

Report

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“The US Appears to be Destined by Providence to Plague the Americas with Misery in the Name of Freedom.” - Simón Bolívar, 1829

COLOMBIA: The Ruling Class Is Getting Desperate



(Photo: Rebelión)

By Hasan Dodwell & Nick MacWilliam, Jacobin

Editor’s note: These excerpts are drawn from the article cited at the end.

On April 28, Colombian trade unions and social movements staged a new round of *paro nacional* (national strike) protests, the latest in an ongoing series of mobilizations to address the litany of problems impacting Colombian society.

Opposition to a planned tax reform, which strike organizers said would unfairly target the middle and working classes in what is one of Latin America’s most unequal countries, was the central issue, particularly in the context of the global

pandemic, which has pushed an estimated five million Colombians out of work. Calls to repeal the tax reform were aligned with longer-running demands around growing poverty levels, addressing the human rights crisis affecting much of the country, and properly advancing the implementation of the 2016 peace agreement.

Since the national strike movement was launched in November 2019, protesters have become accustomed to the police crackdowns of President Iván Duque’s right-wing administration. Yet, even by recent standards, the spread and duration of the violence unleashed since April 28 has been extreme. For over three weeks of daily protests across Colombia, security forces, especially the notorious riot police

unit, the Mobile Anti-Disturbance Squadron (ESMAD), have committed massive human rights violations as Duque’s government seeks to suppress anger toward his government.

While the official organization of the national strike movement comes from trade unions together with peasant, indigenous, and other established social organizations, the protests have been characterized by the mobilization of young Colombians from poor urban neighborhoods. In cities across the country, most notably in Cali, this new generation of political protesters have become the so-called front line resisting ever-increasing levels of police brutality.

Social media has also exposed the horrific violence inflicted on protesters by security forces. In one harrowing video, as four ESMAD agents drag her into a police station in Popayán, seventeen-year-old Alison Meléndez shouts that they are removing her trousers. The next day, after reporting they had sexually assaulted her, she took her life. Footage filmed in the town of Madrid in Cundinamarca shows a tear gas canister fired at protesters from an armored police vehicle. The projectile

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SOUTH AMERICA

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hit twenty-four-year-old Brayan Niño in the face, killing him despite the efforts of those around him.

By May 18, Colombian human rights organizations had registered the security forces' apparent responsibility for more than 2,300 acts of violence, 43 killings.... 18 sexual assaults, and 30 cases of eye injuries. Men in plain clothes have been filmed firing at protesters as uniformed police officers stand alongside them and do nothing[.]

Opposition to the planned tax reform comes at a time when more than five million people are estimated to have lost their main source of income due to the global pandemic and poverty levels have increased to over 40 percent. Coronavirus has particularly impacted the many Colombians eking out a living in the large informal sector, which accounts for roughly half of the labor force, in roles such as transport workers, domestic staff, and street vendors.

National lockdowns, coupled with an absence of state support, pushed many Colombians into even deeper conditions of precarity. Although Duque repealed the

tax reform after five days of intense unrest, it was far too late. His government had spilled too much blood.

Anger over economic injustice sits alongside major concern for human rights and peace. The 2016 peace agreement brought the curtain down on decades of armed conflict between the Colombian state and the FARC. The peace process has seen important advances, such as the FARC's [Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia] reformation as a political party and the development of an internationally acclaimed transitional justice system that has begun investigating crimes committed during the conflict. In one of its most significant findings so far, it found that between 2002 and 2008—during the government of former president Álvaro Uribe—the Colombian military murdered 6,402 civilians and falsely presented them as guerrillas killed in combat.

Duque's electoral campaign was based on antagonism to the peace agreement.... Furthermore, since the agreement was signed, more than one thousand social activists and community leaders have been murdered across Colombia, with violence

concentrated in regions historically impacted by conflict, structural poverty, and state abandonment.

Additionally, more than 270 FARC former combatants have been murdered since putting down their weapons. The UN Verification Mission in Colombia warns that violence toward social activists and former combatants is the main threat to the peace process. The Duque government, however, has sought to downplay the human rights crisis and denies that killings reflect a systematic targeting of specific groups.

The multitude of factors underpinning popular discontent in Colombia has now exploded to the fore. In meetings on May 10 and 16 with government officials, the National Strike Committee presented demands to resolve the crisis, including an immediate end to the violence. Human rights organizations have called for drastic police reform, which involves removing police jurisdiction from the Ministry of Defense and disbanding the ESMAD.

Source: "Colombia's Ruling Class Is Getting Desperate," *Jacobin Magazine* 5/24/21

COLOMBIA: US-Backed Assassins Kill Peace Negotiator

By Alice Loaiza, Vice President of TFA

On May 17, 2021, Jesús Santrich, esteemed and beloved revolutionary leader, as well as a poet and musician, was assassinated in the Serranía de Perijá mountains in Venezuela by Colombian military commandos acting as bounty hunters. They cut off one of Santrich's fingers as proof of their kill to collect a \$US one million bounty cosponsored by the US State Dept. and Colombia's President, Iván Duque.

In 2012, after decades of fighting as a guerrilla leader in Colombia's FARC-EP, Santrich became one of the FARC's peace negotiators working to end the 40-year war in Colombia. After the Peace Accords were signed in 2016, Santrich became a member of the Colombian Congress. Along with Iván Márquez, also a member of Congress and a FARC party leader, Santrich became a prominent critic of the

peace process and the government's failure to honor its agreements. That failure was marked by paramilitary killings of FARC politicians and progressive activists.

In 2018, the US, through INTERPOL, had Santrich arrested on trumped-up drug trafficking charges in order to extradite him, though the arrest violated the Peace Accord. Santrich went on hunger strike for 41 days, until a Colombian court denied extradition and ordered his release. But the US persisted and Santrich was rearrested, jailed, drugged, attempted suicide in jail, and suffered a heart attack. The Colombian court again ordered his release and began an investigation into misconduct in the case by the Colombian Attorney General who had issued the warrant and the US Drug Enforcement Agency; the Attorney General then resigned. (Simón Trinidad, another Colombian revolutionary extradited to the US on false charges, has been imprisoned



Jesús Santrich (Photo: FightBackNEWS)

in the US since 2004 and is serving a 60 year sentence. He is now 70 years old.)

In 2019, both Santrich and Márquez had resigned from Congress and returned to the guerilla struggle, forming the FARC-EP, Segunda Marquetalia movement.

Source: "U.S.-vV commandos kill blind Colombian revolutionary leader," *Fight-Back! News* 5/28/21

SOUTH AMERICA

BOLIVIA: Despite US Dirty Tricks, Bolivia Stays Independent

By Vijay Prasad, historian and journalist

Sentiments in Bolivia for and against the coup d'état of November 2019 are predictably along class lines. Those from more affluent sections felt that the socialist policies of the government of President Evo Morales (which was in power from 2006 to 2019) were eating into their authority. But these sections could not oust Morales at the ballot box because his policies of redistribution were wildly popular among the mass of the population. Morales won three elections, each of them with a decisive mandate: winning 53.74 percent in 2005, 64.08 percent in 2009, and 61.36 percent in 2014.

Pressure to prevent Morales from running in the election in 2019 mounted early, but it failed. The opposition, with the full backing of the US government, tried to undermine the October 2019 election by painting it as fraudulent. With no real evidence the military, with a green light from Washington DC, moved against Morales, sending him into exile.

Morales was replaced by a minor extreme right lawmaker, Jeanine Áñez, who became the interim president. Harsh repression against Morales' party, the Movement for Socialism (MAS), followed, and Morales was forced to leave Bolivia. Almost immediately, then US President Donald Trump said that the coup "preserves democracy." As the violence of the coup unfolded, US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo described it as "Bolivia's political transition to democracy"; Pompeo's statement was made on November 21, 2019.

