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TRUMP, STARMER, NETANYAHU...

**NONE OF THEM
KNOW WHAT
THE F**K THEY
ARE DOING!**



INSIDE: ON TRIAL FOR PALESTINE SOLIDARITY - INTERVIEW WITH CHRIS NINEHAM

NEWS



NO KINGS PROTEST, WASHINGTON DC. PHOTO: DIANE KRAUTHAMER/CC BY 2.0

Trump's authoritarianism met with mass protests

SEAN LEDWITH

During last year's US presidential campaign, Donald Trump stated he would act like a dictator 'only on day one' of his presidency, as if that was supposed to reassure anyone. However, since his inauguration in January, Trump's authoritarian instincts appear to be accelerating almost daily. He has trampled over the country's constitution and triggered confrontations with both legislators and street protests.

There are serious questions whether Trump's tariff policies are in fact constitutional, but that is just the start of an alarming pattern. The arrests of judges and Democrat politicians seem to be becoming routine events, while the violent arrest of the leader of Service Employees International Union California (SEIU) trade union, David Huerta, while observing an ICE raid in Los Angeles, was particularly sinister.

Richard Nixon, as president in the early 1970s, created the template of the 'Imperial Presidency', enabling him to bypass the constitution and initiate policies such as the saturation bombing of south-east Asia, the Watergate break-in and extensive wire-tapping of political opponents. Daniel Schuman, director of the non-partisan American Governance Institute draws comparisons with Trump's second term.

Within the Republican Party, there's are some who believe the president is king, who view Congress and the legislative branch as an impediment which should not be allowed to stand in the way of the president's commands.

On 14 June, as Trump presided over a bloated show of military might, massive demonstrations took place across all fifty

states of America, in 2000 separate locations. Demonstrators were united under the slogan 'No Kings' and were on the streets opposing Trump's increasingly authoritarian administration.

The 'No Kings' slogan acted as a reminder that the US was founded on an explicitly democratic basis in 1776, and even if its rulers fail to be constrained by that fact, millions of Americans believe their rights are worth preserving.

Estimates suggested the scale of the demonstrations dwarfed the Black Lives Matter protests of 2020, which until now were the biggest protests in US history: between five and ten million people took part.

These demonstrations were a direct and impressive response to Trump's militarised raids on undocumented workers by the Immigration and Customs Enforcement agency (ICE). They were a powerful message to Trump that his attempt to subvert centuries of democratic gains by American workers and civic organisations will not be tolerated.

Recently, the full panoply of state power in the form of agents from the FBI, Homeland Security and the National Guard have been deployed against some of the most vulnerable in the US. Los Angeles was the focus of the raids and witnessed scenes of confrontation between the forces of the state and the population that looked like a prelude to civil war.

At one point, Defence Secretary Pete Hegseth authorised the deployment of 700 Marines – an act of federal over-reach leading to California Governor Gavin Newsom and LA Mayor Karen accusing the president of abusing his executive authority and breaching constitutional norms.

Trump's provocative acts and aggressive language suggest a clash is looming between his rebooted brand of 'Imperial Presidency' and the US federal system. The potential for dramatic escalation of violence was underlined by the brutal killings of Minnesota legislator Melissa Hortman and her partner by a far-right fanatic the same weekend as the No Kings protests. Governor Tim Walz described the killings as a 'politically motivated assassination'.

The US Constitution was crafted over decades by wily bourgeois politicians such as Madison, Jefferson and Lincoln who carefully calibrated the interests of the ruling class in the emerging capitalist power in the late 1700s and 1800s. They understood

the importance of achieving consensus in a society powered by mass immigration. The separation of powers and federal structure of the US system was tailor-made for an elite that had come to power with democratic rhetoric and mass mobilisation from below. Trump personifies the degeneration of that same ruling class as its global power is waning.

In an extraordinary interview with NBC in May, the president was reminded that the fundamental duty of his position is to uphold the constitution. His response was, 'I don't know. I'm not—I'm not a lawyer.' With Trump handling the levers of power in the White House, it is no wonder the country is edging towards the abyss.



SIZEWELL C PLAN. PHOTO: UK GOVERNMENT/OCL v3.0

GOING NUCLEAR WON'T SOLVE THE CLIMATE CRISIS

ELAINE GRAHAM-LEIGH

While cutting the budgets of most government departments in June's spending review, Rachel Reeves was prepared to splash the cash on a range of energy infrastructure projects. Any hope that this represents a positive step towards a green energy transition would however be unfortunately wide of the mark.

The headline announcement was £14.2bn for EDF to build Sizewell C

nuclear power station and for Rolls Royce to build small modular reactors (SMRs). Sizewell C is apparently to take as its blueprint EDF's nuclear plant in Somerset, Hinkley Point C, although it is to be hoped that it doesn't mirror its model too closely when it comes to cost overruns or timescales.

Hinkley Point C will have taken at least 21 years to build when it finally gets up and running, having been approved in

Continued on page 3

Continued from page 2

2008 but now looking like going online in 2029 at the earliest, and is on course to cost more than double the initial cost estimate (£16bn in 2013, £33bn in 2023).

This illustrates a significant problem with nuclear power as an answer to climate crisis: that it takes so long to implement that it's hardly the urgent response we need. Proponents of nuclear power as green energy will argue that it is nevertheless needed to complement renewable energy generation, as it can provide a reliable energy source for those times when the wind isn't blowing and the sun isn't shining.

In theory, this might sound reasonable, but in practice, where countries turn to nuclear it tends to be instead of, rather than as well as, renewable energy generation. The spending review was a perfect illustration of this, as investment in solar and wind was conspicuous by its absence.

If Sizewell C sounds like a dubious investment, the same is true in spades for the spending on SMRs. These, as the name suggests, are supposed to be easy to site and quick to build, being largely constructed in factories rather than built on site. In practice, though, they aren't as simple as they sound and end up being very expensive for the electricity they might generate.

The cash for the SMRs is just one of a number of energy investments in the spending review for technology which might or might not sound good but has yet to be shown to work. This is true of the money for carbon capture and storage.

The Public Accounts Committee reported in February 2025 that 'the Department is taking a high-risk approach by backing first-of-a-kind, unproven technologies with large amounts of taxpayer and consumer funding' when it came to CCS. The same is true for nuclear fusion, which would be an incredible energy breakthrough, but which has been twenty years away for fifty years and more.

