

L i b e r a t i o n

Journal of **Liberation** formerly the *Movement for Colonial Freedom* Winter 2020

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Formerly the Movement for Colonial Freedom, Liberation was founded in 1954. Today Liberation campaigns for peace, economic justice, equality and human rights

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Post election apocalypse?



A CLEAR OUTCOME of the UK general election is that the Manifesto of the Labour Party, which for the very first time seemed to be promoting an independent foreign policy in the interests not just of Britain but the citizens of the world, will not now be implemented.

It said that international peace and security would be a “primary objective” since “Britain deserves better than the Conservatives’ reckless approach to complex global challenges or the outsourcing of UK foreign policy to US President Donald Trump.”

Referencing “failed military interventions in countries like Libya”, which have worsened security across North Africa, accelerating the refugee crisis”, Labour under long-time friend of Liberation, Jeremy Corbyn, would have trail-blazed “a New Internationalism”. A War Powers Act would have ensured no prime minister would again bypass Parliament to commit to conventional military action.

Sadly, no audit of the impact of Britain’s colonial legacy will now be conducted, unless Liberation starts a project to create understanding of Britain’s contribution to “the dynamics of violence and insecurity” across regions previously in sway to the Empire. Whether there will ever be a British apology for the Jallianwala Bagh massacre is left in the air. The people of the Chagas Islands remain in limbo and the rights of the people of West Papua and the Western Sahara go unrecognised. With no inquiry into complicity over rendition and torture, we must continue fighting for international justice the best we can.

The Conservative Manifesto viewed Britain as “a force for good”, with strong Armed Forces and a willingness to use

them all being “reasons for the UK to hold its head high”. Did the Conservatives perhaps run past Greta Thunberg their claim to have “driven the agenda” on fighting climate change? Doubtful, probably, especially given their refusal to honour the convention on the rights of the child due to their ideological commitment to domestic corporal punishment. Ms Thunberg and 15 other children have recently filed a sample legal complaint against some countries of failing to take action on climate change, in violation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Yet, apparently, ‘Getting Brexit Done’ will allow Britain to do more on the international stage, championing a “rules-based” approach by bolstering “NATO; the Commonwealth; Five Eyes; the G20; the G7; and the World Trade Organisation”, all economic, espionage, and military frameworks designed to keep the status quo. Other international initiatives involve “supporting the upcoming Commonwealth Games, UEFA European Women’s Championships and Rugby League World Cup – and we would back a potential UK and Ireland bid for the 2030 FIFA World Cup”, say the Tories. But “unlike Jeremy Corbyn, we will stand up to foreign countries that threaten the stability of Europe, or commit state-sanctioned murder on British soil”

Meanwhile, the world cartwheels into disaster. President Trump’s claim about growing Iranian control of Iraq might be dismissed as nonsense without the larger consequences involved. Although Washington’s anti-Muslim passport-ban purports to be about 9/11, none of the states from which the hijackers came are subject to the ban. The intent behind the list and the hostility to Iran increasingly looks to be to use anti-Shia sentiment to divide peoples. If Donald Trump thinks Latin refers to dance movement, no doubt Boris Johnson imbibed Caesar’s Commentaries on the Gallic Wars in his youth. It doesn’t take much knowledge of dead languages to work out that the playing fields of Eton have always resounded with the refrain ‘divide et impera’, or divide and conquer.

Breaking up larger concentrations of power into pieces that individually have less power may sound clever but it’s a dangerous game. A Sunni Arab war against Shia forces in the Middle East would surmount all national borders. An alliance between imperialism and the Sunnis, cosied up to by Israel, is the greatest danger to world peace, with Sunnis making up 90% or more of the populations of Egypt, Jordan and Saudi Arabia. Shia constitute about 10% of all Muslims and globally.

The interests of the US military-industrial complex and the oil and transport lobbies, together with their allies in Britain, in motivating this burgeoning strange alliance may be well aware of much speculation over the impending global crash in 2020, now coming in thick and fast, led by investment bank, JPMorgan – sparked by automated trading systems. *Forbes Magazine* says: “2020s Might Be The Worst Decade In U.S. History – triggered by contagion from a global credit crisis.” The chief economist at Moody’s Analytics, has said that “2020 is a real inflection point”.

