

L i b e r a t i o n

JOURNAL OF LIBERATION, FORMERLY THE MOVEMENT FOR COLONIAL FREEDOM



International
Women's
Day!

Also inside:

- **Dalit Women Fight Back!**
- **Kurdish Women's Revolution in Rojava**
- **Progress for Women in Iran**
- **South Asia Ethnic Relations**

L i b e r a t i o n

Formerly, the Movement for Colonial Freedom, Liberation was founded in 1954 as the Movement for Colonial Freedom. Today, Liberation campaigns for Peace, Economic Justice, Equality and Human Rights.

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EDITORIAL

CORBYN: "WOMEN WILL BE AT HEART OF GOVERNMENT" International Human Rights Day speech reinforces commitment

Women and women's rights "will be at the heart" of government policy if the Labour Party wins the next general election according to Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn.

During an event to mark International Human Rights Day, Corbyn appeared alongside Shadow Foreign Secretary Emily Thornberry, Shadow Home Secretary Diane Abbott and Dawn Butler, the then Shadow Secretary for Communities, Diversity and Inclusion.

He told an invited audience at London's Methodist Central Hall he was "very proud" to be working alongside many talented women. Corbyn paid tribute to women across the UK working for social and economic justice, highlighting the struggle of Becky Shah and Anne Williams who have been involved in the Hillsborough campaign for many years.

In a speech that focused heavily on the situation in the UK before moving to international issues, he highlighted some of the challenges that British women face on a daily basis.

Many women "are dealing with poverty, domestic violence and discrimination, especially in the workplace," he said, citing the gender pay gap as a particular area where Labour policy would seek to improve transparency and fairness at work.

Looking further afield, he lauded "pioneering" women who have contributed to the cause of social justice; he singled out former United States First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt for her contribution to what was to become the UN Declaration as well as African American campaigner Dorothy Height.

"These amazing women really understood that women's rights, social rights and civil rights are everybody's rights", said Corbyn who has appointed a number of women to senior positions in the Shadow Cabinet.

He also expressed regret that Britain had, many years ago, perpetrated "grave injustices" in a number of different countries as well as in British Overseas Territories including the Chagos archipelago which was administered by the UK when its entire population was forcibly removed to make way for a US military base - believed to have later operated as a black site for rendition - on the island of Diego Garcia.

Corbyn praised the work of Crawley-based community activist Sabrina Jean whose family was among those prevented from returning to their homes.

Speaking on the 68th anniversary of the original UN Declaration of Human Rights, Corbyn condemned attacks and human rights violations - on women and men - and singled out the use of rape as a weapon against women in areas of conflict.

"One of the most moving experiences of my life was when I had the honour of meeting some survivors of the mass rapes in the



Congo and hearing their testimony," he told the audience in a departure from his prepared speech.

The United Nations Convention on Human Rights and the European Convention on Human Rights were, he said, two vitally important tools which should be key to preventing abuses in the future.

In a call for concrete action, the father of three sons stressed "it is not enough to say that the world must put a stop to it. We must actively work to end the use of rape as a weapon of war."

Corbyn who has been MP for Islington North for more than 30 years and whose wife is Mexican, has a long track record of supporting human rights issues at home and abroad, particularly in Latin America.

He was one of the many on the Left who campaigned for a prosecution case against General Augusto Pinochet who took power during a coup in Chile in 1974 which saw thousands disappeared and killed including several British and European citizens.

When Pinochet was arrested during a visit to the UK seventeen years ago and placed under house arrest, many hoped that it was a sign that the then Labour government was realising what the Foreign Secretary Robin Cook had called an 'Ethical Foreign Policy'.

Referring to Prime Minister Theresa May's first months in power, Corbyn said: "This Government may be led by a woman but the rights of women are not leading this Government. Women's rights are human rights. A government headed by me would put women's rights at its heart."

"We will ratify the Istanbul Convention - guaranteeing every woman who has been the victim of violence timely access to help to rebuild their lives.

"We will change the law to ensure that equal pay will be evaluated by external audit - we can't carry in with such a wide gap between men and women's pay.

Women have suffered unfairly from the Conservative government's austerity policies, he said

"Of the cuts delivered through tax and benefit changes since 2010 86% have fallen on women"

A Labour government will commit to benchmarking future legislation prior to ratification "to check its impact on women."

In a region stricken by conflict, Syrian Kurds have embarked upon a women's revolution

Melanie Gingell

PEACE IN KURDISTAN

Campaign for a peaceful solution of the Kurdish question

The oppression of Kurds in Turkey has only recently begun to appear in the Western press, although it follows a pattern of persecution and abuse that started nearly 100 years ago. It continues in grotesque forms with little or no comment or condemnation from our government.

The persecution of Kurds by the Ba'ath regime in Syria, over the decades, likewise went so deep as to even deny their existence, and has received even less attention. Examples such as the following recorded by Human Rights Watch in 2005 were typical of the acts of torture in detention perpetrated by Syrian security services against members of the Kurdish political opposition:

They tortured me physically and emotionally. The physical torture began from the moment I arrived at the branch. The officer who heads the branch beat me personally. His men tied my legs to a Russian rifle, and the officer beat me on my feet with a whip. The beating covered various parts of my body. He would insult and threaten me and insult the Kurds. He found a notebook in my pocket where I had written the name of the town by its Kurdish name, Kobani, which the regime had changed to 'Ain 'Arab, so he hit me with more than 100 lashes saying, "Damn you and damn Kobani. Why don't you write 'Ain 'Arab?" The torture lasted for almost six hours of on-off beatings.

Yet this area of Syria, Rojava, now the autonomous federation of Northern Syria, is the setting for a story of liberation against all odds; the site of an ideological revolution which has taken root in the villages and towns, drawing in women, men, Kurds, Arabs, Chaldeans and others. This revolution is not for a nation state but is for direct democracy, women's liberation, ethnic plurality, a cooperative economy and for ecology, in an autonomous region within the borders of existing states.

This revolution is inspired by the writings and thoughts of Kurdish leader Abdullah Ocalan, founder of the PKK in the 1970s and now long term prisoner in a solitary cell on the Turkish island of Imrali. His early ideology was Marxist-Leninist and the founding goal of the PKK was to create a nation state for the Kurds, but during the long years in isolation the ideology has transformed into one which has defied description in pre-existing vocabulary, and is now termed Democratic Confederalism.

Democratic Confederalism is one of the most radical and chal-

lenging movements in recent times, with a concept of freedom which surpasses nationalism, power and the state. It is a movement in which women's liberation is central, an immediate and essential demand and not one to be considered after the "main" battle has been won. Ocalan has stated that patriarchy and capitalism lie at the heart of oppression. He said: "All the power and state ideologies stem from sexist attitudes and behaviour...Without women's slavery none of the other types of slavery can exist let alone develop. Capitalism and nation-state denote the most institutionalised dominant male. More boldly and openly spoken: capitalism and nation-state are the monopolism of the despotic and exploitative male."

In the Autonomous region women are playing leading roles, from the outset, in an ideal of gender equality. The oppression of women is regarded as connected with the very existence of the nation state; as the domination of women is rejected, so too is the existence of the nation state.

One manifestation of this is a dual leadership principle, so that every meeting in every organization has dual leaders, a man and a woman. For example, the PYD Party has two co-chairs – Salih Muslim and Asya Abdullah – who play complementary roles in the organisation and in representing the Party. The co-governors of Jazira Canton are a man and a woman. In every level of the democratic self-administration there is a duality of leadership. Likewise, in all meetings, there's a quorum, so that no meeting can have official legitimacy unless there is 40% women present. Or, if there are more women than men, there have to be 40% men.

The Kurdish women's movement in Syria has been able to mobilise into a mass movement through this lived experience of a political life and a desire to collectively find solutions in the face of extreme difficulties.