The money for all these speculative investments, at a time when we are facing continuing austerity for public services, shows the government's priorities. There is money for war and for the sorts of projects that private investors see as good opportunities. Spending on proven technologies like renewables to address the climate crisis though is as out of reach as proper funding for welfare.

EDITORIAL



KEIR STARMER AND DONALD TRUMP. PHOTO: SIMON DAWSON / NO 10 DOWNING STREET / CC BY-NC-ND 2.0

THE MAIN ENEMY IS AT HOME

COUNTERFIRE

Gaza, the West Bank, Lebanon, Syria, Yemen, and now Iran.

In the last twenty months, Israel has bombed, killed and maimed tens of thousands of people across the Middle East. Each time they have launched their aggressive actions, they have come out with the same tired excuses: this was a 'pre-emptive strike' that was 'targeted' on 'terrorists' and munition sites, a surgical attack by 'the most moral army in the world'. But the world knows the truth.

Israeli forces have destroyed housing complexes, schools, hospitals and universities. They have repeatedly broken international law: their bombing of Iran's nuclear power stations being the latest example. They have used hunger and starvation as weapons of war and civilians as human shields. Even as they attacked Iran, they continued their genocide in Gaza, bombing the strip and regularly shooting starving civilians. There is no depth to which their depravity will not sink.

The claim that their goal was to destroy Iran's nuclear-weapon capability is an old and discredited line from Netanyahu. There is only one nuclear power in the region, Israel, which itself refuses to sign the nuclear non-proliferation agreement, or allow in international inspection teams.

Almost immediately, the stated aim changed to 'regime change', revealing that the intent was to remove Iran as a regional competitor to Israel and destroy support for the 'axis of resistance'.

Israel's assault is only possible with the backing of the Western powers. The EU, France, Germany and the UK all released statements defending Israel. British planes were involved in shooting down Iranian drones and missiles and providing refuelling services for Israeli warplanes. Starmer refused to rule out UK involvement to 'defend Israel'.

Behind Trump's bluster, it is clear that the US knew of the attack, was happy for it to go ahead and was able to constrain Israel's plan to assassinate Iranian leader Ali Khamenei. Ten days after Israel launched the offensive, US B-2 bombers dropped 'bunker-buster' bombs on Iranian nuclear sites, another breach of international law which prohibits attacks on nuclear installations.

This threatens further destabilisation of the region and the expansion of the war. Given Iran's relationships with Russia and China, it brings us closer to a global conflict.

For the US, regime change to establish a US-friendly Iran (with control over its oil and gas riches) has been a goal since the Iranian revolution of 1979. Destroying

Iran's independence would also fit with wider objectives of US imperial strategy. Iranian and Chinese economic relations have developed greatly over recent years and China's trans-Kazakh railway has emphasised Iran's geographical importance. Breaking these economic and geopolitical links falls within the US long-term plan to block China as the major imperial and economic rival to the US.

Israel, with the participation of the US and UK, is on a killing spree. Yet the Iranian regime is a far more significant player in the region than Hezbollah or Hamas were in Lebanon or Gaza. The Iranians have managed to shoot down several F-35 aircraft and have launched multiple waves of missiles which have repeatedly breached the Israeli Iron Dome defence system. Key cities and military sites have been bombed to an unprecedented extent in Israeli history, as well as the Haifa oil refinery being put out of action.

Israel and their US masters have taken the region and the world to a dangerous place. It is a disgrace that Western leaders, and Labour politicians in Britain, are backing Netanyahu once again.

For the pro-Palestine and anti-war movement in Britain, it is clear that our main enemy is at home. We need to stay on the streets and increase the pressure on Starmer.



WEEKLY BRIEFING

Cut through the media bias with Lindsey German's analysis on the latest political developments straight in your inbox every Monday morning



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RANK-AND-FILE ROUNDUP



NHS WORKERS DESERVE BETTER

Health unions are currently balloting their members over the government's pay offer. Cici Washburn spoke to Tracy Scott, an advanced NHS Nurse and member of NHS Workers Say No about the mood on the ground.

What's it like at work right now?

I work in the breast team which is generally a fairly well-funded area but we can really see the impact on services. Delayed GP appointments and failures of care impact many of our patients. I can see the impact of lack of staffing in A&E and on the wards.

I think people are demoralised, frustrated and angry. But in the last wave of strike action, nurses came out in force and because they put up a fight, more and more people joined those strikes. I was out from day one and I watched how the picket lines grew and grew. Workers wanted to be out on strike to have their voice heard. People had never spoken about going out on strike before but I think it was the straw that broke the camel's back for everybody, watching the destruction of the NHS and the erosion

of their pay, and the loss of nursing staff retiring early because of burn-out and not being replaced.

Nurses and NHS workers are being offered 3.6% by the government, what are NHS staff saying about this?

It's not as much of a consistent pay cut as we have had over the last thirteen years, but it goes nowhere in terms of pay restoration or to resolving the issues of retention or recruitment of staff. In reality, it's a 0.5% pay increase on essentially what is a 20% pay loss over the last thirteen to fourteen years. So how can the Labour government say that they are committed to restoring the health?

I think the problem is that people just feel so let down from the last wave of strikes, from their unions, that they feel at a bit of a loss about what to do. They are angry. The unions are asking if we think the offer is enough, but beyond that, they should be asking how they can support us. But we, as members, need to be saying to our unions as well, 'what are you willing to do as a union?' It's all well and good,

most members wanting to go out and fight. But if your union's going to cave at the first paltry increase of an offer, then what was the point in even going out? We lost way more than that being out on the picket line.

What we were offered as nurses and other healthcare professionals is abysmal. The offer is unfunded so it's taken from other parts of the NHS budget and we're pitched against others. So they'll give us a small raise but take money off disabled people or pensioners or someone else – when actually the money is there for all of us.

What next?

Certainly we need to be on strike, but importantly, we need our unions to have a clear vision, make it transparent, and stick to it. Not wavering. For instance, the RCN during the last strike wave, campaigned initially for a 17% pay increase. But then when the going got tough, they backtracked, 'we never said that'.

During the strike wave and it being post-Covid, we had the full backing of the public who were also angry with the government. We were out with the teachers, posties etc, it was the perfect opportunity to get public-sector workers the pay they deserve, it was like shooting a fish in a barrel and the unions failed.

What gives you hope?

I think though the answer always has to be people. People give me hope. I think the media and politicians control narrative. They love to pitch people against each other.