Global stimulus packages are coming to an end, inflation is coming, trade disputes will create a drag on economies and interest rates are now on a rapid upward trajectory. A slump can only be avoided by going to war. Unquestionably, for billions of people the medicine is much worse than the illness. But, for the elite, things are different. It was Albert Einstein who said he didn’t know what weapons World War III would be fought with; but he was sure “World War IV will be fought with sticks and stones”.

254 armed conflicts have been fought since 1946, of which 114 are classed as wars, defined as more than one thousand battle-related deaths per annum. Right now, long-standing wars continue in Afghanistan (42,000 fatalities in 2019), Yemen (21,000), Syria (12,000). 10,000 people were killed last year in conflicts in Somalia, Libya, Iraq and Kurdish populated areas of Turkey. Are we not entitled to ask what the price of war in 2020 will be? ■



Middle East – political uncertainty continues

The assassination of the commander of the Islamic Revolution Guard Corps, Qasem Soleimani, has sparked a further round of uncertainty in the Middle East and brought the danger of increased conflict closer. **Jane Green** assesses the current situation.

THE DEATH TOLL following the assassination, by the United States, of Islamic Revolution Guard Corps (IRGC) commander, General Qasem Soleimani, currently runs at over two hundred, with over 60 civilians being crushed in scenes of grief at Soleimani's funeral and 176 deaths in the shooting down of the Ukrainian civilian airliner, which the Iranian regime has admitted was a tragic mistake.

Neither of these events would have taken place without the assassination of Soleimani and both are examples of the unintended consequences which can follow on from significant political and military decisions.

The official Iranian regime response to the assassination has been strangely

muted, with a relatively low-key rocket attack on US air bases inside Iraq, with no reported casualties. Sources inside Iran indicate that the Iranians had alerted the US in advance of the strike, allowing all US and Iraqi personnel to be evacuated well in advance. Given the public outpourings of grief on the streets of Iranian cities and the expressions of vengeance from the regime's leaders, Iran's action so far does not appear to be proportionate to Soleimani's status.

Following the "missile attack" Iranian Foreign Minister, Javad Zarif tweeted that Iran had responded, indicating in effect that the issue was settled.

This contrasts to the Iranian response less than a week earlier when Iran's Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, had said that "severe revenge awaits the criminals" behind the attack and three days of national mourning were announced. At that time Javad Zarif called the attack an "act of international terrorism", going on to say that,

"The US bears responsibility for all consequences of its rogue adventurism."

On an official level, it appears that the Iranian side has secretly conceded to the US. However, there may be more to come. Iran has a range of options for action across the region, through allies

such as Hamas and Hezbollah for example, which may result in further responses taken at arm's length from the regime itself.

While political assassination as a tool of foreign policy is not a new tactic for the US, the assassination of Soleimani still came as a shock to the Iranian regime and a blow to its adventurist foreign policy in the Middle East. With responsibility for the IRGC Quds Force, in charge of overseas operations, Soleimani was instrumental in extending Iranian influence throughout the region, across Iraq, into Syria and in Lebanon and Yemen. His military and tactical acumen is widely credited with having turned around the prospect of a Western led victory in the war of intervention in Syria.

Soleimani, was the loyal servant of a theocratic dictatorship, unpopular with its own people, as recent demonstrations in November 2019 against corruption and political cronyism across Iran illustrate. The Iranian regime will never admit it but his assassination came at a time when uniting the country against a foreign enemy could have been a useful distraction from domestic pressures.

At least 7,000 people have reportedly been arrested in 28 of Iran's 31 provinces since mass protests broke out on 15th November, prompting UN High



Commissioner for Human Rights, Michelle Bachelet, to state that she is, “extremely concerned about their physical treatment, violations of their right to due process, and the possibility that a significant number of them may be charged with offences that carry the death penalty, in addition to the conditions under which they are held.”

Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) chief commander, General Hossein Salami, suggested that the protests across Iran were conducted by “thugs” with the backing of the US, Israel and Saudi Arabia. Salami went on to link the protests to the US policy of “maximum pressure” against Tehran, following the US withdrawal from the 2015 nuclear deal with Iran last year. Khamenei, has talked of a “dangerous conspiracy” implicating the US, Israel and Saudi Arabia.