**Kurdish youths come out the streets in Rojava
(Source: KurdishQuestion.com)**

As Dilar Dirik has set out::

The Kurdish freedom movement's outlook on women's liberation is of an explicit communalist nature. Rather than deconstructing gender roles to infinity, it treats the conditions behind current concepts of womanhood as sociological phenomena and aims to redefine such concepts by formulating a new social contract. It criticizes mainstream feminism's common analysis of sexism in terms of gender only, as well as its failure to achieve wider social change and justice by limiting the struggle to the framework of the persisting order. One of feminism's main tragedies is its falling into the trap of liberalism. Under the banner of liberation, extreme individualism and consumerism are often propagated as emancipation and empowerment, posing clear obstacles to any collective action or to even touch the issues of real people. Of course, individual liberties are crucial to democracy, but failure to mobilize in a grassroots manner requires a fundamental self-critique of feminism. The feminist term intersectionality of course underlines that forms of oppression are interlinked and that feminism needs to take a holistic approach to tackle them but often, the feminist circles that engage in these debates fail to touch the real lives of millions of affected women, generating yet another vacuumed discussion on radicalism, inaccessible to most. How radical or intersectional is a struggle that fails to spread?

Janet Beihl, who visited the region notes: "As for the women's movement, one of the things that most impressed me was the energy by which women's institutions are being created there. Councils, women's centres, day-care centres, even women's villages. An enormous amount of energy is expended in going from door to door, knocking on the door in the cities of the north and making sure that the woman who lives there -- woman or women -- of whatever ethnicity they might be, let them know that there's a women's centre there, available to help them if they need it. They have education, they have employment opportunities and they don't need to be dependent on their men. This is absolutely brilliant for the Middle East where, as I'm sure you know, it's been a place that has been pervaded, including in the Kurdish area, by patriarchy, by honour killings, by polygamy, by underage marriage -- these things are all banned now in the Federal System. And the women's movement ensures that all women are informed of these possibilities.'

It's now over two years since so-called Islamic State swept down through the Yezidi lands of Sinjar in Iraq to systematically commit the most unimaginable atrocities "of men being killed or forced to convert; of women and girls, some as young as nine, sold at market and held in sexual slavery by ISIS fighters; and of boys ripped from their families and forced into ISIS training camps.' Women were repeatedly and systematically raped.

In the recently published "Revolution in Rojava, Anja Flach explains that the Kurdish women's movement characterises capitalist patriarchy as "rape culture" and that so-called Islamic State represents just an extreme form of this exploitative culture. The woman-centred society in the autonomous federal region represents the antithesis of this rape culture and the women, in realising that they cannot rely on the protection of

men, have organised to defend themselves, not only ideologically but also militarily, two aspects of the struggle which must go hand in hand. A slogan used is "We will defeat the attacks of the Islamic State by securing the liberation of the women of the Middle East". Dilar Dirik sums up this connection: "...this slogan is quite telling. Because one cannot just defeat ISIS militarily without also defeating the mentality that underlies it, the persisting global rape culture that gives it a platform. That mentality is not just embodied by ISIS but is also partly expressed in our own minds, in our own communities -- liberal state violence, ISIS violence, and honour killings in our own community are not that different from each other. Against all odds, after decades-long struggles and sacrifices, Kurdish women have established a political culture in and around the PKK in which sexist violence against women will meet social ostracism."



Women protesting in Rojava (Source: Huffington Post)

Of course, many challenges lie ahead for this revolution in Syria, because of the historical context, the fact that the conservative social structures of the past run so deep, and the vulnerability of this relatively small area to attack from outside forces. These factors cannot be shrugged off in any short period of time; everyone accepts that the process will take years. But the will to succeed is strong and as the message spreads more widely about what has already been achieved and the great potential of this project for the future, our solidarity and support will be of utmost importance.

**This article was written for Liberation by Melanie Gingell,
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The Kenyan 'Planned Development' Approach

Dan Thea

Is 'capitalist' Kenya toying with 'socialist planning' in its development? Not the Soviet model, of course; but, the Chinese version? After all, there is the Kenya-China January 2015 Memorandum of Understanding; and Kenya's declaration that China is its "*principal development and trade partner*". Well, not quite. No such danger. Kenya remains a bastion of the capitalist mode of development; with the media in particular agog at the fast growth in the number of "Kenyan millionaires"; rather than lifting the citizens from poverty.

Beginning in 2008 under President Mwai Kibaki and even more so under his successor Uhuru Kenyatta, the Kenyan economy has developed on a substantially government-led, planned basis; abandoning the earlier post-colonial laissez-faire approach. The government studied the prevailing socio-economic reality visualised the living standards of the forecast 65 million Kenyans by 2030 examined the resources available and the manner of mobilising them for development and analysed, planned and organised the implementation of its project. It developed a model that appeared both attractive and realistic. This ambitious and transformative programme was aimed at lifting the country from the dire poverty of the United Nations' "Least Developed Country" classification; to that of the more bearable "Developing Country" grouping, apparently imitating the "Asian Tigers", such as Singapore and South Korea. The plan was named Vision2030 and a Vision2030 Delivery Secretariat to oversee its implementation established.

The Vision2030 programme was broken down into five-year plans the first covering 2008-2013; i.e. President Kibaki's second, and final, five-year term in office and saw the construction and refurbishment of today's best roads; and the identification of many of those built since or under construction.

The unfair world economic system however hit back with the European Union threatening Kenya for the audacity of attaining 'developing' status; separated it from its fellow members of the East African Community: Tanzania, Uganda, Rwanda and Burundi, threatening the exclusion of its agricultural exports to the EU from concessionary "duty- and quota-free" access!

Kibaki took great interest in education, introducing universal primary education. Overall, the most important national achievement under his presidency was the 2010 Constitution, which entrenched democracy and laid the foundation for the country's overall development and received high praise domestically, in Africa and by the United Nations.

President Uhuru Kenyatta has even more vigorously than Kibaki

implemented Vision2030 with an economic growth rate consistently among the fastest in Africa at around 6% in the past four years; thus raising standards of living, while providing resources for further development.

In education, the process of universal primary and secondary education has been consolidated. Admission to the 84 universities and university colleges increased to 90,000 students in 2015 though still short of the 160,000 capacity. The student population in 2017 reached 769,000. The epitome in education has been Uhuru's launch of the Digital Literacy Programme whereby every primary school student gets a tablet device, or access to a computer laboratory for the senior primary students. Also commendable is the prioritisation of: *science, technology, engineering, mathematics and medicine in education*, reflecting the economy's needs.

The goal for a bed in a health facility for every mother-to-be has been achieved; and the Gender-based Violence Recovery Centres established at hospitals. Also, 98 referral and teaching hospitals, fully equipped with ICT scans, X-Rays, dialysis and ICU machines have been established with at least two such hospitals in each of the 47 Counties.

Reportedly, 757 doctors completed their internships in 2016 all were recruited by the hospitals. Yet, the Kenyan doctor-to-population ratio of 1:5,000 is poor compared to the World Health Organisation's standard of 1:600; leaving Kenya requiring *seven times more doctors* to reach the WHO norm. With its fellow WTO regional members: Burundi, Comoros, Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Mauritius Rwanda, Seychelles, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan, Tanzania and Uganda even further behind in this regard, Kenya was chosen to host the regional WTO Centre for Disease Control and Prevention.

ICT is well developed in Kenya, with a world-leading M-Pesa 4G high-speed mobile phone money transfer platform and unlimited bandwidth TV connectivity and a specialist ICT university. A world class 'greenfield' Konza Techno City, complete with a technology university and a varied ICT business hub is under construction, supported by South Korea. An ICT cabinet minister oversees the sector.

In the provision of government services Kenya has implemented its comprehensive Integrated Financial Management Information System, IFMIS, comprehensively covering government financial transactions for the necessary control and audit.

Similarly the HUDUMA one-stop-shop public service and information centres across the country deploy integrated technology systems, saving the user travelling time, cost and inconvenience, it has won commendations from the United Nations and the African Union.

Purposefully and energetically, drinking and sanitation water had been connected to 58% of households by October 2016; with 63% due by June 2017. Huge effort is being made to connect all households.

As in the case of water, connecting households to electricity rose from 32% in 2013, to 75% in 2016; while the price fell by about 30%. Universal connection is expected by 2020; well ahead of the UN global target date of 2030. Additionally, a programme to end the troublesome power cuts has started. Actually, Kenya has an excess of power capacity; with the highest demand level taking only 70% of the available 2,341MW. Much more capacity is under construction; mainly sustainable, clean and cheap geothermal, hydro and solar. The problem is the inadequacy of the transmission grid in a geographically large country, with substantial, scattered and nomadic populations but the grid is being energetically extended and supplemented with small-scale, stand-alone local plants.

