can restore jobs and services, and undo the damage of austerity.

- Read Nadia in her own words 'Southampton - Bevois socialist campaign going down a storm' at socialistparty.org.uk
• Including Nadia, TUSC is standing 17 candidates across Southampton

We say:

- Councils must refuse to pass on Tory cuts, instead set no-cuts budgets, based on the needs of the 99% not the 1% - no to increases in council tax and local charges
• End low pay. Support striking workers! End the cost-of-living squeeze!
• Renationalise energy companies and the other privatised utilities
• Restore youth services, jobs, reopen libraries, and reverse social care cuts
• We need a future for young people - free education and training, well-paid jobs for all
• A mass council house building programme to solve the crisis - reject rent and service charge increases
• Fully fund the NHS - stop and reverse privatisation
• Combat climate change, which should include a free-to-use, expanded, renationalised public transport system. Don't make workers' pay for the bosses' climate crisis
• Fight for united, working-class struggle against racism, sexism, and all forms of oppression
• Take the wealth off the 1%. We need socialist change!

CONTINUED ON PAGE 4 - READ MORE ABOUT THE TUSC CHALLENGE

# VOTE SALLY GRIFFITHS

FOR A SOCIALIST MAYOR OF SALFORD ON A WORKERS' WAGE!

VOTE TRADE UNIONIST AND SOCIALIST COALITION TUSC AGAINST CUTS

We need a mayor who stands with local workers fighting for what Salford needs...

NOT A MAYOR WHO COSIES UP TO WESTMINSTER HANDING OUT CUTS TO OUR COMMUNITY!

Sally Griffiths, who is a member of the Socialist Party, is a health worker from Salford and Assistant Branch Secretary of UNISON health branch in Salford. Salford has some of the worst health outcomes in England, but Sally has been health service for years; back a socialist NHS and let's kick out the privatisers!



## TUSC has only anti-cuts, anti-war Salford mayor candidate

SAM HEY MANCHESTER AND SALFORD SOCIALIST PARTY

Socialist Party member Sally Griffiths is standing for the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC), as the only anti-cuts, anti-war candidate in the Salford mayoral election. Sally's anti-austerity policies make a stark contrast to the Conservative, Green, and Labour candidates she stands against. The Lib Dems and Reform couldn't even put forward a candidate!

A proud trade unionist, Sally is confident taking her political programme to the streets of Salford. She opposes all cuts to council jobs, services, pay, and conditions.

The current mayor, Labour's Paul Dennett, is paid £69,903, making him out of touch with what working-class people in Salford earn. If elected, Sally will only accept the average wage of a skilled worker in Salford.

The capitalist parties stand idly by, as local authorities issue section 114 notices, limiting spending to only 'statutory' services. They are ignoring the crisis caused by their own policies.

If you oppose cuts to council services, and believe that the main capitalist politicians don't represent your views, then vote TUSC.

Sally Griffiths in also standing in Eccles ward in the Salford council elections

## Union meeting backs standing candidates against Labour

LEWIS REES LIVERPOOL UNITE COMMUNITY NW567

People wonder what a potential Labour government will look like. Many working people already understand what Keir Starmer's Labour Party is like, highlighted by his praise of hated Tory prime minister Margaret Thatcher. These sentiments are prevalent in the trade union movement.

motion unanimously to disaffiliate from the Labour Party. What was evident amongst members was a consensus understanding that Labour is positioning itself to be the party of big business.

It was acknowledged that the residing Liverpool City Metro Mayor Steve Rotheram has shown active support for the development of free-land in the trade union movement.

At my first Unite Community meeting, I put forward a motion, which was passed unanimously, that acknowledges and supports trade unionists standing in elections, with the prospect of financial support being provided by associated members.

The meeting also passed another motion unanimously to disaffiliate from the Labour Party. What was evident amongst members was a consensus understanding that Labour is positioning itself to be the party of big business.

# Build free, high-quality council-run nurseries to solve childcare crisis

KATIE SIMPSON NORTHAMPTON SOCIALIST PARTY

The crisis of childcare access and quality is ongoing. This month saw eligible parents of two-year-olds being entitled to 15 hours free childcare. From September 2024, this will be expanded to include nine-month-old babies.

My 19-month-old daughter is cared for by a childminder five days a week. This works out at up to £245 per week, a more reasonable rate than most. With 15 hours free we will still pay £167.50 a week - £8,710 a year.

The process of arranging childcare and costs is stressful and it puts many parents off. Not to mention that my childminder is now at full capacity and told me how guilty she feels turning people away. In fact, with most facilities privately owned and run as businesses, new funding has meant younger babies being prioritised over toddlers. Children with additional needs continue to lose out.

Parents are desperate, struggling in the ongoing cost-of-living crisis, and being forced back to work. Competition for childcare is an added stress and puts pressure on childcare

facilities to take on more children without adequate staffing. The Tories have already changed the legal staff-child ratios - childcare workers now have more children they are responsible for. Low pay and long hours make it hard to hire and retain staff.

Many parents, especially mothers, are forced to work part-time or remain in the home caring for their children. This not only keeps many women from pursuing careers but also exacerbates pay inequality and sexist attitudes towards women, taking away choice. Research shows children have much better social, emotional and cognitive outcomes when their parents have had a choice in returning to work or staying in the home.

Many grandparents who were hoping to retire are forced into new roles as free childcare providers for their children. My 65-year-old mum, who hasn't even been able to retire yet due to the increased pension age, will be supporting caring for a third grandchild come September.

Rather than threatening nursery closures, like the Labour council in Leeds, councils could create high-quality, flexible public childcare facilities to cater for parents' needs. Private nurseries that fail to meet standards or at risk of closure could

be brought in-house too. By using all resources at their disposal, linking up with other councils and mobilising popular support to demand funding from the government, childcare services could be subsidised and made genuinely free. Labour has promised 'childcare reform' if it wins the next general election. Labour councils could get to work now - and put pressure on Keir Starmer to fund what is needed rather than stick to Tory 'fiscal rules' - cuts.

I constantly see parents struggling to find affordable or suitable activities or facilities to enjoy with their children. By investing in play-grounds, leisure and play centres and affordable community cafes, parents would be able to enjoy time with their families.

This would also give children cared for in the home a chance to interact with other children - something crucial for their development.

Councils must invest in families to enable the next generation, many hit hard by Covid, not to be lost to a failing crisis-ridden system.

Do you agree? JOIN THE SOCIALISTS socialistparty.org.uk/join



Campaigning in Leeds to stop council nursery closures

## Leeds Labour making up nursery cuts as they go along

IAIN DALTON LEEDS SOCIALIST PARTY

Parents campaigning against the closure of their Little Owls' nurseries by Leeds Labour council have made a freedom of information request. Parents asked for the review documents that the proposed closures were based. They got the response: "There is no rationale document or consultation papers currently, as the delegates decision report is unfinished"

Some nurseries were due to close as early as May, now delayed until August. On what basis?

Parents are set to lobby the council's executive board on 17 April demanding answers. Why won't they share their review documents with parents? Or are they simply making up the cuts as they go along?