I see so much good in many people though. We just need to remember to stay aware of those trying to divide us and why. As a collective, we can be such a force for good. They are scared of that. We have so much more that unites us than divides us. Together we are always better.

BIRMINGHAM BIN STRIKE: UP THE STRUGGLE

PETE WEBSTER

The resolve and determination of the Birmingham bin workers was reinforced last month when a ballot reaffirming their industrial action resulted in a 97% 'Yes' vote on a 75% turnout. The dispute started in January as a series of one-day strikes but escalated to an all-out strike in March. It means that the mandate for action is extended until December, if required.

There is widespread support amongst the public and the wider trade-union movement in support of their struggle. This is not surprising given that nearly 400 workers will face a £6-8,000 pay cut if the city council gets its way.

This dispute is the result of years of cuts from central government and financial mismanagement by the local Labour-led administration. Birmingham City Council leaders, and the unelected government-appointed commissioners from Whitehall, remain intransigent and have dug in for a long and protracted dispute.

The stakes are high. If the council can force through these draconian measures, it will not only be a defeat for the refuse workers but will give the green light to use the flawed re-grading process on other sections of the council workforce and across the public sector nationally. Other councils and employers are watching this dispute closely.

The key question for strikers now is how to escalate to win. Building community support has seen encouraging developments. You cannot go anywhere in the city without seeing a billboard or mural in support of the bin workers. Trade union branches nationally have sent delegations and made donations to the strike fund.

But more needs to happen. The nationally-supported 'megapicket' in May was a great success and strikers need to persuade Unite officials to make another call out for something similar to happen soon to keep the momentum going. Neighbouring councils as well as recruitment agencies providing scab labour need to be confronted and shut down, and a mass city-centre march and rally can broaden and deepen support from the public, being a focal point for other trade-union branches to come out in solidarity.

A victory is achievable but not without a major escalation and this is what strikers and activists should be arguing for as a key objective over the coming days.

PICKET LINES THIS MONTH

BIRMINGHAM BIN WORKERS

Union: Unite
Dates: Continuous
Location: Sites across Birmingham

NEWCASTLE UNIVERSITY

Union: UCU
Dates: Weekdays from 1-17 July
Location: Newcastle, NE1 7RU

NEW CITY COLLEGE (BSIX)

Union: NEU
Dates: 1-4 July
Location: Kenninghall Rd, E5 8BP

STAGECOACH WEST SCOTLAND

Union: Unite
Dates: Continuous until 21 July
Location: Depots in Ayr, Arran, Ardrossan, Kilmarnock

WIGAN ALPLA UK

Union: Unite
Dates: 11, 12 July
Location: Golborne, Warrington, WA3 3GY

INTERVIEW

The state is attacking our movement because we represent a real challenge



Chris Nineham is facing trial with PSC Director Ben Jamal in relation to the national Palestine protest on 18 January. **Michael Lavalette** spoke with Chris and asked him why he thinks Palestine activists are being targeted by the state.

Could you tell us a little about how you got involved with Stop the War and became the chief steward for the Palestine demonstrations?

I've been a socialist since my late teens and I always thought opposition to war and imperialism must be central to the socialist case. That's especially true in Britain, given its long history of imperial conquest and colonial brutality.

I helped launch the Stop the War Coalition in 2001. For the previous year and a half I had been working within the anti-capitalist movement that emerged after the protests in Seattle in 1999. I was involved with networks across Europe building for protests at the meetings of the World Trade Organization and the G8. I was one of the organisers of the massive protests at Genoa in July 2001.

After 9/11 that year, I suppose I brought my international connections and experience to the Stop the War movement. The anti-capitalist movement helped launch the historic protests against the Iraq War including on 15 February, 2003, when thirty million people marched around the world. I've been working for Stop the War ever since.

My role has evolved over the years. As well as speaking, writing and organising, I have been head steward on most of the recent marches against the genocide in Gaza. It was in that role that I was violently arrested on 18 January. The police alleged I breached the Public Order Act and, alongside Ben Jamal, I'm facing trial on 7 and 8 July.

A number of other people were interviewed about the events on 18 January but most of them have been told they will not face charges. What do you think is going on?

I think the fact they have dropped threats against the majority of those interviewed is a sign of their weakness. It is quite clear that the police did let us through the lines they had set up on the 18th. I think they realised that charging everyone on a weak case could have been damaging for them. But they are still pursuing Ben and myself because they think they have the greatest chance of getting convictions against us.

They want to use us as examples. If we are convicted, they think it will have a chilling effect on the movement.

From the very start of our marches in 2023, the state, the police and government politicians have attempted to marginalise and criminalise our movement. They have put all manner of barriers in place to try to limit protests. What they want to do is drive a wedge between what they see as the hard-core of the movement and broader society. But so far, they have utterly failed in this.

As well as you and Ben, there is the proscribing of Palestine Action and charges against Mo Chara of Kneecap. There seems to be an authoritarian turn in government policing of our movement.

This is an unprecedented state campaign of harassment against an entirely peaceful protest movement. The attacks on Kneecap and Palestine Action are



a disgrace. The targeting of activists needs to stop. I think you'd need to go back to the Miners' Strike of 1984-5 to find a comparable level of police mobilisation and criminalisation of a popular movement.

Last month, there was an anti-austerity demonstration that followed the exact same route that we asked for on 18 January. There were no restrictions whatsoever placed on it; whilst the Palestine march on that same route was banned!

The Palestine demonstrations have been overwhelmingly peaceful, but they are directly

and the politicians would expend so much time and energy attacking us if we didn't.

You said Palestine remains the key political question, how, then, does it relate to, and feed, other movements and campaigns?

Support for Israel is declining rapidly and is found disproportionately amongst those at the top of society and in the corridors of power. The vast majority on our demonstrations are ordinary working people. The government that is spending billions on weapons, including for Israel, is at the same time cutting welfare, taking money from disabled people and refusing to fund social care.

As a result, I think increasing numbers of those on our marches are starting to draw connections. Although our movement is focused on the genocide in Gaza, it easily shifted to opposing Israel's and the US's war on Iran. Many people can see the parallels with the West's military backing of Ukraine. Many people recognise that a big fight against austerity would help us with the fight over Palestine.

When I see people defending their communities against the marines in Los Angeles waving the Palestine flag, when I see teachers on the picket line wearing keffiyehs, when I see Palestine activists marching to stop cuts to disabled benefits, I am filled with hope.