Two days before Pompeo's statement, troops under the authority of Áñez conducted two documented massacres of MAS supporters at Senkata and Sacaba (near El Alto). The day after the killings, and the day before Pompeo's statement, the New York Times reported on the killings in Senkata. None of this mattered to Áñez, whose Defense Minister Luis Fernando López denied the murders ("not one bullet was fired," he said), or to Pompeo. This kind of coup was business as usual for Washington, DC (I recount the story of this coup in *Washington Bullets*, my book about the CIA, coups and assassinations.)



Indigenous people celebrate the return of the MAS government.
(Photo: theconversation.com)

But the Bolivian people were not going to allow their democratic rights to be stolen. They began to organize against the Áñez regime, which tried to postpone elections over and over again. Eventually, a month before the October 2020 elections were held, Áñez herself dropped out for her embarrassingly low poll numbers, and the MAS—led by Luis Arce and David Choquehuanca—prevailed with 55.10 percent of the vote. Morales returned to the country triumphantly, and President Arce revived the MAS agenda to advance the interests of the Bolivian people.

No coup can go by without some framework to reestablish faith in institutions and to prevent the feeling of impunity among the coup makers. Therefore, after a legal process, on March 13, the Bolivian authorities arrested a dozen people, most of them political leaders of the coup, and released arrest warrants for military officers who exceeded their constitutional authority. The most high-profile arrest was of Áñez, who tweeted, "The political persecution has begun." A warrant was made for General Williams Kaliman who nudged Morales to resign. It is telling that two of the men who were to be arrested—Defense Minister Luis Fernando López and Interior Minister Arturo Murillo—have taken refuge in the United States. Yerko Núñez Negrette, another minister, who came out shouting about a "hunt for former ministers," has vanished.

Not long after the arrest, the new US Secretary of State, Antony Blinken, re-

leased a statement warning of the "anti-democratic behavior" of the Bolivian government. It is important to pause here: Blinken, US President Joe Biden's secretary of state, is not critical of the coup of November 2019 but of the arrest of the coup makers in March 2021. Trump said that the coup "preserves democracy," and now Blinken says that the legal process against the coup makers is "anti-democratic." The word "democracy" has lost its meaning when uttered by US government officials.

For the most part, the Biden administration continues the broad US policy to seek dominance over the countries of the world. The US government's unilateral and illegal sanctions against more than 30 countries come alongside the promotion of regime change policies against countries such as Venezuela and Iran. Blinken's statement about Bolivia indicates the continuities between the Trump and Biden administration.

Editor's abridgement: Here the author notes the July 2019 formation of the group of seventeen nations called "Friends in Defense of the Charter of the United Nations," which includes China and Russia, to address the undermining of the UN Charter in cases such as the US violations in Bolivia. (For the entire article, see below.)

Source: "Despite U.S. dirty tricks, Bolivia is finding a way to stay independent," *mronline.org* 3/30/21

SOUTH AMERICA

ECUADOR: Dirty Campaign Defeats Arauz and the Left

By Medea Benjamin, co-founder of Code Pink and Leonardo Flores, Latin American policy expert

Ecuador's April 11 election that led to a 5-point victory by conservative banker Guillermo Lasso over progressive candidate Andrés Arauz was not what it appeared to be. On the surface, it was a surprisingly clean and professional election, as our Code Pink official observer delegation witnessed. But a fraud-free process for casting and counting ballots does not mean that the election was free and fair. Behind the scenes was a monumentally unequal playing field and dirty campaign designed to quash an Arauz win.

For starters, Arauz, a 36-year-old follower of the political leanings of former president Rafael Correa and his Citizens Revolution, barely even got on the ballot. The political party he tried to run under was banned by the National Electoral Council (CNE). He and his supporters formed a new political party and that, too, was banned. Eventually they found a small party that let them borrow their slot, but by then it was late December, and the first round of elections was on February 7th.

Arauz, who was virtually unknown, wanted to have Rafael Correa as his vice president, but the CNE banned Correa from being on the ticket. Even more astounding, the electoral authorities prohibited the Arauz campaign from even using Correa's voice or image. But in a show of blatant bias, they didn't banish Correa's image from being used in a negative way by his opponents.

Another intense obstacle was the role of the media. The corporate media dominate all the airwaves in Ecuador, and they were clearly in the Lasso camp. The media led a dirty campaign spreading fake news about Arauz, Correa and their supporters. They scared people by claiming that Arauz was going to de-dollarize the economy. Ecuador has been using the dollar as its currency since 2000, after a financial crisis saw the collapse of its former currency, the sucre. An economist, Arauz understood dollarization had stabilized Ecuador's economy and he never suggested going back to the sucre.



(Photo: Reuters)

A particularly absurd accusation came from Colombia, where the country's right-wing attorney general claimed that the National Liberation Army, an armed insurgent group that has been operating in Colombia for decades, made an \$80,000 loan to Arauz's campaign. Based on a doctored video that was proven to be false, this accusation nevertheless continued to circulate throughout the press.

A concerted smear campaign also attacked the legacy of Rafael Correa to scare people away from voting for Arauz. During his time in power from 2007 to 2017, Correa brought economic and political stability to a country that had had seven presidents in ten years. Correa, who has a Ph.D. in economics, completely transformed Ecuador into a modern democracy with a vibrant middle class. He also brought tremendous gains to the poor, reducing poverty from 37 to 22 percent,

and built critical infrastructure, including highways, hospitals and schools. But the portrayal in the media made Correa out to be a corrupt authoritarian who was a threat to democracy, creating a dilemma for the Arauz campaign about how much to align itself with Correa's legacy.

Editor's Abridgement: Media attacks on the left began with the Lenin Moreno administration of the previous four years. Moreno had been elected as the chosen successor to Rafael Correa, but once in office effected a virtual coup, betraying the Citizen's Revolution and the progressive policies of the Correa government. He adopted a strictly neoliberal program hostile to regulation of the private sector and to labor, and loyal to IMF austerity prescriptions promoted by Lasso and the opposition. In October 2019, the Moreno government violently put down mass protests against the elimination of a fuel subsidy that would have raised prices on many necessities.

Moreno employed "lawfare" (abuse of the legal system for political purposes), jailed opposition leaders, and forced Correa into exile, effectively decapitating the Citizen's Revolution and weakening the Arauz campaign. A dirty campaign against Arauz, falsely painting him as a neoliberal in Moreno's mold, and a biased CNE further hurt the campaign. Finally, the indigenous organization CONAIE endorsed Arauz at the last minute, but that endorsement was undermined by a successful "null vote" campaign. In the end, Lasso won by some 420,000 votes, while 1.7 million Ecuadorians submitted "null votes," refusing to vote for either Lasso or Arauz.

Had Arauz won, it would have furthered gains by the left throughout Latin America and the progressive social welfare policies, regional integration, and international solidarity advanced by the Pink Tide of the 2000s. (For the unabridged article, see below.)

Source: "The Dirty Campaign Underlying Ecuador's 'Free and Fair' Election," CodePink.org 4/19/21

VENEZUELA/WORLD: Against the Economic Blockade

By Pasqualina Curcio, Economist, Central University of Venezuela

At least twenty countries are victims of US “sanctions.” Since 1992, in the United Nations General Assembly, all countries except the US and Israel have voted against the unilateral coercive measures the US imposes on Cuba. The US has ignored this obvious majority. Good wishes, denunciations and calls to lift the blockades have not been enough to prevent these genocidal actions against entire peoples.

To put an end to this interference, we must correct two grave errors humanity committed in 1944 and 1971. For that, we must first know how sanctions work. Let’s take an example. When food company X from, for example, Mexico wants to trade with company Y from Venezuela (a sanctioned country), the US government, through the Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) sends a little message and says: “If you sell food to Venezuela, we will freeze all the bank accounts you have in the world financial system. Therefore, if Venezuelan company Y pays you for the food, you will not be able to dispose of that money, nor the money already in your accounts. Don’t even bother to transfer it to another bank account because we will block it as well. Oh, and if you put it in the name of another person or company, we will block that one too.”