Such assertions, while completely false, have become the regime’s default position when faced with protests against its policies of extreme austerity, resulting in unpaid wages, hunger, routine discrimination against women and university students facing an uncertain future.

While the regime may have been hoping that the death of Soleimani would provide a distraction from domestic pressures, the shooting down of the Ukrainian passenger aircraft, with

significant loss of life, has refocused the Iranian people upon the incompetence of the regime.

On Saturday, 11th January massive demonstrations by university students took place in Tehran and other key cities, in protest against the IRGC forces shooting down the plane killing 176 passengers, 147 of them Iranian, on their way to Europe and North America. The Iranian authorities had for three days falsely claimed technical difficulties as the cause of the crash. However, early on Saturday morning they announced that an IRGC air defence system had shot down the airliner minutes after leaving Tehran international airport. Protesters were calling for the regime’s resignation.

The recent wave of internal protests were sparked by the withdrawal by the United States from the 2015 nuclear deal. This was swiftly followed by tighter sanctions upon Iran, resulting in increased pressure upon the domestic economy. This has especially hit the financial sector where exclusion from the US international interbank payment system, SWIFT, has led Tehran to look to link with alternative systems in China and Russia.

Oil sales continue, primarily to Syria and China in order to generate income for the regime. Iran has also upped the ante by participating in joint naval drills with Russia and China in the Indian Ocean in late December.

From an Iranian point of view, pre-eminence in the Shia Muslim world is paramount and the networks established through Soleimani have been instrumental in maintaining an Iranian regional presence, in the face of the Sunni Muslim pressure from US backed Saudi Arabia, as well as providing a bulwark against threats from Israel.

The assassination of Soleimani followed a sequence of events going back to the 27th December, when an Iranian backed Shia militia attacked an Iraqi military base, killing a US contractor. Reports from the US indicate that Secretary of State, Mike Pompeo, suggested the killing of Soleimani at that point but the tactic was rejected in favour of air strikes against the militia responsible for the attack.

The air strikes led militia supporters to attack the Green Zone in Baghdad’s diplomatic quarter, overrunning the gated US embassy compound, before Iraqi forces arrived to break up the intrusion. It would seem that the event

was sufficient for Pompeo to win over Trump to his viewpoint and Soleimani’s fate was sealed.

The political balance in the region, already precarious, has become even more volatile since Soleimani’s death.

Iran is using the opportunity to call for the complete withdrawal of US troops from the region, a demand echoed by the Iraqi Parliament, but one with which the US is unlikely to comply. An estimated 5,500 US troops are in Iraq and the US is in negotiations with NATO about an increased non-US NATO contribution. This is added to the fact that the United States has moved 14,000 additional troops to the Gulf region in the past year.

Much has been made of Iranian proxies in the region but, in Saudi Arabia and Israel, the US has proxies of its own who could inflict potentially severe damage upon Iran.

On the Iranian side of the scales there must be added the support of Russia, expressed militarily in its intervention in Syria, and that of China, which continues to provide an economic outlet for Iranian produce.

However, the volatility of US foreign policy, the ideological objectives of Saudi Arabia and Israel, and the geopolitical ambitions of Russia, do not lend themselves to any degree of certainty. Added to that the increasingly unstable position of the theocratic dictatorship in Iran, under intense pressure from its own people for democratic change, will continue to be a major factor for instability in the regional balance. Resistance to US troops in Iraq continues to be an issue, political instability in Lebanon continues and the ability of the Syrian people to recover from seven years of war will, no doubt, continue to be tested.

Much of this uncertainty however is due to the pressure for democratic change coming from the people of countries suffering under dictatorships of one form or another, such as Saudi Arabia and Iran, or suffering under US occupation or influence such as in Iraq.

The Middle East remains a complex web of alliances in which there is no obvious or easy route to navigate. However, solidarity with the people of the Middle East, in their efforts to reshape their nations and the region in their interests, rather than those of Western corporations or the military industrial complex, will be more vital than ever in the coming period ■



IRAQI UPRISING

Fight for democratic change and peace

The popular uprising, the broadest movement for decades in Iraq, is continuing unabated despite bloody repression.