With all the extreme obstacles we face, it feels like we have started to challenge the whole system.

Join the protest to defend Chris and Ben: 7 July, 9:30am, City of London Magistrates' Court, 1 Queen Victoria Street, EC4N 4XY

challenging the interests of the British state in the Middle East, and the state's relationship with both Israel and the US. Israel is the crucial prop of Western interests in the region and any threat to that relationship is potentially a mortal threat to how the Western powers operate and control the region.

Our movement is creating a massive problem for the British state because support for their relationship with Israel is melting away. However frustrated we all feel, we represent a real challenge to the complicity of our rulers. There is no way the police

US imperialism is going for broke in the Middle East

Trump appears set on a decisive reckoning with Iran and the Palestinians, argues Dragan Plavšić

The rapidly escalating crisis in the Middle East – first the genocide in Gaza then the war on Iran – cannot be divorced from the relative decline of US power in an increasingly multipolar world of competing imperialisms.

US imperialism dominates the Middle East, deploying military capabilities unmatched by any other power. Currently, it has 40-45,000 troops in the region in nineteen military facilities, of which eight are permanent bases, across ten countries. It's the leading supplier of arms and the security partner of choice for multiple Arab elites. On top, it arms Israel to the teeth.

Defeats and disasters

All is not well, however, and has not been for years. Defeats and disasters from Iraq to Libya have dented its hegemony, giving rise to resistance movements supported by Iran, from Hezbollah in Lebanon to Hamas in Gaza and the Houthis in Yemen. This has provoked re-evaluations in US ruling-class circles about its role given mounting geopolitical challenges elsewhere from Ukraine to the Pacific.

Trump is the sharpest political expression of this re-evaluative mood. Repeatedly explicit about stopping 'endless, senseless wars that don't benefit the United States', his overriding goal is to release the US from its draining military entanglements in the Middle East so it can pivot decisively to the Pacific to meet the pressing demands of economic, political and military competition with China.

But there is a problem. The Middle East remains a key geopolitical hotspot, one that cannot be strategically sidelined at will. It accounts for over 40% of global crude oil exports and 48% of global crude oil reserves. And though in recent years, the US has reduced its dependence on this oil to 10%, China's dependence remains high at 45% (Saudi Arabia supplies 14% and Iran 13%), a key consideration US strategists cannot ignore.

China and Russia

China is also a steadily growing presence in the Middle East, relying on the sure and certain pull of economics but also politics to do its work. Economically, it's the largest trading partner of many states,



DONALD TRUMP IN THE SITUATION ROOM AS THE US BOMBED IRAN, 21 JUNE 2025

including Saudi Arabia, Iran, and the UAE, and it's undertaken multiple Belt and Road Initiative projects in recent years. Politically, it's brokered high-profile agreements, such as the 2023 Saudi Arabia-Iran rapprochement following seven years of broken ties.

In 2017, China also opened its first overseas military base in Djibouti in the Horn of Africa at a location reportedly

fifteen minutes' drive from the US base. Djibouti overlooks the narrow Bab-el-Mandeb Strait, a Suez Canal gateway that connects the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden and laps Yemen's shores a mere eighteen miles away. In 2018, Washington alleged that laser attacks from China's base had injured its pilots flying nearby, while Beijing counter-alleged espionage.

Russia, by contrast, is focused on

retaining what it can of its slipping foothold in the region. In 2015, it intervened in Syria to support its close ally, Bashar al-Assad, only to see him overthrown in 2024.

The future of its two bases in the country – a longstanding naval one and a more recent air base which was attacked in May – is now uncertain. As a result, it's fallen back on its relationship with Iran

but retains an opportunistic readiness to exploit any faults in US power.

In this context, regional powers are becoming increasingly adept at playing imperialist powers against each other for maximum gain. States like Turkey, the UAE, and Saudi Arabia engage with all three powers in different domains: the US for security, China for economics, and Russia for occasional diplomatic support.

Decisive reckoning

All this presents Washington with a strategic dilemma. It needs to pivot away from the Middle East but as things stand, it cannot do so without inflicting serious self-harm in three key respects. It risks emboldening Iran, weakening Israel, and China advancing towards displacing the US as the dominant imperialist power in the region.

Washington has now opted to resolve this strategic dilemma in the most brutal manner possible. It's embarked on a decisive reckoning with Iran and the Palestinians, aiming to 'pacify' the Middle East and 'safeguard' it for US imperialism and the West for the foreseeable future.

On Gaza, the genocidal logic of the mass ethnic cleansing Trump is supporting could scarcely be clearer. As he put it: 'You're talking about probably a million and a half people, and we just clean out that whole thing and say: "You know, it's over".' His goal is to secure, once and for all, an ethnically homogeneous Israel no longer threatened from within by the liberation struggle of the Palestinians. In turn, this fortifies Israel and therefore US power in the region.

On Iran, the aim is to inflict a catastrophic defeat on the regime, disabling it militarily and politically for years to come. Doubtless, the hope is also for regime change and a successor regime as US-pliant as Assad's replacement in Syria. The overall calculation is of a 'pacified' Middle East decisively 'safeguarded' for Washington and providing it as a result with the latitude it needs to pivot to still greater dangers in the Pacific.

Consequences

US imperialism under Trump is going for broke in the Middle East. The consequences are incalculable. If recent history is anything to go by, chaos and catastrophe threaten.

Yet, this is also a time of great danger for the Arab states and ruling classes. As has often been predicted, a decisive reckoning of a quite different order from Trump's is long overdue: that of the Arab masses with their repressive and rapacious rulers and their mercenary alliance with US imperialism.



TOPPLING OF THE STATUE OF SADDAM HUSSEIN, BAGHDAD 2003

A timeline of regime change and its failures

KEVIN CRANE

Within a day of their illegal attacks on Iran, senior Israeli politicians had already moved on from claiming that they were defending themselves to proclaiming that they intend to bring about the overthrow of the Iranian government: what is so often now referred to as 'regime change'.

The present concept of regime change by means of brute external force as a foreign-policy objective of the West in general, and America in particular, only really goes back to the start of the twenty-first century under the presidency of George W Bush. Right-wing fanaticism and belief in the power of globalisation fuelled a drive to use force to spread American domination to the remaining parts of the world that didn't accept it.