The US government can block financial resources because it is the owner of the purse strings of all financial transactions made in dollars in the world. Through the Society for Worldwide Interbank Financial Telecommunication (SWIFT), the global payment clearing system, the US has the power to decide what financial transactions are made, when and under what conditions. With that power it instills fear, threatens, blackmails, “sanctions” and sets blockades.

Taking this power from the US is the

strategy to be followed to fight these criminal blockades, which requires suspending the Bretton Woods Agreement (1944) and the petro-dollar (1971). In 1944, in the midst of World War II, 44 countries met in Bretton Woods to decide on the new commercial, monetary and financial order that still prevails today. At that time, when Europe was destroyed and ruined by the war, the United States took advantage of its status as the country that not only produced half the world’s total production, with a surplus trade balance, but more importantly, as the world’s largest lender.

They decided that the US dollar would

ro-dollar. From that moment on, all the oil bought in the world had to be traded in dollars, and since there was no country that did not buy hydrocarbons, all of them would need the US currency, which would be available in sufficient quantities because it could be issued freely, unlimited by the amount of gold in the vaults of the US Federal Reserve.

The US flooded the planet with dollars and, in order to trade them, it created the SWIFT payment clearing system, also unilaterally granting itself the monopoly of the world financial market. It was a masterful move by the country of the North.

Editor’s abridgement: The US is now the world’s most indebted nation, while China has a surplus; US production has fallen from one-half to one-quarter of the world’s production while China has gone from 1% to 16% of world production. The author proposes the creation of a new system that would allow trade in many currencies, through payment clearing systems other than SWIFT, and through the exchange of goods themselves. The article concludes:

The coalition of countries against the blockade that has recently been formed by Venezuela, China, Russia, Iran, Cuba, among others, should, besides continuing to add nations, besides denouncing the criminal “sanctions” of the US, and besides calling for compliance with the UN Charter, include in the agenda of the United Nations Assembly the creation of a new commercial, monetary and financial system that would allow us to move towards a pluripolar, multicentric, truly democratic world in which the sovereignty and self-determination of the peoples would be respected. Thus, in passing, and in the face of the imminent decline of the most genocidal empire that history has ever known, they would give it a little push to finish its fall.

Source: “Global Proposal Against the Economic Blockade,” *Ultimas Noticias*, translation: *Resumen Latinoamericano-English* 4/5/21



(Photo: venezuelanalysis.com)

be, nothing more and nothing less, than the world’s reference currency. In other words, the US currency was granted exclusivity and therefore the power that came with the requirement that all the world’s currencies be referenced to the dollar, which in turn was backed by gold. That was the first big mistake. (Incidentally, Bretton Woods also created the International Monetary Fund [IMF], which gave a voting share of one-third to the US, and with it the greatest control over that organization.)

Then in 1971 humanity committed the second great mistake by silently allowing the United States to unilaterally drop the gold standard for fixing the price of its currency. Nixon announced to the world that from that moment on, the price of the dollar, to which all the world’s currencies would continue to be pegged, would depend on confidence in the US economy. This announcement was accompanied, not by chance, by the creation of the pet-

VENEZUELA: US Admits Responsibility

Roger Harris, TFA Board

(Edited by author)

Venezuela was once one of the most prosperous countries in Latin America. The popular classes enjoyed major advances from the Bolivarian Revolution initiated by Hugo Chávez. Today Venezuela is experiencing an unprecedented economic crisis with severe humanitarian consequences. The US government blames the crisis on the mismanagement and corruption of the Venezuelan government headed by Nicolás Maduro. The Venezuelan government faults the US and its allies for imposing sanctions, unilateral coercive measures illegal under international law. An official US Congressional Research Service report issued April 28, *Venezuela: Background and US Relations*, suggests the Venezuelan government has valid arguments that it is being strangled by US sanctions. According to the report, citing another government report: “sanctions, particularly on the state oil company in 2019, likely contributed to the steeper decline of the Venezuelan economy.” The report provides a brief revision of history to fit an imperialist narrative to justify the hybrid war to achieve regime change in Venezuela. Hence the US-backed coup in 2002, when the US government welcomed a “return to democracy,” is euphemistically referred to as President Chávez’s “brief ouster from power.”

While in the above instance, the US role in events is rendered invisible, the report describes how “Congress has provided funding to support democratic civil society in Venezuela,” which is Washington’s duplicitous shorthand for regime change programs. The report continues: “For FY2021, the Administration requested...\$200 million to support transition in Venezuela.”

Key in the US hybrid war to achieve regime change in Venezuela are the economic sanctions. The report forthrightly describes the “multiyear economic crisis, one of the worst economic crises in the world since World War II.” The report notes: “Imports—which Venezuela relies on for most consumer goods—have fallen by almost 95% since 2013. The country



Venezuela demands respect.
(Photo: peoplesdispatch.org)

faces shortages of critical food and medicine.”

Contrary to the official US narrative that Venezuela’s Bolivarian Revolution is the root cause of all problems, the report admits: “The trigger for Venezuela’s economic crisis was the crash in world oil prices in 2014.” The report explains how US sanctions confounded the Venezuelan government’s efforts to address this crisis: “Subsequent rounds of US sanctions targeting the government, central bank, and gold sectors, as well as limiting Venezuela’s access to the US financial system, likely exacerbated economic pressures in Venezuela.”

The sanctions are not just against Venezuela but affect other countries amounting to a blockade: “The sanctions framework also prohibited non-US entities from transacting with PdVSA [Venezuelan state-owned oil company] in US dollars and made non-US entities subject to having their US property blocked, should it be determined that they materially assisted PdVSA.”

The US government imposes the choice on Venezuela—in the words of the Latin American revolutionary slogan—of *patria o muerte* (homeland or death). In the period 2017-2018 alone, some 40,000 deaths were attributed to the sanctions. And that was pre-COVID and before the most devastating sanctions fully took effect.

In a weaponization of the pandemic, the US took advantage of the health vulnerability to make conditions even worse, according to the report: “The outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic further exacerbated

the economic challenges facing the Venezuelan government.... Fuel shortages, exacerbated by the end of US-licensed oil for diesel swaps in the fall of 2020, reportedly have made food distribution and humanitarian aid delivery more challenging.”

Noting that “it is unclear how Venezuela’s economy can rebuild in the absence of a significant reorientation of economic policies,” the report calls for the abandonment of the Bolivarian social project and adoption of an IMF structural adjustment program, which would remove price controls on vital necessities, privatize banks, and fully open the economy to the dictates of international finance.

If the US government’s propaganda is correct that the current crisis is due to Maduro’s mismanagement and corruption, then illegal and inhumane sanctions would not be needed to dislodge the “regime.” Conversely, given that the sanctions and accompanying blockade are so overwhelming, the impacts of mismanagement and corruption would be difficult to parse out. In fact, the report says, “data suggest that production declines accelerated following sanctions targeting Venezuela’s oil sector.”

The US is punishing the Venezuelans for the good things (such as poverty reduction, documented in the report) and not the bad. Otherwise, demonstrable narco-states like Colombia and Honduras that are guilty of manifest human rights violations would be treated like Venezuela, and Venezuela would be the largest recipient of US aid.

The Congressional Research Service report concludes: “The failure to dislodge Maduro from power demonstrated the limits of US and other international efforts to prompt political change in Venezuela. Unilateral US policies, such as oil sanctions, arguably worsened the humanitarian crisis in the country and caused divisions within the international coalition that once backed Guaidó.” In other words, despite inhumane sanctions by the US and its allies, the Bolivarian Revolution has endured because of its popular support.

Source: *Resumen Latinoamericano-English 5/1/21*

Ramsey Clark: A Life Well-Lived for the People of the World

By Bill Hackwell, editor of *Resumen Latinoamericano-English*

Yesterday Ramsey Clark died at the age of 93 in New York and today justice and peace-loving people and movements in the US and around the world are in mourning for a man who stood up and fought tirelessly in support of justice, equality and against his country's drive for endless wars.

Ramsey Clark, the son of a Supreme Court Justice, was a lawyer who began an eight-year career in the US Justice Department in 1961 where he helped draft the landmark Civil Rights Act of 1964 and 1968 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965, becoming the US Attorney General in 1967. During this time he took on the establishment by banning wiretapping of progressive movements, calling for the abolition of capital punishment, and banning federal executions.