The campaign is drawing up pledges for local election candidates to respond to - pledging opposition to the proposals, and calling on the council to work with parents, communities, and trade unions to demand the funding necessary to maintain the nurseries.

Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) candidates

fully support the campaign. We have been out building for the rally and march at Gipton North Little Owls on Saturday 20 April at 10am, door knocking on streets near the nursery, and getting a great response from local residents.

Iain Dalton is the TUSC candidate in Gipton & Harehills. TUSC is standing seven candidates across Leeds.

Read what we've said before 'Campaign to save Leeds nurseries steps up a gear' at socialistparty.org.uk

# If Sure Start centres work why not fund them?

ELEANOR DONNE ESSEX SOCIALIST PARTY

Gordon Brown and other 'veterans' of the last Labour government have called on Keir Starmer to bring back Sure Start. The scheme, introduced in 1998, provided integrated support and advice on health, education, childcare and employment for parents and carers of children aged 0 to 5. By 2010, there were over 3,000 Sure Start children's centres across England - concentrated in poorer areas and seen as a lifeline by many struggling parents. Sure Start may have been one of New Labour's 'Greatest Hits' but it came at a price - the abolition of free university education. Students in higher education had to pay tuition fees for the first time and working-class students in particular have been saddled with a lifetime of debt as a result.

Brown references a recent Institute of Fiscal Studies (IFS) report which found that pupils in areas with Sure Start centres got better grades in their

1,300 Sure Start centres closed

GCSEs eleven years later and that the improvement was more marked for children getting free school meals, i.e. from households with lower incomes. The 'Evaluation of Children's Centres Project 2009 to 2015' found that attending a Sure Start centre would "improve the mental health of mothers and functioning of families but that these benefits are being eroded by cuts."

Since 2010, around 1,300 Sure Start children's centres have closed due to council cuts following Tory attacks on central government funding. Communities campaigned to save them but, in the main, Labour councils have implemented cuts rather than mount a co-ordinated and determined fight for more money from the Tory government. Brown has yet to convince Bridget Phillipson, Labour's shadow education secretary, who has failed to commit to any further funding from a Labour government for Sure Start children's centres.

Support and parenting advice is very important and can be life-changing. But it cannot make up for not having enough money to buy food or heat your home. For the 4.3 million children living in poverty, or the 41% of Universal Credit claimants

4.3 million children live in poverty

who have been 'food insecure', life is a hugely stressful daily struggle - and it shouldn't be.

The Socialist Party fights for the following measures as vital first steps towards improving children's life chances and will campaign for an incoming Labour government to implement them:

- Abolish the benefit cap and the two-child limit on Universal Credit. This would immediately lift around 1 million children out of poverty. Labour has, so far, committed not to do this
- Raise the minimum wage to at least £15 per hour and fight for pay rises to end in-work poverty
- Full public funding for a network of free, high-quality, flexible childcare from birth, including before- and after-school and holiday care
- No council cuts, fully fund services, make the super-rich pay
- Build a new mass workers' party
- Fight for socialist change



PAUL MATTESSON

## Struggling with rising prices?

Asda has some suggestions for its workers. And it is not to encourage strikes, like those which have taken place at Asda in Gosport and Wisbech, and soon maybe Brighton (see p10). A sample includes:

- "Have a no-spend day"
- "Bulk out dishes with breadcrumbs"
- "Keep an eye on the Martin Lewis Money Saving Expert website"
- "Buy and sell second-hand clothing"
- "Check you've claimed any benefits you're eligible for"

Maybe the problem starts with the fact that Asda pays many of its workers just a fraction above the minimum wage?

That's Asda price. 'Check chck...'



PHOTO: GMB/X

## Recession over - just about!

Britain is no longer in a recession. The economy has grown a whopping 0.1%, Woo-hoo!

The economy stagnates and the bosses try to maintain their profits by forcing working-class people to take the hit. That means trying to make us accept poverty wages, more hours, and worse public services and infrastructure that's falling apart.

And, like running on a treadmill, we've got to keep fighting for wage increases that keep up with the cost of living. Its not just olive oil that's doubled in price - bread and butter have shot up as well. The injustice of a system which puts profit above all else is clear to see.

Workers fighting collectively have got better pay offers than their bosses originally offered them, but why should we have to fight every year just to scrape by? Workers democratically deciding themselves what we produce, what wages we pay and what services we all need, not what makes a profit from the bosses or they can be forced to grant. A socialist society would put the economic chaos of capitalism firmly in the past.

## Tories use Cass Review to stoke division

## Fight for fully funded services under working-class democratic control



MARY FINCH

MICHAEL JOHNSON SOCIALIST PARTY LGBTQ+ GROUP

Ask anyone wanting to access NHS gender identity services and they can tell you - they aren't working. Getting a referral is no simple task. Understaffing, a lack of funding and local provision means people wait years, at least, and often have to travel for miles up and down the country to even get a first appointment, let alone treatment.

The Guardian reports that around 5,000 children and adolescents are waiting for gender-related NHS services. The context is an NHS crisis with one in five people in the country now estimated to be on a waiting list and delays most prominent among 16-24-year-olds.

It's clear that the Tories, increasingly hated, have no answers to this crisis - or any of the problems facing working-class people. They will continue to try to use trans issues in the so-called 'culture wars'. Part of that could mean further cuts and closures of gender services. Starmer's Labour has, true to form, abandoned promises to "stand with trans people" and pledged the continuation of private profiteering in health.

It is in this climate that Hilary Cass's review of gender treatments and services for young people was released on 10 April. Whatever the contents of the report, the Tories would have used it as a tool to foment division and cut back services.

It's clear that central to any safe and effective provision of healthcare

for trans youth and trans people generally is ending the crisis in the NHS. The Socialist Party calls for ending cuts and privatisation, full public funding and ensuring the resources needed, not only in gender specific services but across the NHS, that would allow people to access the healthcare they need at the right time. Fighting for that requires a united working-class struggle that resists the Tory attempts to divide us.

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



# IRAN STRIKES ISRAEL – MIDDLE EAST CRISIS ESCALATES

ROBERT BECHERT

CWI INTERNATIONAL SECRETARIAT

Iran's retaliatory attack on Israel ushers in a new, more dangerous, stage in the widening of the Gaza conflict towards a full regional war in the Middle East, something which would have global implications. In reality, some features of a regional war already exist, although not yet between states.

To many Israelis, the missile and drone attack will seem to confirm that Iran is its most serious opponent. Among Palestinians and others in the Middle East, it will have been welcomed as at last someone hitting back after six months of the bloody destruction of Gaza.

This move marks a shift away from Iran's asymmetrical conflict with Israel, fought often through allies, to a direct confrontation. Notwithstanding Iranian claims that it gave Washington prior notice of the attack, and its claim that its targets were only Israeli facilities involved in the 1 April destruction of the Iranian consulate in Damascus, this is a major development.

It breaks the idea that Israel is too strong to be attacked. The Iranian regime sent a message to the Israeli leaders that it is willing to respond to future attacks directly. Furthermore, some military commentators have said that, without the prior warning Israel received, more of the projectiles would have hit targets.