Presently Kenya has only a rudimentary social welfare system, limited to: the elderly poor, homeless children and displaced persons.

Transportation and infrastructure sectors have received the most attention over the past decade. About 10,000km of roads have been paved; with many more in progress or due to start. In June 2016 President Kenyatta retorted to the clamour for roads, pointing out that: *"We have built thousands of kilometres of tarmac roads and we have built more roads in the last three years than we did in the first 50 years of our independence"*. Straight from the horse's mouth!

Among the biggest projects undertaken is the Standard Gauge Railway, (SGR); largely replacing the colonial-era dilapidated narrow-gauge "Lunatic Express". SGR's 457km Mombasa-Nairobi section is due for commissioning in June 2017 cutting Inter City passenger journey time from 11 hours to just over four hours; with freight charges falling by 2.5 times.

The second section, 120 km long, Nairobi-Naivasha, is already under construction to be followed by the 262km Naivasha-Kisumu section; with a 10km extension to Kisumu Port. The final section, 107km Kisumu-Malaba, will bring the overall length to 956 km.

Aviation has grown hugely; with airstrips and airports all over; a dozen international airports but the hugely expanded, 14 million

passenger capacity Jomo Kenyatta International Airport handles only 6.5 million passengers annually. A second runway is planned! For enhanced security, integrated ICT systems have been installed at all airports.

As with JKIA, the Port of Mombasa has been transformed, primarily with the participation of China and Japan; and major works continue. To attract more tourists a \$350 million world class cruise ship terminal is due to open in July 2017. Two 1.5 million ton container terminals have opened; with another 0.5 million ton one due. Mombasa is a hive of construction works: including roads, railway, port, berths, ferry, fuel oil pipeline, oil refinery, etc.

North of Mombasa is Lamu, the base of the massive, multi-project, \$23 billion Lamu Port-South Sudan-Ethiopia Transport Corridor Project, (LAPSSET), geared to open up the lagging north-eastern and northern Kenya for development; and estimated to add in excess of 1.5% to the national economy. LAPSSET's main projects include: a crude oil pipeline, an oil refinery at Lamu, a standard gauge railway, major road systems linking Lamu to Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, and Juba, South Sudan, resort cities at Lamu, Isiolo and Lokichar, each with an airport; a huge deep-water port capable of accommodating the biggest, post-Panama, bulk carrier ships, including crude oil tankers; and 22 berths, three of which are under construction while the port itself is being dredged accordingly.

Having received AU's *Presidential Infrastructure Champion* accolade for its potential to improve *African integration and inter-connectedness*, six-monthly progress reports on LAPSSET are required.

Rather than being the exemplar, Nairobi's poor transportation system lets down overall national achievement though the new Nairobi Metropolitan Area Transport Authority is to establish a train-and-bus mass-transit system to redress this issue.

Unlike Vision2030, which is medium-term, *Agenda2063* is a continental, all-Africa, fifty years, 2013-2063, long-term project; broken down into five ten-year periods, ending in 2023, 2033, 2043, 2053 and 2063. 2063 is the 100th anniversary of the formation of the *Organisation of African States*, the predecessor of today's *African Union*.

In summary, *Agenda2063* is Africa's fifty-year development programme to attain full advanced status, high standards of living and education; modern transportation and communications; sustainable, clean and cheap energy; unity facilitating trade, travel, culture and continual progress.

Dan Thea is a regular contributor to Liberation journal, writing mainly on Africa.

Do the religious minorities have a future in Bangladesh?

Mihir Sarkar and Sujit Sen

Eminent economist and researcher Dr Abul Barkat recently published a book, "Political economy of reforming agriculture-land-water bodies in Bangladesh". Dr Barkat is also a professor of Economics at the University of Dhaka, Bangladesh.

In his book Dr Barkat highlighted the reform Bangladesh needs in achieving the economic developments it is targeting. He has also painted a grim picture for the future of the Hindu Communities in Bangladesh. He predicted that 'no Hindus will be left after 30 years' in Bangladesh. He made his prediction on the basis of his research and "The rate of exodus (of Hindus) over the past 49 years"

In his research he found that from 1964 to 2013, around 11.3 million Hindus left Bangladesh due to religious persecution and discrimination, he mentioned in his address in the launching ceremony for his book. It means on an average 632 Hindus left the country each day and 230,612 annually. From his 30 yearlong researches, Barkat found that the exodus shamefully and mostly took place during military governments after independence in 1971.

Before the Liberation War of 1971, the daily rate of migration was even higher at the rate of 705 per day while it was 512 during 1971-1981 and 438 during 1981-1991. Then the number accelerated to even higher than pre-liberation period to 767 persons each day during 1991-2001 while around 774 persons left the country during 2001-2012, the book says. There is nothing to suggest that the exodus of Hindus has decelerated in recent months and years.

These findings reinforced the concept that the fundamentalist Islamic forces have a clear agenda to root out Hindus from Bangladesh. They have been very successful in staging violence against Hindus year after year without the difficulty of facing justice in Bangladesh. Equally, the political hierarchy and the criminal justice systems have both failed to protect the religious

minorities in Bangladesh. There has been only one trial about violence committed against the religious minorities.

Following the 2001 election serious violence was brutally unleashed on Hindus in Bangladesh. Subsequently a judicial commission was set up to investigate it. The commission found that a total of 355 politically motivated murders took place while 3270 incidents of rape, arson, looting and other atrocities were recorded. Not a single person stood trial in independent and claimed to be secular, democratic Bangladesh.

The prediction of Dr Barkat echoes the prediction of Professor Mizanur Rahman former head of the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) when he said in 2014 that there will be no Hindu citizens left in Bangladesh after 20 years. "Because we did whatever is needed to force them [Hindus] out of the country and we have always failed to do what was needed to protect them." The percentage of the Hindu population has come down from 13% in 1974 to a single digit figure according to the latest census in Bangladesh.

Ajoy Roy, Professor at the University of Dhaka, was present at the book launching ceremony and on this occasion he said that the government grabbed the properties of the Hindus during the Pakistan regime describing them as enemy property and the same properties were taken by the government after independence as vested property. It is worth mentioning that he is still seeking the justice for the brutal killing of his son by the religious fanatics.

Retired Justice Kazi Ebadul Haque added his concern mentioning that the minorities and the poor were deprived of their land rights. People remain deprived in the independent democratic secular Bangladesh, he said, adding that the land management system should be reformed.

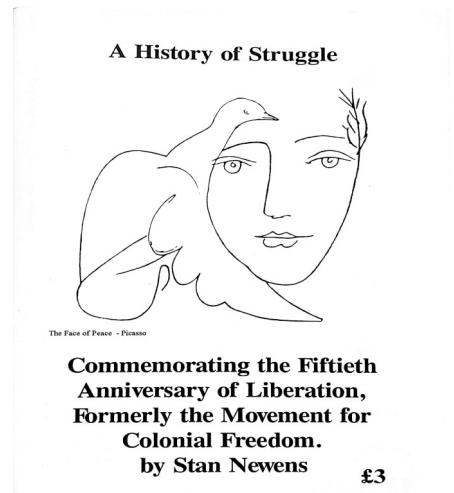
Dhaka University teacher Prof Farid Uddin

Ahmed said that the government has to ensure that the indigenous people would not be affected or harmed. "The government must ensure that the people do not think about leaving the country."

Even taking into account of the very recent incidences it does not feel as if the exodus of the Hindus would be less than what Dr Barakat assessed. According to a report compiled by Bangladesh Jatiyo Hindu Mohajote (BJHM) at least 98 people of Hindu community were reportedly killed and 357 others were attacked physically in the year to 29 December 2016. The same report also claimed that "At least 22 Hindus are still missing and over 26 Hindu women were raped in the country." It says "at least 141 temples were vandalised and torched while at least 165 Hindu houses were attacked by the same period of time."

Therefore, the systematic cleansing of Hindus in independent Bangladesh goes on. Hindus are leaving their ancestral homes due to fear for their safety and security. They are leaving Bangladesh in an ever increasing number at least 774 people per day. Now the question is do they really have any future in Bangladesh?