Ramsey could have easily remained in the ruling class circles he was born into but once outside of the US government he became a voice against its policies that could not be ignored. He chose instead to become a beacon of unequivocal support for the people of the world going to literally more than 100 countries on fact-finding missions and leading humanitarian delegations. He flew tirelessly to countries being targeted by the Pentagon sometimes even as the bombs were beginning to fall.

It is almost impossible to list all the countries and peoples that Ramsey Clark stood up for but perhaps his role in helping to expose the 12 years (between the first Gulf War to the full-scale attack in 2003) of sanctions against Iraq is the most illustrative one in showing the cruelty of the slow misery and death that sanctions cause. During that time Ramsey went to Iraq over and over again to document just how horrific it was. In February 1996 I had the honor of accompanying him as the photographer on a delegation to document on the ground evidence for a report being compiled by the UN Food and Agriculture Organization that was claiming that 567,000 Iraqi children had died as a consequence of the draconian economic sanc-



Ramsey Clark speaking in support of the Cuban Five (Photo: Bill Hackwell)

tions being applied in just five years. We went from empty hospital to empty hospital where doctors informed us that children were dying from preventable dysentery because they could not even get or produce simple hydration tablets and that diseases that had been eliminated were reappearing because of the conditions. Prior to the war, Iraq had the most modern medical system in the Middle East. We witnessed a pharmaceutical factory that lay dormant because they could not get the material needed to make medicine. Sewage flowed into the Tigris River through bombed-out sanitation plants that could get no spare parts to get them running again. It was obvious everywhere we went, from government officials to people on the street the level of respect and love that people in Iraq and throughout the Middle East for that matter had for Ramsey.

Today the US has sanctions leveled at over 20 countries for the crime of insisting on their independence. Ramsey Clark was opposed to all sanctions and said, "The lawlessness and cruelty of death-dealing sanctions must be recognized as genocide

and a crime against humanity and must be prohibited."

Over the years Ramsey played a significant role by leading delegations and participating in events throughout Latin America and the Caribbean including against the US-financed Contras during the Reagan years, to meeting with Hugo Chavez as leader of the Bolivarian Revolution in Venezuela, the Zapatistas in Chiapas, and support for the FMLN in El Salvador.

Ramsey actively opposed the over 60-year blockade of Cuba and called for the closure of the illegally occupied US naval base at Guantanamo and returning the land to the Cuban People. He involved himself in the struggle to send Elián González home with his father and the prolonged campaign to free the Cuban 5 from US prisons. In recognition for his endearing and unwavering support, Ramsey was awarded the Order of Solidarity granted by the State Council of the Republic of Cuba in November 2013 in Holguin by the mothers of the five Cuban heroes.

Today Cuban President Miguel Mario Díaz-Canel Bermúdez tweeted, "We mourn the death of Ramsey Clark, former US Attorney General. Honest and supportive, he joined us in crucial battles and was critical of the great injustices committed by his country in the world. Cuba pays grateful tribute to him."

Fernando González, President of the Institute of Friendship with the People (ICAP) added, "Ramsey was a sincere and faithful friend of Cuba. We share common ideals with regard to civil and human rights and the defense of just causes like Palestine.... Cuba will never forget a friend as loyal as Ramsey Clark."

Today on Facebook, anti-war activist Brian Willson said from Nicaragua something that rings true to many of us about what a role model Ramsey Clark was. He was just that for a generation of activists, always speaking truth to power, calm and humble, but with unrelenting conviction.

Ramsey Clark, Presente!

Source: "Ramsey Clark: A life Well-Lived for the People of the World," *Resumen Latinoamericano-English* 4/10/21

CENTRAL AMERICA

NICARAGUA: Building The Good Life (Buen Vivir) Through Popular Revolution

By Margaret Flowers, pediatrician, public health advocate and activist

Editor's note: This article has been lightly edited for space limitations. See the source at the end of the article to read it in its original form.

As I traveled in Nicaragua on the recent Sanctions Kill delegation, one thing was clear, social transformation (revolution) requires both political power and participation by the people. Without political power, revolutionary programs will not have the material resources they require. Without the participation of the people, revolutionary programs, even with resources, cannot be put into practice and defended.

Nicaraguans are making great progress in building a new society or as it is often referred to in Latin America, *Buen Vivir*, (The Good Life). They are demonstrating what we mean when we say “transforming society to put people and the planet over profits.” And this is one of the reasons why the US is targeting Nicaragua through hybrid warfare including a misinformation campaign, direct interference in the politics of the country and economic attacks. It is clear the US is already working to undermine the upcoming presidential election in Nicaragua scheduled for November 7th.

Nicaragua is the largest country in Central America, with a low-density population of around six million people. Through a mass armed movement, Nicaraguans ousted the US Marines in the early twentieth century but that was followed by almost 50 years of the brutal dictatorship of the US-backed liberal party led by the Somoza family. Throughout that period, a minority of people (5%) owned most of the land (80%).

In 1979, the same year that the US-backed Shah of Iran was defeated, the Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN), which began in the 1960's, overthrew the Somozas and was finally able to start putting its 13-point socialist program into



2021 Sanctions Kill delegation to Nicaragua (Photo: Popular Resistance.org)

practice. Although there were setbacks during the US-backed Contra War of the 1980s and the neoliberal period from 1990 to 2006, in the past 14 years, Nicaragua has made major achievements that other poor countries and many a rich country like the US have not been able to make.

Their successes include access to free education from preschool through the university level for all people, universal healthcare, land ownership, a pension, the empowerment of women, youth, and marginalized populations and more. Nicaragua has a primarily popular economy composed of cooperatives and small farms and businesses. It has achieved food sovereignty with 90% of the food consumed being produced locally and a growing agricultural export market. It is building infrastructure, particularly roads, electricity, and potable water. Currently, over 98% of homes have electricity and 75% of that comes from renewable sources. Almost one-fourth of the energy produced is geothermal as Nicaragua is a land of volcanos.

The Rural Workers Association (ATC) officially began forty three years ago, although the work to start organizing and unionizing peasant workers began in the early 1970's at the same time that the FSLN was growing. Fausto Torres, who

has been with the ATC from early on and currently serves as the Secretary of International Relations, explains that the ATC and FSLN were born out of the same struggle with the ATC being composed of workers and the FSLN providing a political platform rooted in worker empowerment. Both arms of the revolution complemented each other. For example, the ATC provided food and safe houses for FSLN fighters during the Contra War and many Sandinistas who defended the revolution during that time came from the ATC.

After the Somoza dictatorship was overthrown, it was the ATC that made the agrarian reform, which transferred land from large landowners to over 120,000 peasant families, a reality and helped to defend those land gains. The ATC provided literacy programs and helped new land owners learn to make their small farms productive. Some land owners formed cooperatives.

After the Contra War, the ATC facilitated a reconciliation process between people who fought on both sides. Today, Sandinistas and former Contras live and work side-by-side in many communities and belong to the same cooperatives. The ATC continues to organize rural workers and educate them about labor laws and it has

CENTRAL AMERICA

special programs for youth and women.

The ATC has several schools. One of its newer ones is the Latin American Institute of Agroecology or IALA (based on the name in Spanish), which educates people from all over Latin America. IALA incorporates traditional knowledge and the latest science to create practices that are sustainable, address the climate crisis and serve the cultural needs of local communities. In line with the values of the ATC and FSLN, emphasis is placed on the inclusion and empowerment of youth and women to support the development of new leaders.

In the early 1990's, the ATC globalized its peasant movement by founding La Via Campesina, a member organization that currently operates in the Americas, Africa, Europe, Asia and Oceania and represents over 200 million rural families who are working to build a democratic and non-exploitative society. In addition to peasant workers, La Via Campesina members include migrants, landless peasants, and human rights defenders. There are four major areas of work: land reform, food sovereignty, peasant culture and socializing common goods. As an organization, it operates through collective leadership and participatory democracy. La Via Campesina values gender equality, youth participation, diversity, discipline and international solidarity. It is anti-capitalist, anti-imperialist and anti-patriarchal.