THE NUMBER of protesters brutally killed by security forces, militias and shadowy armed groups has exceeded 500 people. The real figures for the death toll are expected to be higher. The number of the wounded is more than 25,000. Tens of activists have been assassinated, abducted and the fate of many of them is still unknown. Despite this vicious onslaught and mass killings, the uprising has been overwhelmingly peaceful. It is a testimony to the resilience of the young protesters who have risen up courageously against a corrupt oligarchy and sectarian politics that have stolen their lives and future and plundered their homeland. Their burning desire for radical change and a better Iraq, for a civil democratic Iraq and social justice, has been encapsulated by the slogan: 'We Want a Homeland'.

New Big Challenge

The Uprising is now facing a new big challenge and a crucial phase ahead that could have a decisive impact on its outcome and the whole political scene. The dangerous developments in recent days, with the military escalation between the US and Iran taking place on the territory of Iraq, flagrantly violating its national sovereignty, have pushed the region to the brink of yet another devastating war. This situation constitutes a grave danger to peace in the Middle East and the world. The Iraqi people have experienced the horrors of war several times in recent decades, as a result of the criminal adventures of Saddam's dictatorship, including the Iraq-Iran war that lasted 8 years during the 1980s and the invasion of Kuwait in 1990, followed by the US war, invasion and occupation in 2003. They also suffered the disastrous consequences of more than a decade of harsh international economic sanctions.

Democratic forces and protesters have strongly condemned the violation of Iraq's national sovereignty by both the US and Iran. They have also declared their opposition to turning Iraq

into an arena to settle accounts and implement tit-for-tat revenge operations between the two sides. The Iraqi people and youth should not become cannon fodder for a war with which they have nothing to do. This position was clearly expressed in mass demonstrations, rallies and sit-ins during recent days, as expressed by the slogan "No to the US .. No to Iran".

Every effort must be therefore be made to spare both Iraqi and Iranian peoples the scourge of international and regional conflicts. These conflicts should be defused and settled by peaceful and diplomatic means, by respecting international laws and norms and ensuring peace and security. Every people have the right to decide their own destiny with their own free will, without threats and external interference.

The bitter experience of the Iraqi people over more than three decades of dictatorship and wars prove beyond any doubt that only a truly democratic regime can guarantee peace and social progress, strengthen national unity and protect national sovereignty and independence.

It is therefore fundamentally

important in the current situation in Iraq and the area to reiterate the vital lesson drawn from past bitter experience that the struggle for democracy is closely interconnected with the struggle for peace. It is especially a vital lesson and a guide of action for the Uprising, to face up to the warmongers, who themselves are also responsible for the massacres against the protesters, and to defeat the attempts to stir up division and infights and divert attention from the main objectives of the Uprising.

Resignation of PM

A significant victory was achieved when the Prime Minister Adel Abdul Mehdi was forced to announce his resignation on 29th November 2019. It was one of the urgent demands of the participants in the uprising, mainly young people seeking deep political change, by getting rid of the corrupt political system, based on sectarian-ethnic power-sharing, that was installed after the US invasion and occupation in 2003. But the resignation only came after another massacre committed by the security forces and militias against peaceful protesters in the southern city of Naseriyah (Thi Qar province) and the city of Najaf when tens of people were killed.

The resignation of the Prime Minister, however, was considered only a first step that was necessary to start implementing a roadmap that leads to defeating the corrupt system, dismantling the “deep state” and achieving the alternative: a civil democratic state based on citizenship and social justice.

Roadmap

The roadmap put forward by the protesters called for setting up a transitional government with exceptional powers that would prepare for early elections within a period of no more than six months. It also called for selecting a new prime minister based on specific criteria: patriotism, competence, integrity, independence. He/She must not have previously held a ministerial or legislative post. This selection must not be influenced by the infamous quota system, regional and sectarian tendencies and narrow partisanship. The Prime Minister-designate would form the transitional government of national figures who are competent, impartial and known for their integrity. They should be independent of the political parties and blocs that have been in

power after 2003. Women and youth must be represented in this government.

Preparing for new elections, as envisioned by this roadmap, requires the legislation of a new democratic and fair electoral law, as well as a new High Electoral Commission which is truly independent. In addition, the Law on Political Parties must be amended to ensure a democratic political life, preventing the possession by political parties of armed wings and ensuring transparency in their financial sources.