Mihir Sarkar is an activist and adviser for the Campaign for the Protection of Religious Minorities in Bangladesh (CPRMB) & Sujit Sen



Trump goes against global majority

President Trump pursues new nuclear weapons as the global majority backs a ban treaty

Kate Hudson

In uncertain times the last thing anyone needs is the most powerful man on earth kicking off a new nuclear arms race. But that's exactly what president-elect Trump did just before Christmas, tweeting that 'the United States must greatly strengthen and expand its nuclear capability until such time as the world comes to its senses regarding nukes'.

There are so many ways in which this tweet is wrong, dangerous and ignorant!

Just look at the US's nuclear capability. It currently has 7,300 nuclear warheads, with plans to spend over \$350 billion over the next decade modernising and maintaining them. Some of these weapons are many, many times the size of the Hiroshima bomb, so the US already has the capacity to destroy all life on earth. What conceivable reason could Trump possibly have for wanting to increase the US arsenal? Indeed Trump's ignorance about nuclear matters and his seemingly cavalier approach to their use is extremely alarming given that he will have his finger on the nuclear button.

During his election campaign he promised to tear up the nuclear deal with Iran. This agreement was a huge achievement which replaced the Bush war drive against Iran with a deal to end sanctions and reduce nuclear facilities. Ripping it up may well push Iran down the road to nuclear weapons, potentially opening the door to Egypt and Saudi Arabia going down the nuclear route.



An offensive system which encourages an arms race
(Source: CND)

Those of us who remember the fear of nuclear war in Europe in the 1980s when the US was bringing Cruise and Polaris to our shores would do well to be aware that Trump is open to nuking Europe because it's a 'big place' and that he thinks 'you want to be unpredictable' with nuclear weapons.

Of course some people write these comments off as throw away remarks with no substance but the fact is Trump has repeatedly said that more countries should get nuclear weapons, in particular referencing Japan and South Korea, saying he'd be 'OK' about an arms race in Asia.

This has raised the question of Trump's commitment to the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. With his support for more countries acquiring nukes, Trump has called into question the bipartisan policy in the US for pretty much seven decades: non-proliferation of nuclear weapons.

If the US President sanctions nuclear proliferation then we are heading on a disastrous path. This brings us to the second part of Trump's tweet: 'until such time as the world comes to its senses regarding nukes'. The fact is, most of the world has already come to its senses – in fact had never lost them! Only nine countries have nuclear weapons and the vast majority of the rest want global nuclear abolition.

This has never been clearer than it is today. Towards the end of last year, the UN General Assembly voted to start negotiations on a global nuclear weapons ban treaty. Countries including Mexico, Austria, Ireland, Brazil, Nigeria and South Africa put forward the resolution, which proposes two negotiating conferences over 20 days at the UN to conclude a new international treaty that would prohibit nuclear weapons. The first one starts in New York in March.

When it came to voting, the US voted against negotiations – as did the UK, in spite of its repeated insistence that it wants a multilateral disarmament process. Of the other nuclear weapons states, Russia, France and Israel also voted against a ban treaty, China, India and Pakistan abstained, and North Korea voted in favour.

While it's encouraging to see so many countries expressing the need for the world to move on from nuclear weapons, it's very disappointing to see the British government attempting to derail these vital negotiations. After all, Britain is a signatory to the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty which commits us to engaging in steps to disarm.

The international community has united before to ban: biological and chemical weapons, land mines and cluster bombs. As the majority of the world is covered by nuclear weapons free zones anyway, a global ban treaty seems like the next logical step. The British government has repeatedly said it supports a multilateral approach to global abolition. So why is it opposing what is now before us: a clear and concrete multilateral plan? We cannot let the UK refuse to participate in the conference – we need to put the pressure on to get them to the negotiating table. It's high time for Britain to join the global majority.

So – to return to Trump's tweet - it is the US, UK and the nuclear weapons states that need to come to their senses, not the rest of the world!

Kate Hudson, General Secretary
Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (www.cnduk.org)

Reputation of a Nation: Sexual Violence against Women in India

Jaswant Kaur LLB

The discourse in India today of sexual violence against women is seen through the prism of the now infamous 2012, Nirbhaya Delhi rape case. On the evening of the 16th December a 23 year old female paramedical student was traveling on a private bus with a male friend. The six other men on the bus (one of whom was a juvenile) and another driver of the bus, gang raped, beat, tortured and fatally assaulted the young women. Her friend was also severely beaten and both were thrown off the bus. Thirteen days after the assault the victim later named as Jyoti Singh, died as a direct result of her internal injuries. The trial court judge who convicted the six men of murder observed the doctor's report in the case:

"She was gang raped by six persons one by one and...iron rod and hands were inserted into the abdominal cavity...(and a) major part of her intestine was pulled out from the body."

The horrendous brutality of the attack reported by news agencies, ignited widespread outrage and caused thousands to protest across the capital Delhi, where the attack had taken place and nationally.

The Delhi government deployed riot police who responded by dispersing crowds with aggressive tactics including water cannons, tear gas as well as protestors being beaten with police issued canes. The case became a catalyst for the endemic and deeply entrenched reality of sexual violence for many thousands of women across India.

The debate on the roots of the widespread violence experienced by women, the educational and economic advancement of women in recent years is at odds with a largely conservative society, where women's roles remain largely dominated by culture, tradition, family and home.

In deeply patriarchal societies, as in India women are seen as the property of men and their value lies in their obedience, chastity and as symbols of honour. In armed conflict rape is used as a tool to emasculate men and the trauma inflicted in such cases on a woman by a rapist is an attack on her, her family and culture, as in many societies women are viewed as repositories of a community's cultural and spiritual values.

The corrupt, negligent and indifferent attitude of India's law enforcement and judiciary in the vast majority of rape cases brought into focus the issue of justice and accountability in cases of violence against women.

The complexity of Indian society's subjugation of women is against a demographic of half of India's population being under the age of 25, female infantile child marriages, human trafficking and maternal mortality all lead to a gender imbalanced society.

However, an inconvenient and uncomfortable truth that was not part of a larger national or international discourse has been India's long standing impunity for Indian Armed forces

personnel alleged to have committed rape and sexual violence in India's internal conflict zones or "disturbed areas." This, it would seem, is part of a colluded social amnesia.

According to the Asian Human Rights Centre, one third of India (that is 209 out of the country's 640 districts) remains officially designated as "disturbed" under the Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA) 1958. AFSPA provides wide and far reaching powers to security forces. Where the Act applies, security forces can shoot to kill those they merely suspect of acting unlawfully, for the so-called maintenance of public order, take into custody those they suspect of committing a crime without a warrant and to search any premises or vehicle they suspect. Armed forces are provided legal immunity over their offences. There can be no, suit or legal action taken against them unless sanction for prosecution is given by the central government. But such sanctions are seldom granted. Of the 38 requests to sanction a prosecution under AFSPA that the Ministry of Defence received between 1991 and 2015, permission was denied in 30 cases and the decision is pending in eight, defence minister Manohar Parrikar informed Parliament recently. The government's decision on any area deemed disturbed cannot be brought under judicial review.

AFSPA has been widely condemned nationally and internationally as a draconian law providing a blanket of impunity for human rights abuses including disappearances, extrajudicial executions, torture and rape. Despite the wide and arbitrary powers of the security forces, by refusing to declare these regions as conflict zones and instead proclaiming them as "disturbed" the government denies a large proportion of the Indian population its safeguards and protections under the Indian Constitution and international human rights conventions including Article 3 of the Geneva Convention.

AFSPA, 1958 was initially introduced in states in the north-east region of India, including Assam and Manipur, in response to armed political activity arising from demands for self-determination. The Act was meant to remain in force for only one year. 59 years later AFSPA is still in force.

As a result of the of the public outcry over Nirbaya, a committee was established by the Indian Government under the late Justice Verma, to undertake a comprehensive review of crimes against women and amendments to Indian criminal law. He noted *"No part of official duty of anyone invested with any public power can be in any way even remotely connected with sexual assault on women; therefore, the question of Army personnel, paramilitary personnel or any other functionary saying that this could be part of his official duty, well there is something radically wrong with that thinking."* The Justice Verma Committee concluded that AFSPA legitimised impunity for sexual violence and recommended security forces accused of sexual violence be

stripped of AFSPA protection. However four years after the report the recommendations remain unacknowledged and no changes have been made under AFSPA.