La Via Campesina runs a number of campaigns. One of them targets transnational corporations, particularly those based in the US, that are pushing the "Green Revolution," which is trying to dominate land ownership, control food production and push a toxic and exploitative food system based on profits for a few. A recent success in that struggle was the passing of the Universal Declaration on the Rights of Peasants and Other People Working in Rural Areas in late 2018 at the United Nations. It should not be a surprise that the US and some European Union countries opposed it.

The ATC and La Via Campesina are building the local and global popular movement necessary to challenge corporate power and capitalism and create a world that can protect the rights of all people and mitigate the climate crisis. We activists in the US have much to learn from

them.

Another accomplishment in Nicaragua is their ongoing work in the Autonomous Zone, composed of 47% of the nation's land on the Northern and Southern Caribbean Coasts, to restore the rights of Indigenous Peoples and Afro-descendants who have been discriminated against for a long time. It offers a model for the US to consider.

This work is grounded in the Nicaraguan Constitution passed after the overthrow of the Somoza dictatorship that values a multi-ethnic society. Due to the Contra War and the neoliberal period that followed, most of the gains have been made in the last decade or so since Daniel Ortega was restored as the president. There was a ten year period of negotiations between the government and the autonomous communities that resulted in the titles of 33% of the national territory being granted to twenty three Indigenous and Afro-descendant Peoples who requested them.

Indigenous leaders decide what parts of the land are to be used for housing or agriculture and the regulations regarding whether or not non-Indigenous people could live there. For example, the capital of the Northern Caribbean Coast, Bilwi, is owned by the people in Karata and they receive taxes from the city, which was formerly called Puerto Cabezas.

In recent years, unprecedented amounts of money have been spent on building highways to connect the communities with each other and with markets for their goods. There was also a big expansion in health care facilities and infrastructure for electricity and water. Education is also a high priority. Schools are multilingual to include the maternal language as well as Spanish and English. The university system is dedicated to multiculturalism and "rescuing" traditional knowledge. Their development plan is based on human development rather than exploitation.

Some of the major industries in the region include mining, forestry and cattle. They are working on mining methods that reduce the environmental impact and pollution from it. For timber, the community has to approve any plans and it owns and benefits from the entire process. Similarly for cattle, the community decides who can have cattle farms. As the climate crisis

expands the "dry zone" outside of the Autonomous Region, non-Indigenous cattle farmers have been looking for other areas to raise their herds and this has been used by the US as a way to attack Nicaragua through a false tale of assaults on Indigenous communities, known as "the Conflict Beef" story. This is far from the reality.

Although there have been a few small victories recently in the US of returning land to Native American tribes, we still have a long way to go. Nicaragua demonstrates a model that is indigenous-led with the state playing a supportive role. Imagine if land in the US was returned to the Indigenous Peoples who would control what is done on the land, including who could live there. This would go a long way to reversing the centuries of oppression and stolen wealth and could finally end the era of settler colonialism.

There is a lot we can learn from Nicaraguan people about how to organize, resist and build a multicultural society based on participatory democracy, empowerment and healing the Earth. One concept that arose during the delegation is that of "revolutionary discipline." Revolutions don't just happen. They are the fruit of dedication to education and struggle. We can each practice revolutionary discipline in our communities through political education, organizing, putting pressure on the government and building alternative programs. Through this work, we will build the mass movement necessary to succeed.

We must also work to protect Nicaragua and other revolutionary societies that are targeted by US foreign policy for daring to defend their self-determination and sovereignty. We witnessed the violence and destruction of the 2018 US-backed coup attempt. We already see the US laying the groundwork to interfere in the presidential election in Nicaragua this November. Let us also put revolutionary discipline into practice by not allowing ourselves to be fooled by false media narratives and by raising our voices against US interference.

Source: "Nicaragua: Building The Good Life (Buen Vivir) Through Popular Revolution," *Popular Resistance* 3/28/21

CENTRAL AMERICA

EL SALVADOR: US Military Advisor Present at El Mozote

From El Faro, El Salvador

A United States military advisor, Sergeant Major Allen Bruce Hazelwood, was on location, and on duty, in December of 1981 as Salvadoran soldiers carried out the El Mozote massacre, slaughtering almost a thousand civilians.

This groundbreaking revelation was the big takeaway from the expert testimony of Stanford University political scientist Terry Karl during pretrial hearings in El Salvador on Monday, April 26. The news of Hazelwood's presence—along with Colonel Domingo Monterrosa, commander of the Atlacatl Battalion—at the scene of the massacre offers new insight into the extent of the US role, as well as what Karl calls a “sophisticated cover-up” on the part of the Reagan administration and Salvadoran civil-military junta.

It also rekindles the debate about the US responsibility in the Salvadoran armed conflict, as well as the need for both governments to fully declassify internal documents on the massacre and other war crimes, which they have withheld for four decades.

“Had [Hazelwood's presence at El Mozote] come to light at the time, it would have meant cutting off US aid,” said Karl. She added: “The participation of an advisor in wartime activities is against our laws, and it was illegal at the time.”

The El Mozote massacre was the deadliest war crime of the Salvadoran civil war. Between December 11 and 13 of 1981, the Salvadoran Army deployed almost an entire elite battalion to El Mozote and six nearby villages in the Morazán department, killing 978 unarmed civilians. Most of them, 533, were children. 477 of these were under 12 years old, and 248 under six.

For years the governments of El Salvador and the United States denied that the massacre had occurred. Later, they questioned the identities of the victims in suggesting they were guerrillas. The two journalists who simultaneously revealed the massacre, in the New York Times and Washington Post, were Raymond Bonner and Alma Guillermoprieto, who then faced swift backlash for their work. By



The US-trained Atlacatl Battalion during its 1992 disbandment. After the Peace Accords they were able to walk away with impunity. (Photo: Giuseppe Dezza)

2012, the Inter-American Court of Human Rights pronounced the Salvadoran state guilty of the crime.

The case is now in its final phase of the initial hearing, in which the judge will decide if there is sufficient evidence to begin a formal trial, with the possibility of a prison sentence for the implicated officials. Just days before the hearings resumed on Monday, the military's defense attorney, Lisandro Quintanilla, motioned unsuccessfully to have the audience postponed. “They always throw up obstacles,” said Rosario Sánchez, a survivor of the massacre in the *canton* of La Joya, who was present in the courtroom. The same attorney also twice requested that the judge hearing the case be recused, arguing that “we know for a fact that you are not objective.”

Sergeant Major Allen Bruce Hazelwood “was known as one of the best sources for the United States,” wrote Karl in the first version of her expert report prepared for the El Mozote case. A 2018 documentary on the Dutch television network Zembla also identified Hazelwood as having inside knowledge of the plot of Coronel Mario Reyes Mena to murder four Dutch journalists in 1982. Karl suggests that the same could have been true in the case of El Mozote, when taking into account the deep trust that Hazelwood and Monterrosa shared.

“The documents and sworn statements suggest that Hazelwood could have been aware beforehand of what was to come, though there is no implication that he sup-

ported the decision of the Salvadoran officers to kill civilians in any of these cases,” reads Karl's report.

Two representatives of the US Embassy were present for the first day of Karl's testimony. “The United States supports the trial of the massacre at El Mozote,” said Jonathan Lloyd, the embassy's political attaché. “We're supporting the rule of law and an independent trial here in El Salvador, and we believe that efforts to guarantee accountability for human rights violations are important for ensuring justice for the victims,” he said, without referring to the presence of a US military officer during the massacre.

Karl explained that, during the 1980s, El Salvador was “the most important country in terms of foreign policy for the United States.” “I can't say that Reagan knew,” Karl said, as part of her testimony. “But a lot of people in government did know what had happened.”