The Israeli regime has stated that it will respond, which is most likely in some form, but it is not yet clear how or when. In this situation, Israeli rulers face a dilemma: how do they reinstate the deterrent, the idea that Israel is too strong to attack, without provoking a wider war? There are open divisions within the Israeli ruling class over this, symbolised over whether 'revenge is a dish best served cold' or that, given the developing crisis, action is needed now.

The Israeli hawks may feel confident that they have the support of some Arab regimes; Jordan helped in shooting down the Iranian aerial attack. But these regimes are themselves under popular pressure to support the Palestinians under attack in Gaza and the West Bank, with recent demonstrations in Jordan and Egypt. Thus, recent events bring the prospect of a regional war closer.

The reaction of many Muslims around the world can also be one of support for any opposition to the Israeli state. Although there is a sizable Christian minority amongst Palestinians, this conflict is often seen in religious terms. This is not surprising given the widespread use of Old Testament quotations by many Israeli politicians and military leaders to justify both their conduct of the war in Gaza and

the claim, included in the founding statement of Benjamin Netanyahu's Likud party, that "between the Sea and the Jordan (river) there will only be Israeli sovereignty".

The Middle East is truly a tinderbox and the Western powers particularly fear that both the mounting international popular anger with the Gaza war and the possible widening of the war in the Middle East would undermine their influence and power in the region and beyond.

In some ways, today's situation in the Middle East resembles the pre-World War One situation, when the tensions between European powers were deepening and the threat of war was becoming more concrete. The likelihood of war was becoming more apparent, and the question was not 'whether' but 'when' and 'where'. For a time in 1912, it seemed that a European war could then break out. But, while that didn't take place in 1912, within two years World War One had begun.

## Weakened US

The relative weakening of the US position globally has seen it being challenged by other powers and unable to enforce its wishes as it did in the immediate period after the collapse of the Soviet Union. This challenge has been driven by the rise of China but also by other states around the world like India and Brazil being prepared to follow their own interests, something also seen amongst the Middle Eastern oil producers.

The Biden administration both fears what Netanyahu's far-right government will do and at the same time wants to preserve Israel's role as Western imperialism's key ally in the region.

Thus we see the Western powers combining repeated pledges to defend Israel while pressuring and pleading with the Israeli government to moderate its actions. However, the Israeli ruling coalition, between Netanyahu and extreme far-right nationalists, is not willing to play ball. These extreme right-wing ministers might want to provoke Iran in order to invite US intervention. Furthermore, Netanyahu appears to pay limited attention to what Washington says. Perhaps he hopes to remain in power for long enough, hoping that his position can be saved should Trump win November's US

election. It appears that the 1 April destruction of the Iranian consulate in Damascus caught the US unawares. But it is clear that, while there is currently continuing support within Israel for the war in Gaza, Netanyahu's coalition is in a minority both within the population and amongst the Israeli ruling class.

The Western imperialist powers are facing the Chinese and Russian regimes use of anti-colonial language in the Middle East, Africa, Latin America and in parts of Asia to win influence, in a similar way that Japanese imperialism used anti-colonialist propaganda against the British, Dutch and French empires during World War Two.

Facing growing international revulsion at their hypocrisy of condemning Russian attacks on Ukraine, but fundamentally supporting and arming the Israeli destruction of Gaza, the Western powers have seized upon the Iranian attack in a propaganda counteroffensive. In this, the Western propagandists have stressed the oppressive and often brutal nature of the Iranian regime, something which is true but ignores the Western allies like the highly repressive Saudi and Gulf regimes. In the main Western imperialist countries, especially Germany, this campaign has built upon the recent repression of opposition to Israel's war on Gaza that is often falsely equated with anti-Semitism.

But war and oppression is not new in the Middle East or the Arab countries of North Africa, it has been a feature for decades.

The long history of colonialism has shaped the history of the

region and the peoples living within it. The Western imperialist powers drove out the Ottoman Empire to get control of a region strategically important, which was later discovered to have key mineral resources, basically oil.

It was on this basis that British and French imperialism divided most of the region between themselves and chose which tribal chiefs to install as rulers. There was no talk of democracy let alone self-determination, and 'problem' rulers were removed, as the British did in Oman in 1970. The rising worldwide anti-colonial mass struggles and sentiment forced the British and French to retreat from direct rule and they were eventually relegated to a position of influence behind US imperialism. The 2011-12 'Arab Spring' illustrated how mass movements that were not able to take power into their own hands would be ultimately suppressed. But despite this, the rulers still fear 'the street' and the possibility of revolt, hence the general lack of democratic rights.

Israelis themselves have not found, despite economic growth, a peaceful 'land of milk and honey'. Marxists opposed the Zionist plan to create a Jewish state on the basis of removing the existing population of Palestine, a plan justified on the basis of the Old Testament. The cynical reason for British imperialism generally supporting the demand from 1917 was to create a client state in the region, something the French later attempted to do in Lebanon. Thus, the first British governor of Palestine later wrote that London's aim in encouraging Jewish migration was "forming for England 'a little loyal Jewish Ulster' in a sea of potentially hostile Arabism."

This plan inevitably sowed the seeds of today's conflict because it was based on the forced displacement of the existing population.

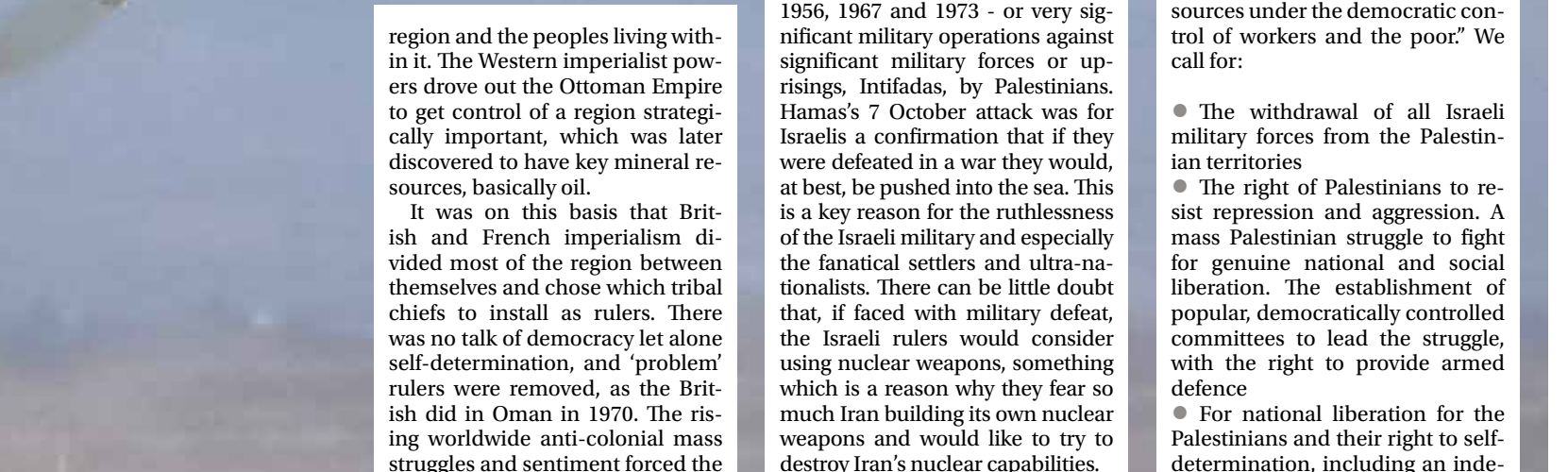
It needs mass action to succeed. Protests and demonstrations are important as mobilisers and expressions of opinion but, as was seen in the run-up to the 2003 US-British invasion of Iraq, will not on their own stop the war.