"Rape, as with all terror-warfare, is not exclusively an attack on the body- it is an attack on the 'body-politic'. Its goal is not to maim or kill one person but to control an entire socio-political process by crippling it. It is an attack directed equally against personal identity and cultural integrity." Nordstrom (1991)

Rape as a tool of genocide or a war crime found its contemporary discourse in the Bosnia-Herzegovina war of 1992, where 20,000 women were systematically raped in Serbian concentration camps. It was not until 2008, that the United Nations Security Council passed a resolution that *"women and girls are particularly targeted by the use of sexual violence, including as a tactic of war to humiliate, dominate, instil fear in, disperse and/or forcibly relocate civilian members of a community or ethnic group."*

Rape in India's internal armed conflicts, and the protection provided under AFSPA, to perpetrators are closely intertwined. Rape has been used in regions under AFSPA for over half a century in quelling internal armed conflict. Cases of assaults, torture, rape and killings of women remain largely undocumented in these areas, despite a number of high profile cases dating back to the 1970's. One such case is the mass rapes committed by troops against female residents of Cheswezy village, in the North Eastern state of Manipur. The north-east states have seen continuing mass rapes, assaults and murders of women.



It was the alleged rape and murder of 32 year old Manorama Thangjam in 2004 that led to the now iconic and shocking image and protest by twelve middle aged Manipur mothers standing naked in front of the Kangra Fort where the Assam Rifles were stationed, with a banner that read 'Indian Army Rape Us'.

Manorama was picked up from her home by the Indian paramilitary unit, 17th Assam Rifles on uncertain allegations of being associated with a banned insurgent group. Her body was found the next day, it bore scratch marks and a gashing wound on her right thigh, probably made by a knife. Her body, according to her relatives, bore other signs of torture. There were also gunshot wounds to the genitals, which lent credence to the theory that she was raped before being shot dead.

This case led to protests across the state and resulted in the central government setting up the Reddy Committee under the chairmanship of Justice Reddy, former judge of the Supreme Court. The committee concluded that AFSPA had become a *"symbol of oppression, an object of hate, and an instrument of discrimination and high-handedness"* and advised that AFSPA be repealed.

The link between AFSPA and sexual violence committed by the armed forces in India's internal armed conflicts as recognised by the Reddy and Verma Committees demonstrates that the practice is widespread and systematic enough to warrant repeated condemnation and a call for its urgent repeal from senior retired Indian judges and a former Chief Justice of India. Four years after the latest Committee's report, AFSPA remains in force, a year after the Verma Committee report, AFSPA was extended to a further 12 districts in Assam. Violence against

"Every 20 minutes a rape is reported in India. Only 0.6% of women who said they were victims of sexual violence had filed complaints with the police."

women has been perpetuated in Kashmir on a large scale, although consistently denied by the State. In one such case, members of an army unit searching a village for suspected militants gang-raped at least six women, including an eleven-year old girl and a sixty-year-old woman. One of these women was told by her rapist, *"We have orders from our officers to rape you."* The criminal courts of Kashmir never prosecuted or punished any of the alleged perpetrators of the mass rapes and police led an official closure report with the court in 2013—twenty-two years after the attacks. Such patterns have been seen in Punjab, Assam and Odisha as well as other states across India.

This in turn leads to wide spread under reporting, and of those that are reported *"only on the rarest of occasions does a female victim of sexual violence in areas of conflict or mass violence succeed in bringing her case through the Indian justice system. More typically, her efforts to secure justice are disregarded or even thwarted by the State....Rather than reporting to a neutral authority, victims and witnesses endangered their lives and safety by reporting the crimes to officials or institutions linked to the crimes."*

The response to those that find the strength to raise their voice, is often brutal. As demonstrated by the case of Soni Sori from the state of Chattisgarh. In 2011, the school teacher turned tribal activist was arrested and accused of acting as a conduit for Maoists operating in the region. A charge that she denied. While she was in police custody, she was subjected to torture, including including verbal abuse, beatings and electric shocks. When Sori refused to sign a confession, her interrogators inserted stones into her vagina and rectum. By April 2013, the Indian Courts had acquitted her in six of the eight cases filed against her due to lack of evidence. Sori was granted bail in 2014, the police official who she claimed had overseen her torture was awarded a gallantry medal by the Indian government. In 2016, Sori was attacked in Chattisgarh by three men. They threw a chemical substance in her face that burned her skin, and warned her that her daughter would be assaulted next if Sori didn't stop talking about police atrocities.



Security personnel with the body of a suspected female Maoist in 2008 after the Operation Lalgarh in West Bengal to restore law and order in the area and flush out Maoists.

For substantial and meaningful reform in India, this brutality of mind and body needs to be acknowledged as a whole and not in isolation and impunity for perpetrators lifted. It is clear there is a pattern of sexual violence committed by India's armed forces, which has become an unacceptable norm of the counter insurgency narrative. Sexual violence in these theatres of conflict remains in the shadows and legitimatised. Through AFSPA, perpetrators are provided blanket immunity and for the most marginalised women justice remains elusive. India need to address its inaction and its trickle down effect, that suggests unrest somehow legitimises violence against women, with its acceptance and impunity now reflected in the streets of its Capital.

Jaswant Kaur LLB is a Human Rights Advocate, specialising in human rights documentation in South East Asia.

BOOK REVIEW: INDEFENSIBLE seven myths that sustain the global arms trade

By Paul Holden et al. ZED Books, 2016, pp. 242

Reviewed by: James Grayson

Accurate information on arms spending is difficult to acquire because secrecy suits all the players. The opportunity costs of arms spending are equally obscure. We remember the *Lucas alternative plan* and *Architect or Bee*, see Chartist 284.

During 2015 Military spending that could be traced worked out at about \$250 for each of the 7 billion members of the world's population according to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, so it is reasonable to ask whether increased military spending equates with increasing security?

Was there a peace dividend after the reductions in stockpiles in the 90s or did the world become more dangerous because some of the contents of stockpiles were sold on to third parties? Currently information is leaking about the launch missiles for Trident warheads being less than accurate; for approximately 180 degrees on a number of occasions (Private Eye 1436).

Is military spending driven by security concerns? The Lockheed F35 has a plethora of purposes and is adept at none of them. Parts of the military at least have realised that computer security may be as important as that afforded by weapons. The projected USA all purpose fighting vessel has now reverted to a Frigate.

Can we (the producers) control where weapons go and how they are used?

Briefly no. Examples include: Saddam Hussein was once an ally of the USA which also managed to arm the Taliban and unwillingly ISIS/DAESH. Weapons require maintenance. The USA has obligingly, "Radically revised and liberalized its Munitions Control list."

Is the defence industry a key contributor to national economies? Defence spending is about 6% of UK government spending, in 2013 3.8% of manufacturing sales at £13.1 billion

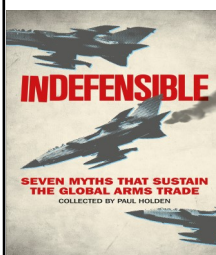
Is corruption in the arms trade only a problem in developing countries? Rolls Royce and BAE systems are no strangers to the courts, domestically and elsewhere. Within the UK government during the nineties contrasting attitudes to arms sales were shown by the then William Waldegrave and the late Alan Clark. South Africa renounced nuclear weapons only to enter into the "Arms Deal". The money spent could have built about a million houses.

Does national security require blanket secrecy? A problem is the yo-yoing of personnel between governments and the arms industry. In some countries clearance is required yet scrutiny hardly takes place. Classifications of secrecy for documents have become a matter of prestige rather than necessity.

Is now the time to re-examine matters? Should we delay scrutiny until the rise of China and Russia and the war on terrorism have been won?

During 2013 11% of US citizens were very worried and 29% somewhat worried about someone in the family becoming a victim of terrorism. 16 US civilians died that year as a result of terrorism. From the 70s to the 90s the number of terrorist incidents was twice those between 2004 and 2011 each year.

The graphics in the book are striking, the information provided is illuminating; read it.



Source: Zed Books

Paperback: £12.99

Dalit Women Fight Back!

Meena Varma, Director—Dalit Solidarity Network UK

"If you are not considered human, human rights do not apply to you," Moni Rani Das, Dalit woman activist, Bangladesh

Dalits are not considered human in many parts of South Asia where the hierarchical nature of the caste system effectively places more than 260 million people outside it – deeming them to be polluted and impure - therefore untouchable.