Source: *El Faro & Committee for the Abolition of Illegitimate Debt* 4/29/21

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MIGRATION: Biden Perpetuates Root Causes

By Karl Kramer, CISPES-Bay Area and TFA Board

“As president, Biden will immediately do away with the Trump administration draconian immigration policies and galvanize international action to address the poverty and insecurity driving migrants from the Northern Triangle to the United States.” (presidential campaign policy document, “The Biden Plan to Build Security and Prosperity in Partnership with the People of Central America”)

President Biden’s immigration plan for El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras is to enlist their governments and militaries, along with Mexico’s, to contain migration through repression. His economic plan, which includes \$US four billion in aid in his proposed US Citizenship Act of 2021, is a warmed-over version of the failed economic model based on Foreign Direct Investment by transnational corporations, exploitation of cheap labor, and the extraction of profits.

His immigration plan goes back to then-President George Bush’s Mérida Initiative in 2007, which called for the creation of a “21st century border” by pushing Mexico to militarize its southern border. By 2013, the United States had funded 12 new military bases along the Mexico/Guatemala border and a 100-mile security cordon north of it, essentially turning Mexico into an extended US border zone.

During the “child-migrant crisis” in the summer of 2014, President Barack Obama pressured Mexico to initiate a new Southern Border program. In bipartisan continuity, Trump bullied Mexico into forming a new, militarized National Guard and deploying 12,000 of the guardsmen to the Guatemalan border, while funding the creation of a high-technology infrastructure on Mexico’s southern border along the lines of the US southern border. He also temporarily froze civilian aid to coerce Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador into signing “safe third country” agreements that allowed the United States to deport asylum-seekers to those countries rather than allow them into the United States.

In March, President Biden linked providing the still-unapproved in the United

States AstraZeneca Covid-19 vaccines to Mexico in exchange for its government further cracking down on migrants from Central America, including suspending its own laws guaranteeing humane detention conditions for families with young children.

The economic model in the plan is to attract foreign corporations with improved infrastructure, tax breaks and weak and unenforced environmental and labor laws and let the Free Market create the jobs that keep people from wanting to leave their homeland.

Throughout the 1980s, the United States financed a counter-revolution in Nicaragua and counterinsurgency wars in El Salvador and Guatemala to make the region safe for investment by transnational corporations and finance capital.

US military and economic intervention in Central American that continued through the 1990s fueled the spread of maquiladora factories for foreign export, the growth of non-traditional fruits and vegetables for the foreign market, and a boom in extractive industries such as mining for gold and nickel and drilling for petroleum.

In the 2000s, under the Central America and Dominican Republic Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA-DR), if a government threatens investor profits in any way, such as when El Salvador denied a license to a gold mining company, the foreign corporation can sue the country and force it to submit to binding arbitration by a panel of corporate lawyers.

President Obama’s, and Vice President Biden’s, 2014 Alliance for Prosperity offered a new round of investor-driven economic development to build infrastructure to benefit transnational corporations such as new pipelines, highways and power lines to speed resource extraction and streamline logistics for assembly of products in low-wage maquilas. Under Obama, the United States recognized a government in Honduras that took power through a coup against President Manuel Zelaya because he infuriated the corporate class by proposing, among other modest reforms, to raise the minimum wage.

Under President Trump, protection of corporate interests remained the priority,



*Migrants charge border near San Diego.
(Photo: nytimes.com)*

just as it was under all previous administrations of both parties. As long as Central American governments promoted an investor-friendly economy and collaborated on restricting migration, the US ignored the expulsion of anti-corruption commissions in Guatemala in 2019 and Honduras in 2020, and downplayed the mounting corruption and drug trafficking accusations against Honduran President Juan Orlando Hernández.

In the first month of the Biden administration, the Committee in Solidarity with the People of El Salvador (CISPES) joined a large coalition of peace, solidarity, and labor organizations that called upon Biden to reject the US approach of militarized security and reinforcement of investor-friendly extractive economies in Central America.

“Confronting displacement demands a total rethinking of US foreign policy. The intersecting crises that millions in Central America face are the result of decades of brutal state repression of democratic-movements by right-wing regimes and the implementation of economic models designed to benefit local oligarchs and transnational corporations. Far too often, the US has been a major force behind these policies, which have impoverished the majority of the population and devastated the environment.” (CISPES press release, “Only a Rethinking of U.S. Foreign Policy Can Address the ‘Root Causes’ of Migration,” January 28, 2021)

Source: “Will Biden’s Central American Plan Slow Down Migration (or Speed It Up)?: The New Border Politics of the Biden era Are Actually ancient History,” by Aviva Chomsky (Tom Dispatch 3/30/21)

NORTH AMERICA

MIGRATION: Haitians Trapped in Mexico

From Al Jazeera

Tijuana, Mexico. Each morning, Samuel leaves the cramped, single-room apartment he shares with a dozen other Haitian asylum seekers in central Tijuana and wanders over to the makeshift migrant camp that he used to call home.

Until last month, he had lived peacefully at El Chaparral, a sprawling migrant tent city near the US-Mexico border wall, alongside Haitians and asylum seekers from other countries, all waiting to try to get into the US. But Samuel says the atmosphere gradually shifted to one of hostility.

“That’s where I used to live,” he told Al Jazeera, pointing to a spot among the wrinkled patchwork of white and blue tents that house more than 1,000 people. “Life here became too hard, and the racism from other [residents] was terrible. I felt that I needed to leave.”

As thousands of asylum seekers have streamed northward to the US-Mexico border in recent months in hopes of entering the US, Haitians say they are facing a second layer of agony: anti-Black racism from police and other migrants in Mexico.

Thousands of migrants and asylum seekers have journeyed up to Mexican border towns like Tijuana with hopes of getting asylum in the US. Haitian asylum seekers were the majority in El Chaparral in mid-2020, but as thousands of other migrants reached Tijuana and took shelter in the camp, the last Haitian holdouts abandoned the informal settlement. Haitians say other asylum seekers hurled racist vitriol at them, creating an atmosphere that pushed Samuel and others to leave and take refuge in squalid apartments or shelters on the outskirts of the city instead.

“The discrimination is very strong from other migrants, but even from Mexican organizations working in the camp,” said Arold, a Haitian activist who has been documenting abuses against the community in Tijuana and delivers food and other aid to Haitian asylum seekers.

“Nobody wanted to share the food being distributed with them [the Haitian camp residents],” he said, adding that he also received reports that an informal school run by residents also stopped Haitian children



Haitians at US-Mexico border pray for Biden to grant them asylum.
(Photo: Matthew Bowler)

from attending classes.

Arold, 32, who came to Tijuana four years ago with hopes of gaining asylum, said he lives in fear of retaliation from police or local armed groups. Like many other Haitians who spoke with Al Jazeera, he requested anonymity in fear of retribution for speaking out.

A pandemic-linked economic collapse across much of Latin America, an explosion of gang violence, and hopes for gentler asylum policies from the nascent Biden administration have combined to trigger a surge in migration towards the US.

In March alone, US immigration authorities apprehended more than 172,000 people attempting to cross from Mexico, while a bottleneck of migrants and asylum seekers from dozens of countries continues to balloon in border cities like Tijuana. An estimated 4,000 Haitian migrants currently live in Tijuana, according to local activists and media reports.

But the exodus of Haitians stretches back to 2010, when the capital, Port-au-Prince, was flattened in a devastating earthquake. The disaster left at least 220,000 dead and 1.5 million homeless and triggered a massive wave of emigration.

Earlier this year, many Haitian migrants had hoped US President Joe Biden would adopt more compassionate border policies, but the US border effectively remains sealed to most migrant adults and families.

Under Title 42, a public health law invoked by the US government last year due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the country partially closed its borders and dramati-

cally restricted access for asylum seekers. Despite promises from the Biden administration to allow more asylum seekers to enter, advocates say about 1,200 Haitians have been deported in the last few months.

“Since Biden took office, they have sent 28 expulsion flights back to Haiti,” said Guerline Jozef, president of Haitian Bridge Alliance, a humanitarian group in San Diego that assists Haitian migrants on both sides of the border.