One of the urgent tasks of the new transitional government would also be bringing to justice the perpetrators of the mass killing of protesters. All restrictions on the media must be lifted and the constitutional right to assembly and freedom of expression must be respected. Arms must be put under the control of the state and militias must be outlawed. In addition, urgent social and economic measures are needed to combat rampant corruption, tackle the high unemployment especially among the young, rebuild the national industry and deal with the crises in health, education and housing.

But the dominant blocs in parliament, representing those in power, have obstinately refused to comply with the will of the people and the legitimate demands of the Uprising. They resorted to political manoeuvres, coupled with escalating repression, in order to maintain their positions and privileges. The parliament passed an amended electoral law that effectively ensures the recirculation of the corrupt political groups. Furthermore, they put forward their own nominations for the new prime minister, all of whom were part of the same corrupt and sectarian parties or closely connected to them. The aim is to prevent the formation of a new transitional government and prolong the life of the current caretaker government, while escalating the repression.

These political ploys were exposed by the participants in the uprising, and all such nominations were firmly and openly rejected at mass rallies and demonstrations every Friday and by daily sit-ins in Tahrir Square in Baghdad and other provinces.

Meanwhile, the campaign of repression against the uprising has intensified to unprecedented levels during recent weeks. The number of protesters brutally killed by security forces, militias and shadowy groups has exceeded 500 people. The real figures

for the death toll are expected to be higher. The number of the wounded is more than 25,000. The figures released by government agencies indicated that more than 50,000 people had been detained and later released. But the fate of many is still unknown and there is deep concern about the ‘disappeared’.

Assassinations and Torture

Assassinations and kidnapping of activists have become a daily occurrence, carried out by militias and unknown assailants, with the aim of terrorising the protesters and suppressing the uprising. Journalists and media people have been increasingly targeted. On 10th January, two reporters of an Iraqi TV station, Ahmed Abdul-Samad and Safa’Ghali, were cowardly assassinated in Basra only one hour after covering an attack by security forces on a mass rally.

A number of protesters were abducted after leaving sit-ins in squares and subjected to torture by militias in coordination with some elements in the national security apparatus. They faced death threats and were forced to give “confessions” and sign pledges that they would not go back to the protests. Such practices and flagrant violations of human rights and basic freedoms guaranteed by the Constitution are reminiscent of the days under fascist dictatorship and occupation.

Appeal for International Solidarity

Despite several reports by the UN representative in Baghdad, and international human rights organisations, exposing the horrific crimes committed against the protesters, they have continued and increased. It is therefore an urgent demand that a special mission is sent by the UN Human Rights Commission to Iraq to investigate these crimes. The Iraqi authorities and the present caretaker government, and its head who is also Chief-in-Command of the Iraqi armed forces, must be held fully responsible and accountable for the escalating repression and bloodshed.

A magnificent example of the spirit of defiance and determination to continue the uprising despite the enormous challenges it is facing, due to both internal and external factors, was the huge turnout for mass demonstrations in Baghdad and other major cities on 10th January 2020. It marked 100 days since the Uprising erupted on 1st October 2019 ■



Resisting Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh and BJP's Hindutva ideology

Joginder Bains

The Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) was created in 1925 on the ruins of Hindu Mahasabha by Dr K.B. Hedgewar who was inspired by the works of Vanaik Damoder Svarker. They both admired the Fascist leaders like Mussolini in Italy and Hitler from Germany. Ever since its formation RSS have been arguing for Hindu Nationalism without which the interests of the Hindus could not be served or protected. It regards Islamic rulers as colonisers equal to the British Colonial Rulers. RSS advocates and promotes the two - nation theory building Hindu nation; the fundamental of which will be Hindu supremacy where Muslims would be driven into subservient status.

On 15th August 1947 India achieved national Independence. Indian Masses rejected Hindutva ideology instead they chose to embrace and strengthen secular democratic Republic of India. RSS was defeated at every election until its political arm BJP gained power in 1999 and served full term. Though suffered a miserable defeat in 2004, BJP remained a primary opposition party for the following ten years. It regained power with landslide victory in 2014 and again in 2019 it won General election with even larger majority.