International workers' action is needed. If trade union leaders in different countries were to build for a 24-hour stoppage to demand an immediate ceasefire, the resumption of full supply of food, medicine and essentials plus the release of all hostages and detained on both sides, and an end to arms supplied to Israel, it would receive huge support.

The CWI has argued that "the rotten, dictatorial Arab regimes need to be overthrown as well as the ruling class in Israel and the elite in the Palestine territories. A socialist confederation of the Middle East on a free and equal basis will need to be built, with all resources under the democratic control of workers and the poor." We call for:

- The withdrawal of all Israeli military forces from the Palestinian territories
- The right of Palestinians to resist repression and aggression. A mass Palestinian struggle to fight for genuine national and social liberation. The establishment of popular, democratically controlled committees to lead the struggle, with the right to provide armed defence
- For national liberation for the Palestinians and their right to self-determination, including an independent socialist state
- The building of direct links between workers on both sides of the national divide
- The building of democratic and independent workers' parties in both the Palestinian territories and Israel
- The right of Israelis to their own state, through a socialist Israel alongside a socialist Palestine if desired by both communities, with full rights for minorities
- A struggle by the masses of the Arab states against the dictatorial capitalist Arab ruling elites, and of the Iranian masses against the reactionary theocratic regime. For a voluntary socialist confederation of the Middle East

Such an international call could get an echo within Israel/Palestine, offering the idea of a way out of repeated wars and endless repression. But this can only come to fruition by building movements of working people and youth offering a programme of liberation, social and national, which includes breaking with capitalism and beginning the socialist reconstruction of society. That is the way to end the wretched cycle that the Middle East, and much of the world, is in.



# Final push for May Day greetings: Fund the paper that fights for workers

SCOTT JONES  
THE SOCIALIST MAY DAY GREETINGS ORGANISER

We need you to support the Socialist by sending May Day greetings and you have a week to do so!

The Socialist backs workers taking action and is usually the only place to report on these struggles, whether its Sanctuary housing workers fighting for union recognition and a pay rise, or Birmingham Amazon workers stepping up their action for better pay.

We stand against war, poverty and all forms of oppression under capitalism and fight for a socialist alternative - including the building of a new workers' party - and we are covering the dozens of election campaigns by socialists in a step towards that. The Socialist calls for independent, socialist, working-class political representation.

To maintain an independent voice for working-class interests, we need

finance. It goes without saying that the big advertisers won't touch us, and we wouldn't have it any other way. Our funding comes from the workers' movement. May Day greetings are a vital part of that.

So celebrate International Workers' Day 2024 in the traditional workers' movement way, by sending May Day greetings. May Day is an annual celebration of workers' struggle against capitalism. Its origins lie in the general strike for an eight-hour working day. Each year, we ask groups of workers and trade unionists to support the Socialist newspaper and its revolutionary, anti-war, pro-working-class ideas by financing a May Day greeting.

Can your trade union branch, community campaign, workplace colleagues, trade union council or student society send us a donation and short message of solidarity? We publish these each year on International Workers' Day.

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## Sanctuary housing workers continue strike



Sanctuary Housing maintenance workers in Unite the Union are continuing their strike action over pay and union recognition. The workers involved in the dispute are based in Hackney but recruitment to the union in Sanctuary is increasing nationwide. A strike rally at the company office near the Kingsmead housing estate will be taking place on 26 April.

# UCU FE special conference votes against aggregated ballot, but a national campaign can still be won



FE strike 2022  
PHOTO: ROGER THOMAS

### SOCIALIST PARTY MEMBERS IN UCU

On Saturday 13 April, delegates from University and College Union (UCU) further education branches in England joined an online special conference, to determine whether or not to back the strategy of the Further Education Committee (FEC). The strategy included plans to build for an aggregated ballot this term to win nationally binding pay bargaining, with a plan to take strike action in September. As we reported in our article prior to the conference ('UCU special FE conference: Members can win a national ballot' at [socialistparty.org.uk](http://socialistparty.org.uk)), the conference was called by branches that had been mobilised by the right wing of the FEC to overturn the strategy.

Delegates report that the conference voted against moving to an aggregated national ballot this year, and endorsed an alternative strategy developed by UCU HQ. However, the conference backed motions for a national campaign for binding pay bargaining, and for the continuation of the strategy of coordinating branches taking disaggregated action.

Now the union leadership must seek to mobilise the maximum turnout of branches as part of a nationally coordinated campaign around the union's 2024-25 pay demands for a 10% pay rise, action on workloads, and national pay bargaining.

At the conference, delegates faced a choice: the 'levelling up: no one left behind' strategy of the FEC or the 'New Deal' strategy of HQ, reported to rule out an aggregated ballot in the next two years so that the union could instead "build and articulate a new strategy".

The left at the conference argued that a mass campaign ahead of the

general election would "firm up Labour's support for FE". In contrast, the union's head of FE argued that the union could "influence" the Labour manifesto without taking action.

The Socialist Party backed moves to a national, aggregated ballot this year. We have confidence that our members can win when given a serious, fighting lead. Given Starmer's commitment to Tory spending plans and "tough choices", just going to Labour with a begging bowl will achieve nothing for FE staff. We agree we can put maximum pressure on Starmer by showing readiness to fight industrially, and, we also argue, by backing political candidates who support our members.

However, we also warned that the campaign needed to be properly prepared for and built. Though the FEC 'levelling up' motion included plans for branch briefings and a 'Get the vote out' campaign, leading members of the FEC could have better prepared the membership ahead of February's FEC.

Building support for the strategy from below would have guarded against the subsequent attack by the ring wing, who were successful at encouraging and exploiting members' worries.

Those opposed to the 'levelling up' strategy sent emails out to all branches, warning the action was too much, too soon, had been imposed anti-democratically, ignored legal advice, and had "no exit strategy". For many branch reps, this was the first they had heard about the campaign, which allowed the right wing's "concerns" to stick.

The online nature of the conference also favoured the right. Coming together in-person builds reps' confidence that they are not fighting alone, and allows for debate and discussion between delegates.

This vote does not mean that the potential for action has gone, however. With a vigorous lead from the top and at all levels in the union, members' confidence can grow. Unified action across the sector will put maximum pressure on employers and the government to agree to the 2024-25 pay claim demands. A national-level campaign for maximum turnout of branches is needed, including support for branches and campaign materials that put the case for coordinated action.