While US authorities last year struck a deal with Mexico to deport citizens of several Central American countries, Haitians are not covered under the agreement. The Department of Homeland Security has used Title 42 to continue to expel migrants directly to Haiti, despite a US travel advisory to the country and growing political unrest.

Meanwhile, thousands of Haitians remain in Tijuana...

Editor’s abridgement: Stephanie left Haiti by boat in 2014, arriving in Tijuana via Brazil on foot. She was detained by authorities and has since given up hope of gaining asylum in the US. She fears for the safety of her two children she had to leave in Brazil. Other Haitians tell of being targeted for arbitrary detention because they are black.

Last summer there were anti-racist protests in El Chaparral after police murdered a black man. Many Haitian asylum seekers remain, hopeless, in Tijuana where they face discrimination and live on charity. Were they to return to Haiti, most would lack housing, food, and money. (For the unabridged article, see source below.)

Source: “‘I’m trapped here’: Haitian asylum seekers languish in Mexico,” Al Jazeera 4/26/2021

Central America’s Forgotten History by Aviva Chomsky (Beacon Press, 2021)

Aviva Chomsky’s latest book explains how imperialism has forced Central Americans to flee their homelands, and covers the four-century history that underlies these mass migrations.

Brazil Still Matters

In a recent article in *The Nation*, “Why Brazil Still Matters,” Glen Greenwald explains how Brazil’s politics reflect global trends and how that in turn affects global heating. Recently in Brazil, rightist politicians used legislative and judicial corruption, lawfare, and disinformation to oust the progressive former president, Dilma Rousseff, and jail and bar from elections her predecessor, Ignacio “Lula” Da Silva. This brought to power the so-called “Trump of the Tropics,” Jair Bolsonaro, and with him his program of unbridled resource extraction, his escalating destruction-by-fire of the Amazon (Brazil’s Amazon rainforest absorbs 5% of the world’s CO2 emissions), attacks on living standards, attacks on indigenous, minority and LGBT rights, and subservience to local and international corporate interests, as well as to US geo-strategic designs.

More recently, Brazil’s callous COVID response has killed over 400,000 people. Greenwald’s illuminating piece traces this rightward shift to the same neoliberal policies that for decades reigned under nominally liberal parties and which brought about right wing political reaction in both Europe and the US.

Source: “*Why Brazil Still Matters*,” by Glen Greenwald, *The Nation* 4/19/21

TAKE ACTION: Finish the Fight to Stop US Funding of Jilamito Dam in Honduras

In late May, the US Development Finance Corporation announced that it will no longer finance the Jilamito project, pulling a promised \$35.7 million in loans. This decision comes in the fourth year of steadfast peaceful resistance by the Jilamito communities of Honduras, organized by the Broad Movement for Dignity and Justice (MADJ, by their initials in Spanish). As a leader of MADJ had written, “far from generating development, [it] generates a climate of insecurity and serious social problems in the municipality of Arizona.” Those opposed to the project in defense of their source of clean water have faced threats, criminalization, and violence while denouncing the corruption associated with the project. Three Hondu-

rans have been assassinated.

Projects such as this usually only serve to privatize and concentrate natural resources in the hands of the elite—and are frequently imposed through US-backed militarization and repression of the communities and organizations who defend their water, land, and rights. In the US, the solidarity groups noted that the Jilamito Hydroelectric Project would directly undermine the Biden Administration’s stated priority of addressing corruption and human rights abuses in Honduras as a way of addressing the root causes of migration.

In April, the Task Force on the Americas joined SOA Watch, the Witness for Peace Solidarity Collective and 60 plus US and Honduran organizations in sending a letter to Janet Yellen, the US Secretary of Treasury, calling for the definitive cancellation of international financing for the project. Last year, over 25 Congressional representatives supported a Dear Colleague letter led by Rep. Ilhan Omar opposing DFC funding. Many across the country have spoken out, signing petitions and lobbying their representatives in solidarity with the people of Jilamito.

This moment is a shining example of what can happen when we organize to fight for justice and a more equitable world.

Let’s keep going! IDB Invest, a subsidiary of the Inter-American Development Bank of which the US is a major stakeholder, still plans to finance the project with a \$20.25 million loan. Join us in calling on the US to use its voice within IDB to definitively end this support. Take action by writing to your Congressional representatives, urging them to contact the US Treasury office to make their opposition to IDB Invest financing known.

Source: *Witness For Peace Solidarity Collective* 5/29/21

Venezuelan Envoy Alex Saab Seized and Imprisoned on US Orders

Alex Saab, a special envoy of the Venezuelan government with diplomatic immunity, was en route to Iran to acquire basic food, medicine and medical equipment much needed for the people of Venezuela,



Alex Saab (Photo: *Venezuelanalysis*)

when he was seized in Cape Verde on June 12, 2020. He is being held in custody and denied medical treatment for cancer.

The US claims Saab committed “money laundering,” which here means making international transactions, of necessity through the US-controlled SWIFT financial system, in violation of US unilateral coercive measures against Venezuela (“sanctions”). These sanctions are patently illegal according to the UN. Regardless, Swiss prosecutors investigated for three years and found no evidence to support the charges. The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Court of Justice ordered Saab’s release, but under US pressure Cabo Verde has not complied.

Saab is not the only victim of this treatment. Meng Wanzhou, CFO of China’s Huawei Technologies, and Mun Chol Myong from North Korea have each been charged with violating US sanctions even though they, like Saab, are not US citizens and were living and conducting business outside the US at the time of the alleged violations.

Source: *The Grayzone* 4/27/21

The Revolution Won’t Be Stopped (AFGJ eBook, 2021)

Readers of the TFA Report are urged to download the free eBook from the Alliance for Global Justice (AFGJ): *The Revolution Won’t Be Stopped: Nicaragua Advances Despite US Unconventional Warfare* (afgj.org). The book collects essays and news briefs covering recent Nicaraguan history, including the electoral return of the Sandinistas in 2007, through the 2018 US-authored counter-revolutionary putsch, its aftermath, and the country’s recovery and response to COVID-19 in 2020.

IN BRIEF/ACTIONS

Chile's Defeat of Pinochet's Constitution

Following the US-backed coup in 1973, Chile's military junta, led by General Augusto Pinochet, used mass repression, murder, disappearances, and torture to enact a radically reactionary economic plan enshrined in the Chilean constitution. Designed by Milton Friedman and the economists of the Chicago School, the plan promoted privatization and subordination of Chile to US imperial interests, resulting in poverty for many and great wealth for a few. This past May, in addition to electing mayors and city council members, Chilean voters elected 155 representatives who will draft a new constitution. Of the 155, the left won a veto proof majority of more than two-thirds. Election rules also made sure that at least 45% of the 155 drafters of the new constitution would be women and 17 would be indigenous.

The election has been called Chile's most significant since the 1988 plebiscite that removed Pinochet from the presidency. There were also extraordinary local victories, including the election of the Communist Party candidate for mayor of Santiago, Chile's capital and its largest city.

Source: *Council on Hemispheric Affairs* 5/19/21

Vaccine Internationalism

Latin America and the Caribbean are getting COVID-19 vaccines from Russia and China. Russia's Sputnik V vaccine is registered in at least 60 countries with a combined population of three billion people. Latin American countries getting the Russian vaccine include Argentina, Bolivia, Mexico, Paraguay, and Venezuela. As of April 5th, China donated vaccines to more than 80 countries, sharing nearly half of its domestically manufactured vaccines through donations or exports to countries including Brazil, Chile, Mexico, Peru, Uruguay, and Venezuela. Notably, Russian vaccines have gone to occupied Palestine and Chinese vaccines have gone to US-embargoed Venezuela. (As we go to press, neither the US nor the UK has yet shared vaccines.)