Bush became a hate figure round the world, but Western commitment to using war to remake countries has remained. The odd thing is that, aside from being brutal, it has also never actually worked:

Afghanistan

In Bush's first war, justified by the 9/11 terror attacks and claims that America could liberate women, America ousted the first Taliban government in 2001. The Taliban did not accept defeat and the Americans never built a functioning state. After twenty years of violence, the US left, allowing the Taliban simply to return. Afghan deaths during this time were not properly counted but are likely to be well over a quarter-million.

Iraq

Bush's second war in 2003 was supposedly to prevent the dictator Saddam Hussein from using weapons of mass destruction, which were

soon discovered not to exist. America failed to establish the government they wanted in the oil-rich state but battled insurgents for eight years before leaving. Perhaps as many as half a million Iraqis died during the occupation, but the war also set the stage for the rise of the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (Isis) which started life as a prison gang in American internment camps.

Libya

Hopes that America would not wage war under president Barack Obama were scotched in 2011 when he sent airpower to destroy the ability of long-term dictator Colonel Ghaddafi to put down a rebellion. Although the war was short from a Western perspective, it has essentially never ended for Libyans. Their gas-rich country went from having one of the highest living standards in Africa to being ridden with terrorists and slave-traders. Two Libyan rebels went on to carry out the horrific Manchester Arena bombing in 2017.

Syria

Flushed with 'success' after overthrowing the Libyan government, Obama's administration involved itself in Syria, with a view to ousting the pro-Russian dictator Bashar al-Assad. Things took a turn when the US not only failed to do that but then Isis emerged from Iraq and seized huge areas, prompting powers like Turkey and Russia to join in.

Assad's government finally fell last year, but America's record of installing successful new rulers does not look to have improved: the new leader is an old Islamist terrorist who has carried out violence against minorities almost uninterrupted.

'Regime change' in Iran, a country larger than Britain, will only add it to this list of bloody failure.

THE CONDITION OF THE WORKING CLASS



YVETTE COOPER ON THE CASEY REPORT IN PARLIAMENT. PHOTO: HOUSE OF COMMONS / CC BY-NC-ND 2.0

‘Grooming gangs’ racist scapegoating to cover state failures



by **Terina Hine**

A girl aged ten dismissed as a prostitute, police calling abused girls ‘slags’ and their abuse a ‘lifestyle choice’, children arrested for being ‘drunk and disorderly’ yet not the men feeding them drink: these are just a few examples of how appallingly some child victims of ‘grooming gangs’ were treated by the state.

Will Starmer’s new national inquiry help? Maybe. But it definitely won’t if it takes years, its recommendations are ignored or if it’s hijacked by political opportunists like Farage and Badenoch.

It’s not as if we haven’t had inquiries into the matter before. So far, we’ve had two local inquiries in Rotherham and Telford, reviews in Oldham and Rochdale and a seven-year £187m inquiry by child-protection expert Prof Alexis Jay, which reported in 2022 and came up with twenty recommendations, most of which remain outstanding.

Labour is correct to note that for years the Tories in government failed to act, and for all her recent bluster, Badenoch herself did nothing when minister for Women and Equalities. Starmer correctly accused Badenoch of ‘jumping on a far-right bandwagon’ when she called for a new national inquiry earlier this year, but it’s not unreasonable to accuse him of the same as he makes the call now, even if it is done under cover of the recently-published Casey audit.

Baroness Casey’s damning 200-page audit has exposed a history of institutional

state failure from 2009-25, reporting a catalogue of failings in schools, religious institutions, the police, social and health services and both Tory and Labour local councils.

It’s a massive scandal involving tens of thousands of young, mostly female victims. In Rotherham, at least 1,400 girls were abused; in Telford, estimates suggest over 1,000 children were abused over three decades; in Rochdale, 74 victims were identified, and there’s evidence of a much wider problem. The exact figures may be disputed, but that many thousands of young lives have been destroyed and the state did worse than nothing about it, is not.

Rather than deal with either the causes or the criminals, our politicians have chosen to use the cases of these young victims for their own political gain in a highly racialised war of words. Even Elon Musk saw fit to weigh in, echoing the far too familiar tropes of Islamophobic prejudice.

Ethnicity data on perpetrators was only recorded in a third of cases, which, Casey emphasised, is ‘not sufficient to allow any conclusions to be drawn at the national level.’ Not that you could hear her above the racist howls. That’s not to say that Casey didn’t find British-Pakistani men ‘over-represented’ as perpetrators in some of the regional child-exploitation statistics, she did. She also found ethnicity had been ‘shied away from’ in some investigations. Even so, it’s crucially important to note that, in most cases going back to 2002, no

ethnicity data was recorded.

Where data does exist, for example in the Hydrant programme, which collated police data on perpetrators and victims in child-sexual exploitation (CSE) cases between 2022-3, it found that 83% of CSE suspects were white, 7% Asian, 5% black.

Claims that girls were ignored while men went free because of political correctness do not hold up in face of the facts. The police as woke warriors was never a believable line: lack of convictions are far more likely the result of ingrained misogynist views and a complete lack of respect for children in care.

State institutions consistently failed these most vulnerable of girls over decades: from the police to schools, councils to social workers. Public inquiries are slow and expensive, often tell us little we don’t already know and can simply be a way for politicians to delay action and brush difficult issues under the carpet. That both political parties are complicit in the covering up of CSE makes this more likely.

Blaming race and culture has provided an excuse for what was a shocking official response to the sexual abuse of working-class girls. It has provided a distraction which enables huge cuts to mental-health and children’s services to continue along with the underfunding of victim-support groups. Casey made clear that grooming gangs are still very much among us. Now is surely the time for action, not for more reports and more words.

EYEWITNESS TO THE GLOBAL MARCH TO GAZA

JIM SCOTT

The Global March to Gaza was an attempt to bring solidarity to Gaza by thousands of activists from 54 countries marching through Egypt to Rafah. Our elected leaders are failing us and enabling a genocide, so it was symbolically powerful for us, as humanity to take action ourselves.

I decided to join the march and went as a representative of CND Cymru. A crowdfunder we launched to cover our costs raised £3,300 in 24 hours, and meant that the action was accessible to people on varied incomes.

There were around 4,000 people who made it to Egypt for the march – some 7,000 people from Tunisia were stopped from getting there. But along the main road from Cairo to Ismailia, the police reinforced two checkpoints and managed to stop people getting through.