UCU congress in May is another opportunity to debate a fighting strategy.

**nationalshop**  
**stewardsnetwork**

**NSSN conference 2024**  
Saturday 22 June 11am-4.30pm

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Conway Hall, 25 Red Lion Square, Holborn, London WC1R 4RL

with the **NSSN bulletin**  
[shopstewards.net](http://shopstewards.net)

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# Unite Tata Steel ballot victory

ALEC THRAVES  
SWANSEA SOCIALIST PARTY AND  
SWANSEA TRADES COUNCIL

Unite the Union has announced a significant 'Yes' vote result in its ballot for industrial action at Tata Steel at Port Talbot and Llanwern.

All four bargaining units, across the two sites, returned a 'Yes' vote, showing the determination of the majority of the 1,500 Unite members to defend their jobs, save the industry and protect the local communities.

With the average age of a Unite Port Talbot steelworker at just 36, it is clear that future jobs and security are far more important than the financial bribes that Tata has dangled in front of the workforce.

Tata Steel bosses continue their bullying tactics by threatening legal action, claiming 'significant irregularities in the ballot process'. With no interest in serious negotiations with the unions to preserve the primary steelmaking process under a green transition, Tata's only objective now is shutting down the blast furnaces and decommissioning the 'heavy end', which has already started with the recent closure of the coke ovens.

The Community union, whose members primarily work at the

threatened 'heavy end' of the plant, started its ballot for industrial action on 11 April, with the result due in a month's time on 9 May. This Unite ballot victory will undoubtedly be a big boost to the confidence of Community members, the largest steel union, alongside the small GMB membership, who have also started balloting, to vote 'Yes' and prepare for united action against this brutal employer.

Unite's positive result has given them a six-month window for industrial action, which can now be used for all the steel unions to prepare together in united action to save the plant.

As the Socialist Party has consistently argued, there can be no trust in Tata to invest the billions of pounds necessary to save primary steelmaking. The demand for 'Nationalisation - NOT Devastation' has widespread support across the communities and crucially within the workforce.

Malcolm Gullam, a Unite retired steelworker, commented after the result: "Now is the time to push Labour into announcing it will renationalise as soon as a new government is formed."

That demand is getting a huge echo and must be the central platform for the trade union leaders to act upon.



PHOTO: SCOTT JONES

# Asda strikes spread



Asda PHOTO: REPTONIX/CC

### ASDA WORKER

A third Asda store has balloted for industrial action.

The ballot result at Asda Brighton Hollingbury comes after industrial action was carried out at Asda Gosport and Wisbech in the last few months.

Members are angry at a number of issues with the employer, citing management bullying, a lack of adequate training, high staff turnover, and health and safety issues not being resolved in a timely manner. Asda staff are demanding to be heard and that the employer takes their concerns seriously.

Asda has been in the press recently after an audit found an additional £140 million profit had been declared, the decision of the private equity firm TDR Capital to leave the board of directors, and one of the co-owners, Zuber Issa, seeking to split

his share of the company. Declan MacIntyre, GMB regional organiser, told the press: "Asda is financed by TDR Capital and GMB has grave concerns that their heads might be turned by the debt pile of their other asset, Stonegate pub group. Let's hope this ballot result refocuses their attention on the plight of our members."

GMB members do not want to see a repeat of Wilko, Southern Cross and other private equity-owned firms that have gone under in recent years. Asda demonstrates the failures of free-market capitalism, with policies that risk the food security of millions of people across the country.

**If there is a risk of a major company like Asda going under, we should demand the bosses open the books to show where all the money has gone, and that the company is nationalised to save jobs.**

# Healthcare workers in Leicester: 'The first time I've been on strike'

HEATHER RAWLING  
LEICESTER SOCIALIST PARTY

"I have been a member of Unison for 41 years. This is the first time I have been on strike."

"I joined the union a few weeks ago to support the strike."

These were a couple of the comments of health care assistants (HCAs), mainly women, on the Unison picket line outside Leicester Royal Infirmary. It is a lively picket with plenty of chanting - and homemade cake to keep energy levels up!

On the third day of the strike,

driving rain, hailstones, thunder and lightning could not dampen the spirits. One picket braved the spray from traffic, standing with her placard asking drivers to toot. She was rewarded with a cacophony of noise. A few weeks ago she wasn't even a union member.

Across the University Hospitals of Leicester Trust, 94.6% of those balloted voted to strike.

The workers are striking for money that they are owed. Inadequate funding of the NHS alongside inadequate pay has led to difficulties recruiting trainee nurses, and many

qualified nurses have been leaving the profession. For years, healthcare workers on Band 2 have been asked by management to carry out duties above their pay grade to make up for the lack of nurses, pickets told me. They should have been providing personal care like bathing and feeding patients, but most have been routinely undertaking clinical tasks like taking blood, performing electrocardiogram tests, and inserting cannulas!

HCAs have won an upgrade to Band 3, but management are stalling on paying all of the pay owed dating back to 2018, and have refused Unison's offer of talks at ACAS. So the strikes are on, with more planned later in the month and into May.



Barnet PHOTO: ROB WILLIAMS

### Barnet Unison members push back Labour council strike-breakers

Barnet Unison (above) has launched further strike action by its members working as mental health social workers. The workers had already taken 27 days of action and, after winning a rebalot with a 87% 'yes' vote on a 70% turnout, they have called a further 45 days of strikes. Outrageously, the Labour-controlled council intended to use agency labour in a strike-breaking move, even though this anti-union measure was defeated by Unison in the High Court last year, rendering it illegal. However, in a victory for the Unison branch and its members, this move was stopped.

**The following Socialist Party members are seeking nomination for the 2024 Unison service group elections**

- Health**  
Steve Bell,  
Adrian O'Malley  
**Local Government**  
Mathew John,  
Angie Waller  
**Community**  
Helen Couchman



## WHAT WE STAND FOR

Capitalism is an ailing, crisis-ridden system based on the exploitation of the majority of the world's population by a small, super-rich elite who own most of the wealth and the means of producing it. This way of organising society, in which the pursuit of profit comes before everything else, causes poverty, inequality, environmental destruction, wars and oppression across the globe.

The Socialist Party organises working-class people to fight against the attacks from this rotten system on our lives and livelihoods, and for a socialist alternative: a society which takes the wealth out of the hands of the super-rich and is democratically run by working-class people to meet the needs of all not the profits of a few.

Building fighting democratic trade unions in the workplaces and a new mass workers' party is a vital part of the struggle to change society along socialist lines.