Caste systems are present in four out of the five countries ranked the worst slavery offenders, in the 2013 Global slavery Index, by the Walk Free Foundation. India alone accounts for half of the people on the planet regarded as 'modern slaves'. The index cites caste and tribe systems as main factors influencing the prevalence of modern slavery in India, singling out Dalit women and children as among the most vulnerable.

If you are a Dalit Woman, you face multiple discrimination. Dalit women are born into an apartheid-like system designed to oppress them, deny them their rights and leave them with no choice but to obey the system. They are trapped in deeply patriarchal societies where women are considered the property of men and are often blamed when men violate them. The severe discrimination they face from being both a Dalit and a woman, make them a key target of violence and systematically deny them choices and freedoms in all spheres of life. This endemic intersection of gender-and-caste discrimination is the outcome of severely imbalanced social, economic and political power equations.

Here we are celebrating another International Women's Day – yet we still fight for freedom and equality for Dalit Women across the world!

Violence and rape

For centuries Dalit women have been key targets of violence and rape. Dalit women suffer from severe limitations in access to justice and there is widespread impunity in cases where the perpetrator is a member of a dominant caste; above the Dalits in the caste system. Dalit women are therefore considered easy targets for sexual violence and other crimes, because the perpetrators almost always get away with it.

They also often bear the brunt of reprisals because they or other Dalits in their community step out of caste lines by trying to improve their lives or access education or work, not traditionally tied to their caste. These reprisals can be in the form of violence, naked parading, beatings, rape, destruction of property, or being set on fire. The Minority Rights Group recently reported a study finding that 70% of cases of atrocities against Dalit women were committed as they tried to assert their rights and challenge caste and gender norms.

In India, studies show that the conviction rate for rapes against Dalit women is fewer than 2% compared to a conviction rate of 25% in rape cases against all women in India. In Pakistan Dalit girls also face abduction, forced conversions and forced marriage. As a religious minority, Dalit women experience violations such as rape and torture as a punitive measure, and prosecu-

tion. These crimes are almost always committed with impunity.

Their access to justice is negligible, forcing them to fight those who rape, rob, cheat or beat them, with no support from the systems of justice meant to protect them. The police refuse to take their complaints, the courts will not convict those who violate them and they are threatened, if they try to oppose them. Violent abuse of Dalit women therefore remains widespread in caste-affected countries and is on the increase in many areas. "Sexual violence against Dalit women is a systemic way of enforcing status quo of the Dalits," Status report of the working group on Human rights in India and the UN, 2012

Denied justice, access to education, health and other services

Sanctioned impunity on behalf of the offenders is a key problem. Police often neglect or deny the Dalit women of their right to seek legal and judicial aid. In many cases, the judiciary fails to enforce the laws that protect Dalit women from discrimination.

Caste and gender discrimination in the delivery of education, health care, water, sanitation and other basic services are also major obstacles for Dalit women severely impacting on their welfare and opportunities. This discrimination has been documented repeatedly by: UN agencies, and major international human rights and development NGOs.

Born into modern slavery and prostitution

Dalit women often work in modern slavery and are key targets for trafficking. They are often used as debt slaves in brick kilns, garment industries and agriculture. 98% of those forced into the dehumanising work of manual scavenging, removing human waste by hand, are also Dalit women. Dalit women may also be born into temple prostitution as 'Devadasis' (sex slaves) in India or be branded prostitutes in Nepal due to their caste status.

"The reality of Dalit women and girls is one of exclusion and marginalisation ... They are often victims of civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights violations, including sexual abuse and violence. They are often displaced; pushed into forced and/or bonded labour, prostitution and trafficking," United Nations Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women, Rashida Manjoo 2013

Fighting back

This is the reality Dalit women face. Still, Dalit women are fighting for their rights every day. They ask the world to speak up when they are silenced, take action when they are shut down, and have the courage to demand that human rights and the rule of law apply, when it is a Dalit woman who is violated.

Dalit women are uniting against one of the world's most gruesome and effective systems of oppression – the intersection of caste and gender discrimination. Dalit women's movements across the world are growing stronger and are connecting to each other and reaching out to decision-makers and people of the world. They are asking the international community and people of the world to come together and stand beside them, and to speak up to end the global silence that is allowing this gruesome form of discrimination to persist. Will you join them?

Progress for Women is Progress for Iran

Jane Green

With the election of Donald Trump as US President, the issue of the relationship of the United States with the Islamic Republic of Iran has figured prominently in the initial weeks of the presidency. With International Women's Day approaching, on 8th March, Jane Green considers the position of the women of Iran and the implications of sanctions being re-imposed.

The nuclear deal, signed between the Islamic Republic of Iran and Western powers led by the US and EU in June 2015, began the process of dismantling the sanctions regime which had been imposed upon Iran. Sanctions had had a crippling impact upon an already fragile Iranian economy. The lack of access to food-stuffs, technology and medical supplies exacerbated an already backward, highly exploitative and deeply discriminatory system of social and economic policies practised by the regime.

Even before the nuclear deal brought about the promise of a relaxation of sanctions, the regime in Iran adhered rigidly to the economic and social template of the World Bank, the IMF and other international institutions determined to manipulate the market in Iran in the interests of the West. The consequences of these policies, which include changing the labour law and abolishing the guarantees for labour rights, have meant catastrophic conditions for the people of Iran.

The women of Iran bear the brunt of the hardship that these policies cause, namely increasing poverty and unemployment, malnourishment and the predominance of temporary forms of employment contracts.

According to official statistics published in April 2016, the rate of unemployment in Iran is 11%, while the unemployment rate among women in Iran is twice that of men. Amongst young women this rate stands at 42.8%. This is despite the fact that, while the rate of women gaining higher education has increased more than 500% and is one of the highest numbers in the world, the number of women in paid employment is very low due to open and hidden restrictions.

In the competition for admission to university places in Iran, female candidates have been so vigorous and successful that the regime has had to intervene and counter the trend, with regulations introduced to prevent male candidates becoming outnumbered by their female counterparts in higher education. There are also now restrictions on women taking certain courses at university.

The regime has also embarked upon a programme of pushing women back into the home through campaigning in recent years to emphasise the virtues of housework and bringing up the children, as opposed to working outside the home. Women workers are offered incentives to go part time, retire early or take employment in areas designated as more female-oriented fields of work. These are of course poorly paid and insecure.

In addition, the regime has mounted legal and civil obstacles against women by passing laws that discriminate against them,

and has tried to justify it by Shari'a. As a result, a large number of women from low-income families are forced into working in small workshops or the informal sector with no safeguards. The employment law for instance does not cover workshops with a workforce of fewer than ten workers and employers can hire and fire at will. Workers do not have the benefit of insurance. Independent trade unions are not allowed in the workplace, so there is no monitoring of wage levels and conditions of service. A by-product of the above policies and practices has been to drive some women into prostitution and drug addiction.

The UN fourth World Conference on Women, held in Beijing 22 years ago, confirmed that the most important economic and social improvement in the life of women may be facilitated through their greater economic participation; through employment. Governments have a duty to put in place the changes in laws that are required in order to allow equal access to economic resources. Yet, the retrogressive regime in Iran, with its adoption of sexually discriminatory policies in all fields, including the economy, has limited women's access even further. The dominant state policy is of sending women back to kitchen and raising children. The ratification of various laws has intensified this tendency.

Iran's regressive stance on the question of women's rights is visible in its attitude to international conventions. More than 191 countries are members of the UN Convention for an end to Discrimination against Women. In May 2003, the then president, Khatami, agreed to join the Convention, but the reactionary Guardians Council refused to ratify the move. As a result Iran is not a signatory to this essential Convention. During the presidential elections in 2013, Hassan Rouhani, who won the election, promised that he would join the Convention but there has been no movement on that promise almost four years later.

To challenge their barbaric and outdated treatment of women in Iran, during the last decade have formed many independent women's organisations. These have promoted progressive social and cultural activities with the aim of improving literacy amongst deprived women, fighting the regime's drive to popularise its misogynistic culture and participating in the wider collective political struggle. Even without the desired immediate changes, the very fact of the mobilisation of millions of women has led to qualitative changes in the forms of struggle. The successful campaigns organised by progressive women in Iran such as the 'Change for Equality' and 'One Million Signatures' against reactionary laws are cases in point.