Bewildered Indian public could not comprehend BJP victory in 2019. They could see the clouds of danger in the horizon, experience of which in the previous five years, was still fresh and wounds of tyranny to Muslims and other minority communities were raw in their psyche. BJP's Hindutva rhetoric forced them to take position of second-class citizens. On the pretext of cow meat lynching of Muslims, Dalits and Adivasi have been taking place with full

connivance of the Government and law enforcing agencies. Private vigilante groups of RSS have been terrorising communities and individuals, murdering many activists, artists and writers while many others have been shut in jail or put under house arrest. Any dissent is being advocated as treason.

Narinder Modi, and Amit Shah, under the guidance from their masters, RSS, have been sending a clear message to the Muslims that they were welcome to remain in Hindu India only if they were prepared to accept Hindu supremacy or reconvert into Hindu religion – Ghar wapsi (return home). The RSS believes that many of its ancestors were forcefully converted into Islam by Muslim Colonial rulers.

Since 2014 millions of Indians, due to BJP's economic policies, have been pushed into extreme poverty, unemployment is reaching an unprecedented level. The nation has still not recovered from demonetisation in 2016 when 100 people lost life queueing at the banks in extreme weather to exchange their hard - earned money. Financial and motor industry have been hit the hardest resulting in the small dependent business shutting for good. Public funds have been reduced to such an extent that the state services are struggling to meet the demands and to maintain standards. National GDP has declined from 8% seven months ago to current 4.5%. Declining urban and rural income resulted from high unemployment has reduced people's buying power and lowered the living standards. Many industrialist and farmers, unable to manage the burden of heavy debts, are committing suicide. Under such an economic downturn, foreign investors are not forthcoming to invest in India. Modi's "Make in India" scheme has miserably

failed. Instead of fixing the economic problems the nation is facing, Modi Government is busy diverting public attention to Hindu/ Muslim debate.

The events in the state of Jammu and Kashmir is part of the anti-Muslim stance arguing that Muslims are not inherently citizens of India. The repeal of articles 370 and 35a in Kashmir has taken away its special status of nationhood. It is a betrayal of the pledge given to the Kashmiri people when they rejected theocratic state of Pakistan and decided to join the secular Indian republic. One nation, one religion and one language theory are promoted to harass minorities and diverse communities. As such people of Kashmir have been deprived of freedom of speech, press and protest that reminds us the black days of British Rowlett Act. All communication modes and transport services are shut depriving them to travel, hold their jobs, run business, go to schools/ colleges, or access medical services. Kashmiri people are being suffocated in the open jail created by the BJP Government. All leaders of the opposition Parties including three formal Chief Ministers were put in jail or under house arrest who have recently been released. BJP Government wants to enjoy the heavenly beauty of Kashmir valley free of the Kashmiris that remind us Palestine sieged under Israeli administration. Reducing Kashmir to union territories along with months of lockdown has made India lose its democratic sheen at world level.

Narinder Modi, Amit Shah and the BJP Government are working under auspicious of their Hindu Fundamentalist gurus, RSS, to transform Democratic and secular fabric of India into a Hindu Nationalist State that will have no place for religious and communal diversity; a state where Hindus will have the position

of supremo religious body and all the others will live at its mercy. It reminded us of the rise of Hitler. Equal to the Private armies like Brown Shirts in Hitler's Germany and Talebans in Pakistan, Hindutva advocates are busy terrorising Muslims and other minorities such as Dalit and Adivasi as well as any dissenters.

In order to fulfil its 2019 elections manifesto pledge to identify and expel all the illegal immigrants, the Home Secretary, Amit Shah, proceeded to conduct National Register of Citizens in Assam where lived a large number of refugees from Bangladesh. All citizens in Assam were required to produce documents to prove their right to citizenship. The results from the exercise proven to be opposite to the expectations of BJP Government. 1.9 million people were unable to produce required documents out of which 1.5 million turn out to be Hindus and 0.4 million Muslims have become stateless and have been moved into detention centres.