Activists had their passports taken off them and were kept on the side of the road with no shade or water for hours. In the evening, they were told they had to turn back to Cairo or they would be beaten up. And some covered up men with sticks violently attacked some of the activists that tried to stay.

It was clear that the Egyptian government’s strategy was to stop the march by any means. Back in Cairo, downtown was crawling with secret police and were busting into people’s hotel rooms. Some of the key organisers were swooped on in a café, had their phones taken off them and were deported.

Speaking with Egyptians along the way, I was told if it wasn’t for the protest laws, there would be a million Egyptians with us. And as activists, I think our role has to be to create hope regardless of the difficulties. You never really know the impact these things will have.

We did our best to bring solidarity to Gaza despite the complicity of our leaders and the Egyptian government.

THIS MONTH IN HISTORY

1789

4th: Revolutionary insurgents storm the Bastille in Paris

1857

5th: Clara Zetkin born

1888

2nd: Around 1,400 women and girls walk out of the Bryant and May match factory in Bow, east London, marking the rise of New Unionism

1948

4th: The National Health Service founded in the UK

1972

8th: Ghassan Kanafani, leader of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, assassinated in Beirut

MARXISM 101



CAN CAPITALISM BE REFORMED?



by **Alex Snowden**

Reformism has for generations been the dominant political current in the working class. It aims to win positive reforms, reflecting working-class interests and aspirations within the capitalist system. In Britain, the Labour Party has historically been the main expression of this current.

Reformism has deep roots. It is normal in capitalist society for working-class people to reject aspects of the ruling political order. That is hardly surprising in an exploitative, unequal society geared towards the interests of the wealthy, but it is also normal for most working-class people, most of the time, largely to accept capitalism as inevitable.

There are two major reasons for this. Firstly, the ruling ideas in any society are the ideas of the ruling class. Karl Marx argued that the ruling class controls not only the means of production, but the means of mental production. Consider how media companies owned by wealthy

interests express ideas that prop up the status quo.

Secondly, this partial acceptance of capitalist society reflects people's experiences. We tend to normalise the way things are. Disliking specific government policies is one thing. It requires a considerable leap to reach a total rejection of the existing social and economic order, with an alternative positive vision of a radically different society.

In a modern, liberal capitalist society, a degree of formal democracy masks the reality that economic power is concentrated in a tiny ruling-class elite, and is totally unaccountable. The limited democracy of parliament becomes the focus of efforts to change society for the better. Elections to parliament are therefore seen as crucial for winning reforms: get better people elected and things will improve for the mass of people.

The capitalist state – the police, armed forces, civil service and so on – remains largely impervious to democratic accountability. It appears politically neutral and benevolent, but is in fact an instrument of capitalist class rule.

Meanwhile, the economic power of the capitalist remains untouched. If a multinational corporation wishes to sack thousands of workers, the workers do not get a vote.

Marx recognised that, despite these limitations, the extension of the vote during

his lifetime was an advance for the working class. Elections to parliament could at least offer an opening for the political expression of working-class interests. That would require independent working-class candidates and potentially a workers' party.

In Britain, that party would not be formed until the early years of twentieth century. The Labour Party was part of the wider emergence, especially in Europe where capitalism was most developed, of social-democratic parties trying to reform capitalism.

Labour constituted an organisational break from the Liberals, reflecting the long-term expansion of the suffrage and a working-class desire for a political voice. It had close links with the trade unions, though it gave voice to the moderate union leaders rather than the workers' movement's more combative elements.

The Conservative Party embodies ruling-class interests. The Labour Party was established, though, to give some sort of expression, as the name implies, to the interests of workers. This is an expression, however, of workers' existing ideas with all their contradictions, not workers' objective interests.

Labour has therefore always been highly contradictory. Lenin called it 'a bourgeois workers' party'. It reflects (in distorted form) the aspirations of workers, with mostly working-class members and

voters, but politically, it operates within a bourgeois (capitalist) framework.

Furthermore, Labour has always tried to balance between class and nation, with the 'national interest' defined by what works for the ruling class and the capitalist state. These pressures to conform to the British state, and bend to powerful interests, become enormous when Labour is in office. It invariably succumbs to the demands of capitalists and, in foreign policy, to Washington.

Labour has often promised a lot in opposition, but delivered little in office. In the post-war boom years, with Labour governments elected in 1945 and again in 1964, there were real reforms (if also disappointments and retreats). Capitalism had scope for allowing improvements to working-class people's lives.

Every subsequent Labour government has delivered less than the one before. The economic growth and rising living standards of the 1950s and 1960s gave way to recurring economic crises from the 1970s onwards. Labour has narrowed its horizons over time.

Corbynism was an exception to the long-term trajectory of Labour moving rightwards. Starmer's government is a new nadir. Labour is shedding support as a result. Socialists must organise independently of Labour and have a broader strategy than electoral politics alone.

WHAT WE STAND FOR

Counterfire is a revolutionary socialist organisation that has been central to the Palestine, anti-war and anti-austerity movements over the last two decades. We are committed to transforming our society from one based on the profit motive to one built on the needs of working people.

Real change can only be achieved by working-class people organising themselves to challenge their bosses and the government that stands behind the bosses. It depends on mass movements, popular protests, and on workers taking action. We believe that this kind of popular opposition requires a dynamic extra-parliamentary left, rooted in workplaces, communities, and colleges.

We also believe that all the struggles against oppression are connected. Racism, sexism, and every other form of oppression and discrimination are a product of a society based on the exploitation of working people by a tiny minority of capitalists. War, climate change, and inequality are all symptoms of a chaotic system based on market competition.

In the process of helping to build every kind of resistance to capitalism, we bring to bear the lessons of the past and a Marxist analysis of the present. Counterfire puts the case for a revolutionary socialism that ultimately seeks popular control of society and genuine liberation for all.

Our members are actively involved in the protest movements and workers' struggles around the country, organising and supporting protests and picket lines. We have Counterfire branches across the country helping to build solidarity with struggles locally and nationally, and popularise socialist ideas and analysis.

As well as putting on a wide range of debates, public meetings and other events around the country, we run one of the best-read websites on the left which has scores of contributors and tens of thousands of readers every month and we distribute thousands of copies of the left's first free paper – which has now expanded to 12 pages.

Join us and get involved today.

COUNTERFIRE & MOVEMENT EVENTS

Counterfire branches around the country organise regular in-person or online public meetings discussing key topics of the moment. We also organise national and regional events like Revolution! and Marxism in a Day periodically. Our events are open to all, and listed below along with key movement dates for your diary.