**Liberation/Movement for Colonial Freedom Archives
are available at the following libraries:**

- **Working Class Movement Library**
- **SOAS Library**

Iranian women continue to demand the repeal of the misogynistic laws against women enshrined both in the Constitution and in the civil law of the Islamic Republic of Iran. Under such laws women are reduced to second class citizens and their persecution is legally sanctioned, supposedly according to Shari'a law, introduced by the regime and interpreted by it. Iranian women have to fight in order to reinstate the gains they had made in the previous decades which were taken from them by the Islamic Republic. These include the right to divorce, the ban on polygamy and the right to become judges.

The struggle of Iranian women encompasses a broad range of issues. Iranian women demand the right of employment; of equal standing as witnesses; equal rights in marriage and inheritance; the right to travel without the permission of their husband, or male guardian; the right to custody of children; the annulment of the right of polygamy for men; raising the age of criminal trial for female children to 18; and pressing Iran to join the Convention for the Prevention of Cruelty and Discrimination.

In the economic sphere and that of civil society, the women of Iran are deprived of the right to form and belong to independent trade union or political organisations. Their civil organisations are brutally suppressed and any peaceful movement by them is met with repression, humiliation, arrest and torture. Members of the Democratic Organisation of Iranian Women, founding member of the Women's International Democratic Federation (WIDF) in the 1940's, were attacked severely and banned in the crackdown against progressive forces in the 1980s.

In spite of these pressures, in culture, sport and education women have shone, in defiance of the theocratic regime's opposition and attempts to restrict them. For example, once Iranian women only had the exclusive role of vocal performers in music. In the past 40 years however, women have revolutionised the Iranian traditional classic music genre by becoming experts in all instruments. There are even groups that are all women performers.

The women's struggle against medieval laws continues in the face of great difficulties and hardship. There are many female political prisoners suffering inhuman conditions in the prisons of the regime. Among them are: women of all ages, young and old, peace activists, students, lawyers, journalists, workers,

'house-wives', and even mothers mourning their children who were executed by the regime.

Women in Iran have shown in the years since the 1979 revolution that, in spite of the many obstacles placed in their path, in spite of the open misogyny of the regime, they are still able to record significant achievements in many fields. Consolidating these achievements and fighting back the reactionary tendency of the clergy is a daily battle. It is a battle in which the younger generation of Iranian women are prepared to engage more readily, as they reject the traditional role of homemaker and seek to establish independent careers.

Any attempt to re-impose sanctions, or further isolate Iran from the international community, will play into the hands of the clergy. Any further weakening of the economy will lead to increased calls for jobs to be protected for male 'breadwinners', for women to be forced back into more 'traditional' roles and for the limited gains women have made under the theocratic regime to be rolled back.

The nuclear deal is far from perfect but it pulled the two sides back from military conflict. There are hidden agendas in both Iran and the US. However, for the women of Iran the more open the culture and economy is to forward-looking influences, the better will be their chance of progressive gains. If women are able to progress, the whole of society will benefit.

Jane Green is National Campaigns Officer of CODIR (Committee for the Defence of the Iranian People's Rights).

For further information on CODIR's news and views please visit www.codir.net



Solidarity with Liberation!

Mexico begins 2017 in social, political and economic chaos

Justice Mexico Now Campaign



Mexico began the year 2017 in social, political and economic chaos, contrary to the wishes of the Mexicans who now face the worst consequences due to the decisions made by the government, the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI).

After the Mexican government (PRI) approved its energy reform in 2013, overtaking the interests of the Mexican society and dismantling the natural resources of the Nation. The president Enrique Peña Nieto argued that energy reform would reduce the tariffs of gas and electricity; this reform would cause more jobs and better infrastructure and would not privatize PEMEX. In 2015, Peña Nieto traveled (with his family and friends) around the world, especially to the United States and Europe to promote his mediocre Energy Reform that violates the Constitution, so he reminds us and returns to the last century during the days of the former president Porfirio Díaz, when he invited foreign investors and/or even more clearly, plunder the natural resources of Mexico as we would say "to serve with the big spoon."

The Government of Peña Nieto ended with a celebration in December 2016, approving bonds for 150 thousand pesos for each deputy. Unfortunately Mexicans have to pay again the price of the corrupt government. On the other hand, the uncertainty of international relations between Mexico and the most powerful country, the world United States of America, President Donald Trump started the year of 2017 with threats, for example, canceling the automotive production in Mexico, or increasing the tariffs, as is the case of the firms Toyota and Ford. Another threat, when the government will approve the reforms in April, they will authorize building the wall by using George Bush's reform of 2006 to build the Wall between Mexico and the USA, the construction was not carried out due to lack of funds, now they ensure that the work will be done because Trump has asked the Mexican government to pay about 10 million dollars for the construction. If the Mexican government refuses to pay it then the US government will raise it by charging tariffs. The Secretary of International Relations in Mexico, Luis Videgaray does not understand that the relationship with Donald Trump in the future is ruined and their threats are evident.

The social chaos started in the New Year because the petrol price increased 20% it was accepted by the Director of Pemex José Antonio González Anaya. However, Rocío Nahle, the Deputy of the party "Morena" shows that the energy reform has failed because Mexico produces less than 50% of its needs, the rest is imported from abroad. The prices of gas, electricity, inputs and commodities have increased, so the Mexican society can't maintain the same living standard since all the product costs have increased up to 30% by contrast the minimum wage is very low. Proof of this, is that the minimum wage per hour in 2016 was \$73.04 (\$3.5 dollars) and increased to \$ 80.04 pesos (\$4 Dollars). The reality is that the Mexican population cannot continue to maintain the economy much less continue to main-

tain the mediocre and incompetent government. They have not even taken the trouble to plan to build a refinery for more than 40 years, which shows their ineptitude and incapacity, they don't realize that in four decades the country has transformed and urges a development in the industry and technology. The lack of employment continues to grow tremendously throughout the country, including in Yucatan State, known as one of the best economies in Mexico. Informal jobs continue to increase because of the lack of formal and decent jobs for Mexicans.

After the rise in the price of oil, gas, electricity and basic products, Mexican people got out on the streets to protest and shout "No to expensive oil and resign Peña Nieto!" unleashing an avalanche of protests all over the country, they began to close the motorways, continuing to close petrol stations and some entered stores to get basic products and food. It is also presumed that there were federal police infiltrators looting shops in order to blame the civilians. The director Manuel Cardona of the National Association of Self-Service and Department Stores of Mexico (ANTAD), asked the federal and the State governments and possibly the army to intervene to ensure the rule of law. During the protests the Federal government has sanctioned and detained hundreds of civilians including women and children. On the other hand Congress wants to approve a new Law of the article 29 of the constitution for the suspension of the Guarantees, in extraordinary times, in addition includes the declaration a state of emergency, where the army can intervene in public security, arrests, and even the investigation of crimes. So it is worrying and alarming because it will violate the human rights of Mexicans.



Protest against Human Rights violations in Mexico

Source: Justice Mexico Now

The media condemn looting in commercial stores; the Former President Felipe Calderón condemned the looting of basic products. We, Mexicans ask ourselves; with what moral authority Felipe Calderón condemns the protests and the looting? He was the president who in 2006 declared the war against drugs trafficking and ordered the military to get out on to the streets to combat the crime (which already existed and increased during the six years of former President Salinas De Gortari and his brothers). It has led to more murders, torture and enforced disappearances, according to figures from Non-Governmental Organizations such as Amnesty International and PRODH Center, for more than 10 years over 200 thousand murders, more than 28 thousand disappeared people have accumulated and hundreds of thousands of people displaced from their homes. The data show that Peña Nieto continues the violation of Human Rights, an example of this is the 43 disappearance students in Ayotzinapa.

The country is in total chaos, Mexicans have reached the peak of tolerance, we are looking for a transition to benefit the Nation, so it is urgent more than ever to ask for help and support to the international community to protect our international human rights and the Mexicans united will defend our sovereignty and dignity.