Because capitalism is a world system, the struggle for socialism must also be international. The Socialist Party is part of the Committee for a Workers' International which organises across the world. Our demands include:

### WORK, PENSIONS AND BENEFITS

- A £15-an-hour minimum wage for all, without exemptions. For the minimum wage to automatically increase linked to average earnings or inflation, whichever is higher.
- Share out the work. A maximum 32-hour working week with no loss of pay or worsening of conditions. The right to flexible working, under the control of workers not employers. An end to insecure working, for the right to full-time work for all who want it; ban zero-hour contracts.
- All workers to have trade union rates of pay, employment protection, and sickness, parental and holiday rights from day one of employment. End bosses using bogus 'self-employment' as a means to avoid giving workers rights.
- No to austerity through inflation. For all wage rates to be automatically increased at least in line with price rises.
- Open the books of all companies cutting jobs or claiming they can't afford to pay a real living wage. State subsidies, where genuinely needed, for socially-useful small businesses.
- For trade unions independent of the capitalist state, with members having democratic control over their own policies, constitutions and democratic procedures. For all trade union officials to be regularly elected, subject to recall by their members and paid a worker's wage.
- Reduce the state retirement and pension age to 55. For decent living pensions.
- Replace universal credit and the punitive benefit system with living benefits for all who need them.

### PUBLIC SERVICES

- A massive expansion of public services including the NHS and council services. Reverse all the cuts, kick out the privateers. Bring private social care and childcare facilities into public

ownership under democratic control, in order to provide free, high-quality services for all who need them. Expand services for all women suffering violence.

- For local councillors who are committed to opposing austerity and all cuts to local services, jobs, pay and conditions.
- For a socialist NHS to provide for everyone's health needs, including dental and eye care – free at the point of use and under democratic control. Kick out the private companies! Nationalise the pharmaceutical industry under democratic workers' control and management.

• Renationalise privatised utilities – including rail, mail, water, telecoms and power – under democratic workers' control and management.

• Free, publicly funded and democratically run, good-quality education, available to all at any age. Abolish university tuition fees and write off student debt, end marketisation, and introduce a living grant. No to academisation. For all schools to be under the genuine democratic control of local education authorities, school staff, parents and student organisations.

- The right to a safe secure home for all. For the mass building of genuinely affordable, high-quality, carbon-neutral council housing. For rent controls that cap the level of rent. Fair rent decisions should be made by elected bodies of tenants, housing workers and representatives of trade unions. For cheap low-interest mortgages for home buyers. Nationalise the privately owned large building companies, land banks and estates.

### ENVIRONMENT

- Prioritising major research and investment into replacing fossil fuels and nuclear power with renewable energy, and ending the problems of early obsolescence – where products are designed to 'wear out' and be replaced – and unrecycled waste.
- Nationalisation of the energy companies, under democratic workers' control and management, with compensation paid only on the basis of proven need, in order to carry out a major switch to clean, green energy, without any loss of jobs, pay or conditions.
- A democratically planned, massively expanded, free to use, publicly owned transport system, as part of an overall plan against environmental pollution.
- For a major, publicly funded, insulation and energy transition plan for existing housing stock.
- Agribusiness to be taken into democratic public ownership. For a food processing and retail industry under workers' control to ensure that standards are set by consumers, small farmers, and

Do you agree? Join the fightback!

## JOIN THE SOCIALISTS

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all workers involved in the production, processing, distribution and retail of food.

### DEMOCRATIC RIGHTS

- For united working-class struggle to end discrimination on the grounds of race, gender, disability, sexuality, age, and all other forms of prejudice and oppression.
- Repeal the anti-trade union laws and all others that trample over civil liberties. For the right to protest and to strike! End police harassment. For the police to be accountable to local committees, made up of democratically elected representatives of trade unions, local community organisations and local authorities.
- For the right to choose when and whether to have children – for the right to access abortion, contraception and fertility treatment for all who need it.
- For the right to asylum – with democratic community control and oversight of emergency funding resources. No to racist immigration laws.
- Expand democracy. For the abolition of the monarchy and the House of Lords. For all MPs to be subject to the right of recall by their constituents at any time, and to only receive a worker's wage.
- For proportional representation and the right to vote at 16.
- For the right of nations to self-determination. For an independent socialist Scotland and for a socialist Wales, both part of a voluntary socialist confederation of Wales, England, Scotland and Ireland.
- Oppose the dictatorship of the billionaire owners of the media. For the nationalisation of newspaper printing facilities, radio, TV and social media platforms. Access to these facilities should be under democratic control, with political parties' coverage being allocated in proportion to the popular vote at elections.
- For a new mass workers' party, based on the trade unions, and drawing together workers, young people and activists from workplaces, and community, environmental, anti-racist and anti-cuts campaigns, to provide a fighting, socialist political alternative to the pro-big business parties.

### SOCIALISM AND INTERNATIONALISM

- No to imperialist wars and occupations!
- Take the wealth off 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, not to the fat cats.
- 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 EU bosses' club. Organise a campaign with European socialists and workers' organisations to use the talks on post-Brexit relations to tear up the EU pro-capitalist rules. For a real collaboration of the peoples of Europe on a socialist basis as a step towards a socialist world.

# Arizona re-enacts primitive 1864 law to effectively ban abortion



PHOTO: FIBONACCI BLUE/CC

AMY SAGE  
BRISTOL NORTH SOCIALIST PARTY

Protesters gathered outside the Arizona Capitol building in Phoenix on 11 April to oppose a further attack on the right to abortion in the USA. The demonstration was called following a decision by the Arizona Supreme Court that a 1864 law, which bans abortion in nearly all cases, may be brought back into effect. Under this statute, anyone who is found to have performed an abortion could face up to five years in prison. If reenacted, abortion in Arizona will effectively be banned from the moment of conception, except where it is necessary to save the life of the mother. No provisions, however, make exceptions in the case of rape or incest.

This recent attack on the rights of women was made possible by the Supreme Court's overturning of Roe v Wade in 2022, which reversed the constitutional right to an abortion. Since this ruling, 14 states have completely banned abortion while two more have introduced laws banning the procedure after six weeks. This has resulted in a patchwork map of where the procedure is legal in the US and has left millions of women and girls at risk.

However, even where abortion was protected under the constitution, provision and access to clinics was also patchy, with many women being denied access to an abortion, not by the law, but by the cost. Abortion has never been free in the USA, with women paying as much as \$500 for a termination, excluding travel and childcare costs, and loss of wages for taking time off work.

The 1973 Roe v Wade ruling signified a crucial victory for the women's movement in the USA and the working class as a whole. However, this latest attack on reproductive rights in Arizona following Roe's reversal shows us that, under capitalism, any reforms won will always be temporary and partial. The ruling class can be forced to make certain concessions under the pressure of mass movements, but as soon as these movements subside, the capitalists will move to claw back the reforms.

Therefore, we cannot rely on capitalist politicians to secure real reproductive freedom. This includes the Democratic Party which is seeking to make abortion a central issue in the upcoming presidential election, yet failed to introduce legislation that would have backed up Roe and prevented the 2022 Supreme Court attack. Securing gains for women and bringing about the end of oppression means fighting to end the capitalist system itself, which perpetuates reactionary ideas, and to replace it with a democratic socialist society.

• Read 'Roe lost but the struggle goes on' at [socialismtoday.org](https://socialismtoday.org)

# German police break-up Palestine solidarity congress

## Protest to defend democratic rights!

TOM HOFFMANN  
SOCIALIST ORGANISATION SOLIDARITY  
(SOL - CWI IN GERMANY), BERLIN

On 12 April, the Berlin police broke up the 'Palestine Congress', a conference of various pro-Palestinian and left-wing organisations, which met under the slogan of "we denounce", opposing support for the Israeli government's Gaza war.