Sources: *CGTN* 4/5/21; *Sputnik News* 4/16/21; *Democracy Now* 3/31/21

US Special Forces Trained Mexican Drug Cartels

An article published in *CovertAction Magazine* outlined how US Special Forces trained feared Mexican drug cartels responsible for grisly murders. The Cartel Jalisco Nueva Generación (CJNG) is one of the most feared Mexican paramilitaries of the past decade. Their propaganda videos often feature masked men bristling with small arms. In May 2019, a former CJNG soldier told Mexico's *Telemundo* network of his time at training camp, and claimed the cartel used US Special Operations Forces as trainers. That same year a US ex-pat family was killed by drug cartel gunmen, then-President Trump tweeted that now was "the time for Mexico, with the help of the US, to wage WAR on the drug cartels and wipe them off the face of the earth." Yet the goal of defeating the cartels is obviously undermined when US Special Forces aid the enemy, directly or indirectly training the drug cartels that commit the atrocities.

This is not the only example of US involvement with Mexican paramilitaries. Mexican journalist Carlos Marín reported Mexican army special units, including troops trained by the US military, formed paramilitaries in Chiapas to displace the population, in order to disrupt popular support for Zapatista forces (EZLN).

Source: *CovertAction Magazine* 4/29/21

Take Action: Support Honduras, Contact Congress

1. HR 1574: Berta Cáceres Human Rights in Honduras Act Reintroduced by Hank Johnson (D-GA) has 53 co-sponsors.
2. HR 2716: Honduras Human Rights and Anti-Corruption Act of 2021: Introduced by Jan Schakowsky (D-IL) and five other House members.
3. S.388: Senate companion bill to HR 2716 Honduras Human Rights and Anti-Corruption Act: Jeff Merkley (D-OR), Leahy (D-VT), Durbin (D-IL)

Call the US Capitol Switchboard 202-224-3121 and connect to your Rep.



Jimmy Justice

(Photo: *Marin Independent Journal*)

Remembering "Jimmy Justice" Geraghty

James Geraghty (aka Jimmy Justice) died of osteomyelitis in March of this year at age 70. He participated in Task Force delegations, videotaped our annual fund-raising dinners, and with several Task Force members co-produced a documentary film on immigration, *Por Que Venimos/Why We Come*, about what pushes people here from south of the border. Jim's greatest passion was local activism on housing, migrant rights, people's media, anti-racism, environmental issues, bicycle routes and transportation, and pretty much anything else you can think of. He was active in a great many organizations and at every level of local politics, including political campaigns. Whenever called on, he videotaped events and meetings, made political buttons, built websites, debated foes online, addressed town and county councils with eloquence and wit, and so much more. We've never known an activist as prolific as Jim, or as beloved. Jim Geraghty ¡Presente!

Berta Cáceres Murder Trial

Berta Cáceres, the renowned and beloved Honduran environmental activist, indigenous leader, and winner of the 2015 Goldman Environmental Prize, was assassinated the following year. The trial against a co-author of her murder, David Castillo, began on April 6th. Castillo is charged with being an intellectual author of Cáceres's murder. The trial is being transmitted by Facebook Live and can be followed on the blog below.

Source: *Karen Spring's trial blog*: <https://www.aquiabajo.com/blog/>

IN BRIEF/ACTIONS

Election in Peru: 2021

As we go to press, the runoff election of June 6th is neck and neck between left candidate Pedro Castillo and right wing candidate Keiko Fujimori. According to the official count Pedro Castillo won 50.1% of the vote to Fujimori's 49.8%. On Saturday, June 12th, the National Office of Electoral Processes acknowledged Castillo's lead but the results have not yet been made official. Fujimori's coalition is looking for US support to contest the results. Keiko Fujimori, daughter of former President and dictator Alberto Fujimori (1990-2000), faces possible preventive detention for alleged corruption. Pedro Castillo, the son of peasant farmers, is a teacher who led a 2017 national teacher's strike. His party, Free Peru, cites Peruvian Marxist José Carlos Mariátegui as a political inspiration, and defines itself as democratic, decentralized, internationalist, inclusive, and anti-imperialist. He is strongly supported by the popular and lower income sectors who are tired of the rich and corrupt turning their backs on the extreme poverty of Peru.

Source: telesurenglish.net 6/11/21-6/12/21

TAKE ACTION: Urge Biden to End Misuse of Title 42 to Expel Migrants

Since March 2020, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) has blocked and expelled migrants arriving at the southern border, including asylum seekers and children. These rapid expulsions are being carried out under a Title 42 public health order which was issued by the CDC in 2020 under pressure from the Trump administration, despite objections by CDC health officials that there was no legitimate public health reason to justify such rapid expulsions.

Title 42 rapid expulsions of vulnerable asylum seekers continue daily. These expulsions have denied asylum seekers their legal right to present their asylum claims. Many have been sent back to their countries of origin, putting them at risk of persecution and danger, in violation of US refugee and anti-trafficking laws and treaty obligations.

White House Comment Line: 202-456-1111 or www.whitehouse.gov/contact

NICARAGUA: Interview With President Daniel Ortega

Editor's note: TFA Board member Teri Mattson interviewed Nicaraguan President Daniel Ortega in Managua.

Teri: Why is there immigration from El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras, but not from Nicaragua?

Pres. Ortega: This is well known by the CIA, and the Pentagon. They say in their own reports that Nicaragua has a system of protection and security that gives stability to families so they don't have to flee as they do from other countries in the region where there is high insecurity and strong economic problems. This causes major migration from countries such as El Salvador, Honduras and Guatemala. So a large part of the population of these countries has gone to the US, and many of them have been deported and returned with the skills from crime, brought from the criminal culture of the US. That is, they go there to the big school, and they themselves become a terror for the families in Central America.

Teri: We just finished a delegation of 13 people, so it was really clear how stable it is here. The economy is actually booming here. It's very secure and peaceful and there's no reason for people to flee. Puppet governments: El Salvador, Honduras, Guatemala, the US-backed governments. It's ironic that those are the countries people are fleeing.

Pres. Ortega: Here the advantage of Nicaragua is that there was a revolution. The revolution created a consciousness and willingness to work for peace, and after so many years develop the economy, and most importantly food. Nicaragua produces food for the Nicaraguan population and for export to Central America and the US. In the other Central American countries we have a very painful situation because the capacity of these countries is very limited. Why? It's because of the same restrictions imposed by US policy. What the US imposes on these countries weakens their capacity to develop initiatives and actions to benefit their people. The immigration to the US gets sent back by the US. That means that the contamination is arriving from the US, the virus



Photo: TFA

comes from the US, the virus of delinquency, the virus of insecurity. The US authorities know it. I remember a meeting organized by President Obama and European countries in Guatemala City, where the conclusion was reached that it was necessary to invest in Central America, a massive investment, to generate employment, develop more education, develop health programs, and in that way immigration would be stopped. This was nothing more than an agreement. They promised millions on behalf of developed countries, including the US Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton, and that was all; it didn't go any further. Later President Obama said he would be giving two billion dollars to the Northern Triangle, and then he said he was taking the money away again because they were letting the immigrants pass. Total insanity. Now President Biden has requested more funds for the Northern Triangle. But the truth is this has always been just a promise, and when the funds are available they can be taken away again at any time. This is the breeding ground for insecurity. On the other hand, in the case of Nicaragua, despite our efforts, we know that the behavior of the US is to harm Nicaragua and its people. As you rightly say, sanctions kill. They kill in Venezuela, They kill in Cuba, They kill in Nicaragua. They kill all over the world.

Teri: In 39 countries around the world, it is a form of war.

Pres. Ortega: Yes, it is.

Source: https://youtu.be/VhhPA2_U4fQ



(Photo: newsylist.com)



(Photo: nypost.com)

On the 500-year anniversary of the Spanish conquest of Mexico, seven Zapatistas set sail for Spain in early May on a mission of peace and solidarity. They will address inequality and the oppression of capitalism. They declare that they were never conquered and are still in rebellion.

Elections in Mexico

In Mexico, the ruling MORENA party kept its majority in midterm Congressional elections and won two-thirds of governorships in dispute. In coalition with the Workers Party and the Green Party, there will now be a strong progressive majority in the Congress. This welcome result comes despite active opposition from USAID and the National Endowment for Democracy.

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