Article written for Liberation by Justice Mexico Now Campaign

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Protest outside the White House calling for answers regarding the disappearance of the 43 students

(Source: Justice Mexico Now)

The Mexicans who live abroad organised a protest on Sunday 26th of February, a "Wall of hope" in front of the US embassy in London to protest against the US-Mexico border wall. The demonstrators from different countries showed solidarity with the Mexicans and the Latin American community in the USA, there was music, poetry and food. They represented a wall with a long blanket and wrote slogans to support the migrants and those who lost their lives crossing the borders in the USA. The message outside the USA embassy is that "migration is positive; The USA government should recognise all the contributions that migrants brought in to the USA economy and walls should not be built instead bridges for hope and peace" should be.

The Mexican people no longer tolerate the corrupt and incompetent government, besides their inability and ignorance to develop economic models for the benefit of the nation, the violation of Human Rights by the Army and Federal Police that have committed the worst massacres in history. The discrimination and threats of migrants in USA, the economic crisis, the peso devalued more than 50% in recent years and the threats from the United States. All these problems Mexicans face today, leading to the conclusion that Mexico is a "failed State."

REPORT OF LIBERATION CENTRAL COUNCIL MEETING

Those readers who don't follow the ramifications of Liberation's existence will be unaware that our former Chair, an obscure individual who goes by the name of Jeremy Corbyn, upped a year or so back and got himself another job, as did our then Treasurer, a certain John McDonnell. If you look carefully at the picture above, you should be able to recognise Jeremy among a group of our Central Council Officers and supporters.

Because we are a campaigning organisation, and this Journal is only part of our work, we have an elected Central Council that meets to decide our policies and priorities. At our latest meeting, held in the House of Commons and chaired by Jeremy's replacement Kelvin Hopkins MP, we discussed issues relating among others to Burma and Guyana. Just as we were finishing, we were delighted to greet our renegade Chair returning at least temporarily to the fold,



Hence the picture above.

We hope we may be forgiven a little name-dropping.

Phil Sedler

ETHNIC RELATIONS IN SOUTH ASIA

Why Balochistan Matters

Charles Graves

The timing for ethnic groups arriving in South Asia historically seems an important factor for unraveling today's events in Pakistan, Bangladesh, India and Sri Lanka. These arrivals seem to be in the following order:

Early 'indigenous' peoples arriving in South Asia from the west from as early as *circa*.45,000 years ago (43,000 BPE). They settled at first mainly in Rajasthan, where there are archaeological remains as shown in the Mumbai museum. Perhaps some of these people's descendants are to be found in the Andaman Islands, they are certainly among the Dalits.

People populating Kashmir, Burushaski-speaking peoples in Chitral and Hunza, and the ancestors of many Sindhis and 'Multan' people who inhabited the Indus valley, e.g. at Harappa and Mohenjo Daro. Their origin dates back to *circa*; 5000 BPE and before.

The **Dravidian-speakers or Tamils** who arrived in South Asia *circa* 3000-2500 BPE. Their language is similar to the Finno-Ugric speakers who originated in the Ural Mountains region. The Tamils resided in the Indus valley and later settled in South India and Ceylon.

The **'Indo-Europeans'** i.e. the people of the *Bhagavat Gita* who held a structured caste system like many early *Europeans*, arrived in South Asia *circa* 2000 BPE. They entered South Asia from the Caspian Sea region and soon dominated all India. There was a variety of languages which roots were similar to European and Iranian languages.

The **'Yiu-Chih'** people from the upper Yenissei river valley of Siberia who were known to the early Chinese. They were 'pushed west by 'Huns'', and from the west they entered South Asia at the beginning of our era and established themselves in *Punjab*. They established the *Kushan dynasty* which had close relations with China across the Karakoram pass.

The **Baluch** who originated in the Caspian Sea region and had migrated into the Kerman and Sistan provinces of Iran by the 8th century of the present era and later established the dynasty of Kalat in Baluchistan.

The Altaic-Turkish groups which estab-

lished the *'Mogul' dynasty* in India (14th century). The **British** were from *circa* 1550 in the Kolkata area and spread westward across the Sub-continent

The present-day descendants of these peoples are: (1) Dalits and indigenous people in India; (2) Sindhis and people near Multan; Burushaski speakers of Chitral, Hunza; Pandits and others of Kashmir etc.(3) Tamils; (4) Hindus and speakers of Indian languages such as Bengali; (5) Punjabis of Pakistan including Sikhs; (6) Baluch . There are continuing tensions between 1+4; 2+5; 3+4 (Singhalese); 4+5; 5 + 2/6.

If we believe in 'first come', first served' ethic the Dalits should be treated better by the Indians; Sindhis and people of Kashmir and the Karakoram should be treated better by the Punjabis; Tamils should be treated better by the Singhalese; Hindus should be treated better by the Punjabis, and the Baluch should be treated better by the British.

I have made a comparative study of Punjabi, 'Multan' and Sindhi languages with other proto-Asian and Siberian languages dating back 10,000 years (cf. my books: **Proto Religions in Central Asia**, Universitäts Verlag Dr. Norbert Brockmeyer, Bochum 1994 (Bochum Publications in Evolutionary Cultural Semiotics No. 34); **The Asian Origins of Amerindian Religions** Universitäts Verlag Dr. Norbert Brockmeyer, Bochum 1995 (Bochum Publications in Evolutionary Cultural Semiotics No. 37); **Old Eurasian and Amerindian Onomastics** Universitäts Verlag Dr. Norbert Brockmeyer, Bochum 1997 (Bochum Publications in Evolutionary Cultural Semiotics No. 38).

It appears that Sindhi, Multan as well as Bengali, and other Indian languages, follow the *'Yukaghir'* model (an ancient language spoken by western Siberian peoples) whereas Punjabi language follows the *'Samoyed'* model. These two - somewhat independent of each other - Siberian languages preserved old terminology and their branches have entered South Asia - the *'Yukaghir'* type, say, since 10,000 years ago, whereas the *'Samoyed'* type since only about 2000 years ago. Comparisons of terminology between Yukaghir and Sindhi / Multan show many similarities whereas similar comparison between Koybal-type Samoyed terms with Punjabi show similar correspondences. Koybal Samoyedic language was spoken in the Minusinsk area in the upper Yenissei River valley in what is now the Russian Federation.

The explanation of the difference between Sindhi and Punjabi languages, in my opinion, occurs because southern Pakistan language descended from the original pre-Dravidian, pre-Indo-European ancient languages spoken around Turgay in western Siberia - the same language perhaps spoken in Mohenjo-Daro and Harappa ancient towns ('Yukaghir-type'). Punjabi language was spoken by a much later arriving people called *'Yueh-chi'* people. These were Koybal Samoyedic-speaking peoples who entered Mongolia and China from the north (upper Yenissei river basin), passed into Xinjiang, and were chased westwards by the 'Huns' (Han Chinese?) who named them the 'Yueh-chi'. Then they re-entered South Asia from the West and arrived in modern Punjab, and established the 'Kushan' dynasty around the beginning of the present era (*circa*. 2000 years ago). Their influence reached from Punjab across the Karakoram to Kashgar area in Xinjiang. From that time the 'Yueh-chi' people have dominated Punjab. Edwin Pulleyblank first introduced their history, calling these Minusinsk (upper Yenissei) peoples 'Tocharians'. (cf. Edwin G. Pulleyblank, « Why Tocharians? » in : **Central Asian and non-Chinese Peoples of Ancient China**. Ashgate Publishing Co. (Variorum Collected Studies Series) 2002, XII, p. 416.)

When India was divided into 'Pakistan' and 'India' in 1947 on the basis of religion, ethnic origins were almost forgotten and a European system of religious nationalism was introduced like the Reformation era ideal separating Roman Catholics from Protestants (probably the principal relevant 'model' known to the British). But the relation between the various groups in the Sub-Continent became all 'out of order'. Incoming groups have not treated the original groups with the consideration they deserve. Many of the problems in South Asia today can be partially explained by this lack of consideration and respect. Let us hope inter-ethnic respect and understanding will one day prevail. Outside powers, like the USA, Europe or China should also try to respect the inter-ethnic realities in South Asia. We should try to promote ethnic and cultural relations in the context of the *'first come, first served'* perspective which I have proposed above. Genuine respect of people's ethnic history, traditions and culture could reduce the present-day tensions in South Asia.

Charles Graves writes for Liberation

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