A weeks-long smear and defamation campaign - orchestrated by the tabloid press and other capitalist media, as well as with the participation of politicians from the conservative CDU, ruling coalition parties FDP, SPD and the Greens and, scandalously, even parts of the Die Linke (Left Party) leadership - was followed by action.

An event where critical discussions about Israel's war against Gaza could take place, including about German support for (among other things) arms deliveries and the repression of pro-Palestinian protests, was banned. The fundamental rights to freedom of assembly and freedom of expression were, once again, massively restricted. Protests against this are needed immediately in Germany.

Even in the run-up to the event, very few people expected this Congress would run smoothly. Around 2,500 police officers, some of whom were sent to Berlin from other federal states, were supposed to 'accompany' the three-day Congress. What this meant became clear in advance. There were repeated calls, including from the Federal Minister of the Interior, the Berlin City Senator of the Interior and Berlin's Governing Mayor, for police to "intervene harshly" during the Congress in the event of alleged criminal offences.

The organisers only announced the Berlin venue on the morning of the event for fear of disruption. Anyone arriving at the site early in the morning saw a venue surrounded by police vans, barriers and a wide cordoned-off area. Inspections by the building authorities, fire brigade and police delayed the start by several hours - as did subsequent police checks. Several hours passed before only the speakers were allowed onto the site.

### Agitation and defamation

For weeks, the organisers and the Congress were vilified as 'antisemitic'. As we wrote in another article, this accusation was "constructed from the fact that hostility towards Jews is derived from opposition to the state of Israel and its racist policies". In contrast, the call of the Congress, which was deliberately ignored, explicitly demanded that all people in the Middle East, "regardless of their religion or ethnic affiliation, whether Muslim, Jewish or Christian - should be able to live with equal rights."

The blocking of the bank account of one of the co-organising groups, the 'Jewish Voice for Just Peace in the Middle East', in the run-up to the Congress, showed how the rights of



PHOTO: SOL GERMANY

Jewish people in Germany who are organising against the Gaza war are faring. A member of Jewish Voice was arrested by the police at the Congress venue without any reason being given.

An absurd incident occurred in front of the Congress centre when the police took away a person with the banner 'Jews against genocide'. The police then allegedly asked the organisers whether this person was wanted at the Congress - which was of course answered in the affirmative. A chant from the crowd, which was still waiting to be admitted, went up: "Jews, Christians and Muslims - against their war machine".

### Ban

The Congress, which was only allowed to start after a massive delay, with only around 250 of the roughly 1,000 who had turned up allowed into the hall, was then interrupted when the speech by Salman Abu Sitta, who had previously been banned from entering Germany, was to be shown on video.

The police stormed the hall and cut the power supply. In videos on social media, the organisers criticised the fact that the police made accusations of inciting hatred in the video, but did not specifically name the incidents. Instead they said they

were 'examining' them. The police later wrote on X/Twitter that they had ended the Congress because Abu Sitta had been banned from taking part and "there is a risk that such anti-semitic, violence-glorifying and Holocaust-denying speeches could be repeated at the event". The organisers have announced in a press release that they will legally challenge the procedure.

Ex Greek finance minister Yanis Varoufakis, who served under the left-wing Syriza government in 2015, has also been banned from Germany, including from taking part in Zoom events hosted in the country.

We reject the defamation of the Congress and its participants as antisemitic - as well as the arbitrary repressive measures taken by German authorities. Some of the speakers and organisers have what we consider to be an overly uncritical attitude towards Hamas and see it as a possible ally in the fight against occupation and oppression by the Israeli state, which we consider to be wrong.

According to various media reports, the entry ban, and also the ban on Salman Abu Sitta's activities, were

justified by the fact that he described the participants in the Hamas-led attack on Israeli territory as "resistance fighters" and said that if he had been younger he could have been one of those who stormed the fence (the border between Gaza and Israel) on 7 October.

### Police prevent debate

Socialist Organisation Solidarity (SOL - CWI in Germany) condemned the massacre of Israeli civilians on 7 October and sees Hamas as a reactionary, anti-worker and anti-women force that shows no promise for the liberation of Palestinians. At the same time, we have always emphasised the fundamental responsibility of the Israeli state for Hamas' development, which thrives under conditions of occupation, state terror and oppression of Palestinians, and has even been supported by Israel in the past, and more recently by Netanyahu's government's campaign to block the establishment of any Palestinian state.

We are convinced that the implementation of the Palestinians' right to self-determination will only be possible on the basis of socialist change in the region and that a mass movement of Palestinians under their democratic control against war, occupation and oppression is needed - which also seeks to gain the support of the Israeli Jewish working class. The relationship to Hamas and the development of left alternatives to it could have been critically discussed at the Congress. The police prevented this discussion.

The fact that the police are not concerned with preventing antisemitism or incitement to hatred is evident when you consider how many events, party conferences, speeches and marches by Nazis and right-wing extremists in this country have been protected by the police for decades without such arguments being used.

Benjamin Netanyahu's Israeli government, which also includes right-wing extremists, has been 'glorifying violence' and 'inciting the people' for years - and yet it continues to be supported by the German government because, its leaders claim, of the history of the Nazi past - but in fact because capitalist Israeli governments are seen as the most reliable defenders of the interests of Western imperialism in the Middle East.

### Protest necessary

The action taken by the Berlin police marks severe restrictions on the right of assembly and freedom of expression. Today, it affects those who oppose the propaganda of the German establishment and the German government's support for the war. But it is also a precedent for future action against others who express criticism of capitalist conditions, growing militarism, oppression and falling living standards and want to organise resistance. Leftists, trade unionists and activists from social movements should therefore also protest against this.



### Pioneering in Plymouth

DUNCAN MOORE  
PLYMOUTH SOCIALIST PARTY

Plymouth Socialist Party members went out to the Devonport area of Plymouth, in addition to our regular city centre stall, to sell the Socialist and spread our ideas on 13 April.

Devonport is traditionally a Labour stronghold, a working-class neighbourhood with many thousands of industrial workers in the dockyard, the largest naval base in western Europe. The area is blighted with poverty and social problems but has a strong sense of community. The nearby pub where we meet put up locals during the recent unexploded WW2 bomb scare, providing evacuated residents with tea and coffee and somewhere to keep warm before

it was declared safe to return home. Support for Labour has plummeted in recent years, shown by the turnout in elections, the lowest in the city in last year's locals.

Most people we spoke to were not intending to vote; those who are were mistakenly looking to Reform UK and the populist right as an alternative to the hated capitalist establishment parties.

Our programme for a minimum wage of at least £15 an hour; a fight to save council services and jobs; for public housing and nationalised energy, transport and water, met with strong approval, cutting across far-right populist rhetoric.

We met three people interested in joining the Socialist Party. A public meeting on 25 April is the next step towards founding a new branch of the Socialist Party in the area.