In order to protect the right to citizenship of all refugees escaping persecution in the neighbouring Muslim Majority countries, Bangladesh, Pakistan and Afghanistan, BJP Government has fast tracked the enactment of Citizenship (Amendment) Act 2019. The act amends the citizenship Act of 1955 providing path to citizenship to persecuted religious minorities who entered the country before 31st December 2014 and relaxes the residency requirements for naturalisation from 11 years to 5 years. Though in principle it appears to an appealing gesture, the argued logic is not consistent, the Act does not protect all minorities, nor does it apply to all neighbouring countries. For example CAA does not protect the Ahmadiyya Muslim sect and Shi'as face discrimination in Pakistan, Rohingya Muslims and Hindus face persecution in Burma and Hindu and Christian Tamils in Sri Lanka. With stroke of a pen legally settled Muslim migrants and refugees are being deprived of citizenship rights and their citizenship is being removed. The CAA clearly violates the section 14 of the Indian Constitution that protects right to equality to all persons. It is evil, racist and undermines the secular, democratic and diverse fabric of Indian society. Religious hysteria is created to hoodwink people creating polarisation of Indian Communities.

A vast majority of Indian people and most leading opposition Parties are

opposing tooth and nail the hurriedly passed CAA. More than 11 state chief ministers have opposed these sinister designs and have pledged not to implement it. On 31st December, Kerala Assembly has become the first legislature to pass a resolution against the amended changes in Citizenship Law and National Population Register. Backing the Kerala Assembly resolution, Punjab Chief Minister, Amarinder Singh, has stated that it is the voice of people which is against the legislation and the centre should pay attention to it.

The CAA, NRC, NPR and BJP's Hindu Nationalist Doctrine is criticised nationally and internationally. The UN Human Rights Chief, Michele Bachelet called the Act, "fundamentally discriminatory in nature and undermines India's commitment to international law and the Indian constitution." The BJP Government's anti - people's policies and its actions of baiting minorities especially Muslims has tarnished India's reputation of a largest democracy in the world.

Indian public resistance to CAA, NRC and NPR has spread every nook and corner of Indian society. Indian people are determined to defeat RSS and BJP Hindutva doctrine that is marginalising 14% of Indian Muslim population as well as the other poor sections of the Indian society. Refugees from all over the world have always been welcomed and accommodated in India. Indian people are angry at introduction of exception and exclusions based on faith.

Millions of Indians regardless of their religion, cast, creed, gender and age have taken to streets. The Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs, Jains, Buddhists and no faith groups are showing RSS and BJP the unity that shook the British Colonial rulers. As patriots they feel let down and angered that their great country, that led the way to diversity and tolerance, should act in such a manner. They are also angered by Hindu Fundamentalists, who played no role in the struggle for independence, are teaching them a lesson of patriotism and are undermining the Indian National heroes.

10s of thousands of women in Shaheen Bagh, New Delhi are sitting strong for the last 35 days sending a strong message to the BJP Government that they will return home only after the CAA is repealed. These are the women who have never participated in any type of protest or a dispute. They are being joined by many other groups from all over the country. Massages of solidarity are

coming to them from all over India and from all over the world. We salute our sisters in struggle at Shaheen Bagh.

Despite the tyranny applied by the state police, Indian masses are standing strong to BJP Government. Since the approval of CAA, 29 people have been killed and hundreds more have been injured by the police brutality. Police entered many houses, attacking residents and ransacking their properties. Students from Jamia Malia University were indiscriminately pulled out of the campus, library and hostels and were publicly beaten. Many protesters have lost limbs, eyesight and have had broken arms and legs. Same has been witnessed at the Jawaher Lal Nehru University where Akhil Bhartiya Vidyarthi Prishad (ABVP) masked goons entered with weapons seriously injuring students. Police arrived at the scenes only after the attackers had left the campus. Police aggression and violence by its goons has made Indian public and students more determined to encounter BJP Government. They are not only opposing CAA, NRC and NPR but resistance of Hindutva Ideology is their primary aim. They are resisting high unemployment, poverty, hunger, racism and fascism, and struggling for better education, working conditions, living wages, and pension. BJP Government are frightened of public uprising that has not been witnessed since the independent struggle.

Democracy, equality and peace - loving people globally are unitedly raising their voice. They fear the Hindutva dogma, if not stopped, will repeat the history of Nazi Germany of second world war. British public has also joined compatriots in India and in other countries to resist RSS-BJP led assault on Secular Republic of India. Since 18th December Britain has witnessed four protests and another one has been organised for 25th January 2020 from Downing Street to the Indian Consulate General.