See [counterfire.org/events](https://www.counterfire.org/events) for updates.

BOURNEMOUTH

Palestine and imperialism: how do we end the genocide?

Tuesday 1 July, 6:30pm
Four Horseman Pub, 77-79 Commercial Road, BH2 5RT

NATIONWIDE

Workplace day of action: Free Palestine, No war on Iran

Wednesday 2 July
Follow @stwuK for updates

WITNEY

The Fiery Spirits - book launch

Thursday 3 July, 6pm
Waterstones, 13 Woolgate, OX28 6AP

TOWER HAMLETS

How do we stop the Gaza genocide?

Thursday 3 July, 6:30pm
Mulberry Hall, St Margarets House, 21 Old Ford Road, E2 9PL

LONDON

Rally to support Chris Nineham and Ben Jamal

Monday 7 July, 9:30am
City of London Magistrates' Court, 1 Queen Victoria Street, EC4N 4XY

BRISTOL

The national liberation struggle in Ireland and Palestine: a Marxist analysis

Tuesday 8 July, 6:45pm
Hamilton House, 80 Stokes Croft, BS1 3QY

PRESTON (online)

Palestine, imperialism and the British state

Thursday 11 July, 6:30pm
Zoom link will be posted on [counterfire.org/events](https://www.counterfire.org/events)

DURHAM

Durham Miners' Gala

Saturday 12 July
Follow @DurhamGala for details

EAST LONDON

Iran and imperialism: a brief history

Wednesday 16 July, 6:30pm
Mulberry Hall, St. Margaret's House, 21 Old Ford Road, E2 9PL

NEWCASTLE (online)

Iran and imperialism: a brief history

Wednesday 16 July, 7pm
Zoom link will be posted on [counterfire.org/events](https://www.counterfire.org/events)

TOLPUDDLE

Tolpuddle Martyrs Festival

Friday 18 - Sunday 20 July
See tolpuddlemartyrs.org.uk

LONDON

National demonstration for Palestine

Saturday 19 July, 12pm
Location tbc - follow @stwuK for updates

DEVON & CORNWALL (online)

Iran and imperialism: a brief history

Tuesday 22 July, 7:15pm
Zoom link will be posted on [counterfire.org/events](https://www.counterfire.org/events)

IPSWICH

Trump, imperialism and war: how do we stop the carnage?

Wednesday 23 July, 7pm
Library, Quaker Meeting House, 39 Fonnereau Road, IP1 3JH

LONDON

Defend Kneecap

Wednesday 20 August
Westminster Magistrates Court, 181 Marylebone Road, NW1 5BR

LOCAL GROUPS

Counterfire has local branches across the country building the movements of resistance and popularising socialist ideas by organising public meetings, local activity and distributing our free newspaper.

To find out more about a branch near you or to help set one up where you are, please contact the national office.

NATIONAL OFFICE

info@counterfire.org
07807 123472

Branches:

BIRMINGHAM

BRIGHTON

BRISTOL

DEVON & CORNWALL

DONCASTER

ESSEX & SUFFOLK

GLASGOW

HASTINGS

KENT

LIVERPOOL

LONDON:

E LONDON

HARINGEY

NW LONDON

SE LONDON

SW LONDON

MANCHESTER

NEWCASTLE

PRESTON & CHORLEY

WALES

WEST YORKSHIRE



You can join by scanning the QR code on the right and completing the form on our website or alternatively fill out your details here and hand it in at one of our stalls or post to Counterfire, UN130, United House, North Road, London, N7 9DP

FIRST NAME: _____

LAST NAME: _____

EMAIL: _____

PHONE NO: _____

POSTCODE: _____



JOIN COUNTERFIRE TODAY

Scan the QR code or go to www.counterfire.org/join

ART & CULTURE



SCENE FROM LOLLIPOP

Lollipop: A tender exploration of our broken care system

LUCY NICHOLS

After Molly (Posy Sterling) is released from prison, the first thing she wants to do is take her two children home to live with her. Unfortunately, she is met with the bureaucracy of our broken care system.

The film primarily deals with this, and the lack of support given to women after they come out of prison, particularly working-class women. In her attempts to win back custody of her children, Molly comes up against this cruel, inefficient bureaucracy. She must fight every step of the way: for visitation rights, for housing, for work. She is not infallible. It is totally heartbreaking to watch Molly make very human mistakes, met not with support, but more punishment from the state.

The art of *Lollipop* is how it explores themes of friendship, motherhood, abuse and poverty through this plotline. Crucially, the cast is entirely female: only women and children have any lines in the film. This means that her support network as well as the social workers, foster carers, lawyers, judges and police that Molly comes up against are all women.

Men are present in the film: they are abusers, policemen without lines, or absent fathers. Though Molly experiences the state only through women, it is clear that she is only in the position she is in because the men in her life have let her down.

The women in her life, on the other hand, ground Molly. This is particularly the case for Amina (Idil Ahmed), who is a rare example of a Muslim woman being allowed to be her own person in film, particularly a hijabi Muslim woman who practices and is informed by her faith. This alone is refreshing. It is a welcome embrace of London's diversity, especially given the growth in Islamophobia and attacks on

Muslim women.

Amina is also fighting for herself and her daughter, up against the same bureaucracy as Molly. There is also Molly's mum, Sylvie (TerriAnn Cousins). *Lollipop* explores their difficult relationship. Sylvie is not a monster, and the film is beautifully nuanced in dealing with her interpretation of motherhood.

We also have Amina's daughter, Maya (Aliyah Abdi) and Molly's daughter, Ava (Tegan-Mia Stanley Rhoads). They are about nine and eleven, respectively. Instead of skipping over them, the film allows them

their own agency, refusing to overlook how children experience the care system. Their kindness also shines, proving the maturity that children often display in difficult situations like these.

Part of the success of *Lollipop* comes from the attention to detail found in the characters. It slowly becomes obvious that the film was created by someone who has been in a similar situation to Molly, experienced some of the same hardships as the women in the film and who has grown up working-class in London.

Given this, the film should be pessi-

mistic, angry and dark. But it isn't. It is a wonderful testament to the overwhelming kindness of other people, and of the loving solidarity between women. It does not come to the naive conclusion that love, and friendship can cure all evils. Instead, *Lollipop* acknowledges that life is incredibly difficult, but can also be incredibly beautiful if we help one another and stand together against the cruelty of the state.