● TUSC is standing in all 19 wards in the Plymouth council elections. Duncan Moore is standing in Peverell, and Alex Moore is standing in Devonport

### Oxford youth campaigning

We held a campaign stall outside Oxford Brookes University on 12 April. Our main focus was the housing crisis in Oxford, with an emphasis on student housing, building for a student meeting the following Friday. We also attempted to gauge how students felt about the Tory government as a whole, making the case for socialism - the outcome was overall positive!

OXFORD SOCIALIST STUDENT  
● TUSC is standing 10 candidates across Oxford in the council elections



### First fighting fund quarter target smashed Now help us smash this one

CHRIS NEWBY  
NATIONAL FIGHTING FUND ORGANISER

The Socialist Party has a target of £25,000 to reach every quarter through public activities and fundraising. Achieving this is vital for us to have the necessary funds for our campaigning materials - leaflets, posters, placards and more. Our branches work hard to achieve their share of the target by organising various activities, but mainly through receiving donations in support of our ideas, which provide a socialist alternative to the current crisis of capitalism.

If you are already a member of the Socialist Party, contact your branch secretary to get more involved. If you are not yet a member but agree with us, what can you do to help us reach our £25,000 fighting fund target this quarter?

Many Socialist Party members over

the next few weeks will be involved in election campaigns involving extra campaign stalls and canvassing. These will be great opportunities for raising extra fighting fund, and if you see us, why not stop for a chat?

Everything raised will help make sure that we can get our socialist message out as widely as possible.

Last quarter we smashed our target, raising a brilliant £37,498 - 150% of the target. This was mainly raised by the excellent campaigning work Socialist Party branches did around many different issues, but particularly putting out our socialist message on the Gaza demos and the movement to defend jobs at Tata Steel.

Socialist Party members and supporters also responded really well to the fighting fund appeal at our annual Congress in March. Our members have worked hard to reach this target and we thank all our members and supporters for making it possible.

### Fund the fightback DONATE TODAY

● Visit [socialistparty.org.uk/donate](https://socialistparty.org.uk/donate) or call 020 8988 8777  
● or make cheques payable to Socialist Party,  
PO Box 1398, Enfield EN1 9GT



## London Gaza demo: support for an anti-war, socialist election stand



CIARAN O'DONOGHUE  
NEWHAM AND EAST LONDON SOCIALIST PARTY

With the developing situation of Iran's retaliation for Israel's strike on its Damascus consulate, thousands of people took to the streets of London to demand an end to Israel's brutal attacks on Gaza and for the West to cease arming Israel.

At our campaign stalls, at the start and end of the march, it was evident that people had become fed up with pro-war politicians and were desperate for an alternative. There was significant interest in the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition and the anti-war candidates that are running

in the upcoming Greater London Assembly elections.

The desire for an alternative to the pro-war parties is also reflected in the fact that many people signed our petitions calling for anti-war candidates. Opposition to Starmer's Labour was often vocalised. All these factors point towards the development of a real constituency opposed to Labour as well as the Tories. The trade union leaders, representing millions of workers, could play a decisive role in the development of a new party. Trade union support for a workers' list of candidates in the general election would be an important step forward; it could include Jeremy

Corbyn and others.

One passer-by said, "I think we are beginning to make a difference". There has been a change in tone from some of the pro-war politicians (at least in words) from total unequivocal support for what Israel is doing. There was a UN Security Council resolution that called for an 'immediate ceasefire for the month of Ramadan', for example.

The ruling capitalist class will not take any necessary action to end the horror in Gaza. Such action can only be taken by independent working class organisation both in Britain and internationally. We need socialist and anti-war candidates to stand up to the interests of the ruling capitalist elites.



## Swindon

HELEN HARRIS  
SWINDON SOCIALIST PARTY

Socialist Party members in Swindon were out in force again to support the latest Swindon Palestinian Solidarity action, taking place in Regent Circus - a favourite spot for protests. Swindon Palestinian Solidarity has been extremely successful in organising support and raising money for the ongoing, disastrous war in Gaza - where many of the group have relatives or friends.

Speakers talked about the numbers of dead, the attacks on hospitals and schools, the targeting of journalists, healthcare workers, teachers and even children going to fetch food from the few aid trucks that are allowed access to Gaza.

Socialist Party member Scott Hunter gave a rousing speech about solidarity between the low-paid Palestinian and Israeli workers - who would have more in common than with those wealthy Israeli capitalists who benefit from the cheap labour provided by oppressed Palestinians.

The group then marched through the pedestrian precinct, stopping at Barclays Bank and McDonald's for more speeches. A minimal police escort was in place and it was another successful, peaceful march.

# TORIES OUT But Starmer's Labour doesn't fight for us!

# VOTE SOCIALIST



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# the Socialist

Issue 1271

18-24 April 2024

formerly **Militant**

JAMES COLLETT  
GLOUCESTERSHIRE SOCIALIST PARTY

Over 33,000 have been killed in Gaza by the Israeli state since 7 October, famine stalks the strip and Palestinians in the West Bank face daily attacks by Israeli settlers. Workers and young people across the world will have watched the missiles fired by the Iranian regime into Israel and now sit with bated breath, fearful that the retaliation of the Israeli state will mean the region slides even further into horrifying war.

With all this, it's no surprise that Labour is losing members as Keir Starmer echoes Sunak; backing imperialism in the Middle East and backing the bosses here in Britain. He has pledged to increase military spending to 2.5% of GDP and his commitment to nuclear weapons is "unshakeable".

Starmer's recent (feeble) criticism of civilian casualties and starvation in Gaza is not caused by a delayed realisation that Israel's ruthless policy of occupation and extermination is wrong: in fact Starmer's current rhetoric is entirely in line with that of most representatives of western imperialism, who fear Netanyahu destabilising the region and threatening to disrupt the profits of the capitalists.

It shows that Starmer's concern is with profits, not human lives. He is yet to retract the comments he made in October that Israel is justified in withholding electricity and water from Gaza.

Summoning the ghost of Blair's New Labour, who stuck to Tory spending plans in their first years in office and boasted to the capitalists that they could "trust Labour with the economy", Starmer's new New Labour is making it clear what we can expect from them: "fiscal responsibility" - austerity for workers, and a free-for-all for big business. From the arms dealers and oil giants who benefit from imperialist war to the private companies gouging profits from the NHS, the Labour leadership represents the ruling capitalist class who can only drag society backwards.

We need to get the Tories out - but to replace them with what? George Galloway's victory in Rochdale shows that anti-war candidates can win. We must build political representation of the working class: a party to unite workers, young people and all those oppressed by capitalism so that we can challenge the pro-war, pro-austerity consensus of the establishment and fight together for a socialist world.

Socialist Party members are standing as part of the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) as part of the fight for such a party. So vote TUSC on 2 May and back candidates who represent workers, not war.

# Starmer's Labour backs war

## FIGHT FOR A PARTY THAT REPRESENTS WORKERS

**Vote Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition on 2 May**

**TUSC AGAINST CUTS**



WHAT WE STAND FOR: THE SOCIALIST PARTY'S MAIN DEMANDS >>> see column on p12

9 771366 962103 ISSN 1366-9621