After watching this powerful film (and crying throughout) it becomes ever more obvious how broken our system is, and how strong is the need to fight back.

TITAN: FATAL CORPORATE COST-CUTTING

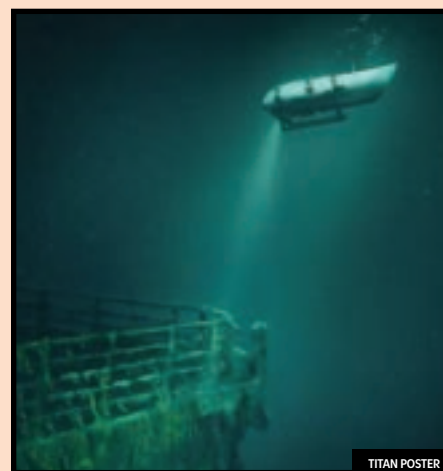
JAMAL ELAHEBOCUS

The sinking of the Titan submersible in June 2023 took over our social-media feeds and was the subject of an intense media frenzy. Stockton Rush, CEO of the company which constructed the submersible, died alongside four others, after the sub imploded on a trip to the wreck of the Titanic.

Netflix's new documentary shines a light on the safety failures in the years building up to the incident and exposes the reckless culture in OceanGate, propagated by Rush.

Interviews with key figures in the company, including those dismissed by Rush after raising concerns, are interspersed between footage of the construction and testing of the Titan.

As the film unfolds, Rush's running of the company becomes more and more reckless and disaster feels inevitable by the end. David Lochridge, the former director of marine operations, who wrote



a report on the safety problems with the Titan, was sacked early on and was sued after reporting the company to safety watchdogs.

Almost every test run was plagued with startling banging where the carbon-fibre hull cracked under pressure. Anyone raising concerns was sacked and more and more important safety measures were ditched, even once the Titanic

voyages began in 2021.

The documentary does a good job of portraying how Rush's ego and narcissism created a culture in the company which led to the production of what was frankly a deathtrap.

Nevertheless, the portrayal of the incident as the recklessness of one man feels slightly implausible. There's limited investigation into the company's actions more widely; for example, it is mentioned in passing that OceanGate did not even offer an apology to the families of those who died.

Comparison could have been made to the cost-cutting regime at Boeing which led to the 737 Max disasters.

It is striking watching the documentary at a time when governments in the US and UK are attempting to rip up so-called 'red tape' and let corporations run wild; these are the protections that prevent disasters happening and they should not be compromised to satisfy the rich and the powerful.

ISRAELI
TERROR
CONDOMINIUMS

ISRAEL IS THE TERROR STATE



CHRIS BAMBERY

Why does the United States, Israel and the West hate Iran?

Simple isn't it. The simple story is that: One, Iran is a key sponsor of terror in the Middle East. Two, it's desperately trying to develop a nuclear bomb with which to destroy Israel.

But no. Iran is not a sponsor of terror, unless you believe Hamas in Gaza, Hezbollah in Lebanon and the Houthis in Yemen are simply terror groups and ignore the fact they are resistance organisations, which were born from the Israeli assault on Gaza and Lebanon and a bloody Western-backed war by Saudi Arabia on Yemen.

Iran has given these organisations limited support because of its relatively strong stand in solidarity with Palestine. Iran has also made it clear it does not want a war with Israel.

The latest G7 Summit described Iran as 'the principle source of regional instability and terror.' Everyone in the world beyond these Western leaders would say that description fits Israel.

Iran has a civilian nuclear programme, which back in the 70s, when it was our ally, the West was busy supporting. However, Iran has made it clear it is not developing a nuclear bomb and its Supreme Leader, Ali Khamenei, has issued a fatwa against this on religious grounds.

Don't take my word for that. That is the stated opinion of Tulsi Gabbard, US Director of National Intelligence in March. It's also the CIA's opinion.

Israel, the only nuclear state in the Middle East, has assaulted Iran because it cannot stand any state in the region supporting Palestine. It is trying to send a message that if you do that it will inflict hell.

Israel's war on Iran is an extension of its genocidal war on Gaza. For that alone, the war must be opposed.

Back in 2003, the US had a list of seven countries where they wanted to force regime change. Iran remains the one where they haven't succeeded. Of the others, Iraq, Libya, Syria, Lebanon, Somalia, Sudan, they are today each in a sea of war and deprivation. When Donald Trump demands 'unconditional surrender', he is demanding Iran cease to be a sovereign state and submits to US dominance.

In 1907, and during both World Wars, Britain and Russia partitioned the country into zones of influence. In 1953, the US and UK led a coup which overthrew a democratically elected government which had dared to nationalise the British-owned oil fields. The coup installed the autocratic rule of the Shah which was a by-word for repression. Tehran was the regional HQ of the CIA.

In 1979, a mass revolution overthrew the Shah. In the months that followed, the US embassy was occupied and its staff taken

hostage. That was a humiliation for the USA and one they've never forgiven. Space prevents me explaining how the Islamic Republic came into being, led by Ayatollah Khomeini, but there cannot be any denying it had a degree of popular support.

In 1980, the US and the West urged on Iraq's Saddam Hussein to invade Iran, providing him with weaponry, including chemical weapons. When the Iranians appeared to be winning in 1988, the US intervened directly to prevent that.

Iran is not Saudi Arabia; it has elections, in which women vote, and a parliament, although the Supreme Leader has final say. The US and Israel are not waging war for democracy. They want a regime which will do what they say.

In fact, Iran is home to one of the oldest civilisations in the world and because of past and current imperialist interventions, a strong sense of nationalism. Even critics of the regime will not cheer Israeli bombings and assassinations.

Iran is bound by treaty to Russia and is a close partner of China, its biggest oil supplier. Trump has increased tension between the US and both states, further endangering our safety.

Finally, if Iran was not building a nuclear bomb, these barbaric attacks can only encourage it do so. Heavens pray not, but Trump and Netanyahu are playing poker, with humanity and our planet at stake.

ISRAELI BOMBING OF THE IRANIAN STATE BROADCASTER. PHOTO: AVASH MEDIA / CC BY 4.0

7 July: Rally to defend Chris Nineham and Ben Jamal
9:30am, City of London Magistrates' Court, 1 Queen Victoria St, London EC4N 4XY

19 July: Palestine National demonstration
12pm, Central London. Follow @stwuK for updates