Indian Workers' Association GB. Calls for a wider possible solidarity with the people of India to stop this tide of anti-Muslim acts National Democratic Alliance (NDA) Government enforcing their Hindutva ideology and advocating a very dangerous path to the two - nation theory. We appeal to all democratic and progressive people and organisations to support Indian people ■

Joginder Bains is General Secretary of the Indian Workers' Association GB



The two Pakistans

(Standfast) Manzoor Pashteen is a leading figure of PTM (Pashtun Tahafuz Movement, or Pashtun Protection Movement).

Here he outlines the anti-war movement's origins in the struggle for Pashtun civil rights, which emerged from mass protests in 2018 against police killings and state repression in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan. 35 million Pashtuns make up the largest single ethnic minority of Pakistan's 207 million population.

THE FIRST overthrow of a civilian government in Pakistan took place as early as 22 August 1947 with the country just a few days old. The dismissal of Dr. Khan Sahib's popularly elected North West Frontier Province government - today's Khyber Pakhtunkhwa - paved the way for military dictatorships that followed. This early political failure shows why a sense of historical perspective is needed to make a different Pakistan today.

On 30 September 1955 four provinces (Balochistan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Punjab, and Sindh) merged with several Tribal areas and smaller states to form West Pakistan, while East Bengal was renamed East Pakistan.

Pakistan's 'One Unit Policy' from 1955-70, sought to create West Pakistan as a counterweight to East Pakistan's Bengali majority in today's Bangladesh. The capital of West Pakistan moved from Karachi in Sindh to Lahore in the heart of Punjab. Punjabi dominance of the new state meant erasing the identity of other cultures and nationalities in West Pakistan.

When General Yahya Khan ended

the One Unit Policy on 1 July 1970, Pakistan's political outlook remained grim with martial law and weak civilian government overshadowed by military interventions, which continue up to the present day under Imran Khan's premiership.

In a recent speech to the UN General Assembly on 22 September, 2019 and in media interviews, PM Imran Khan has formally admitted that since the 1980s Pakistan trained Mujaheddin, Al Qaida and Taliban for jihad in Afghanistan.

According to Imran Khan, the CIA funded this training until the coming to power in Afghanistan of the Taliban. Khan admitted that joining the 'war on terror' after 9/11 has cost 70,000 Pakistani lives and \$150bn.

Pakistanis are grateful to the Prime Minister for these confessions, but he neglected to mention the victims' nationality. Almost all the 70,000 dead were Pashtuns from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan provinces. Likewise, the PM neglected to mention that almost the entire \$150bn came from the same sources.

Since birth Pakistan has been mired

in socio-political and economic crises; periodic martial law, wars with India, loss of 55 percent of the country's population following Bangladesh independence in 1971 and an estimated 90,000 Pakistani soldiers captured by India as prisoners of war. Rising poverty, unemployment and the unresolved national question should have led to investment and industrialisation, to develop our country's different nations.

Instead, Pakistan's rulers ignored the working class and promoted religion to enforce ideological unity, although religion is merely one facet of nationhood. The loss of 55 percent of her population threatened legal and political legitimacy, but represented an opportunity to forge a new social contract. Unfortunately, no efforts were made, nor lessons learned.

Ruling class arrogance, indifference and ignorance of consequences characterises Pakistan's mainly Punjabi civil and military establishment, which habitually resorts to strong-arm tactics. Military dictatorship and internal military operations to quell civil unrest from Balochistan in the 1970's to Khyber Pakhtunkhwa today, have made Pakistan a quasi-military state.

Punjabi dominance also created a deep state, invisible to most Pakistanis but controlled through US military aid, intelligence agencies, paramilitary Pakistan Rangers and police forces. In reality, Pakistanis are ruled with an iron hand through largely invisible power structures based in Punjab. This results in very different standards of justice and attitudes of the state and its organs towards Pakistan's nations and classes.

In October 1947, when 20,000 Pashtun tribesmen invaded Kashmir alongside Pakistan's armed forces conquering a third of Kashmir and Gilgit-Baltistan, with over 6,000 killed and 4,000 wounded, they were honoured as Pakistan's bravest patriots. When US-sponsored mujaheddin confronted Soviet troops in Afghanistan from December 1979 to February 1989, the land of the Pashtuns was used by Pakistan as a launch pad for jihad. The tribal belt was again crowned with the title of most hospitable and bravest defenders of Islam and Pakistan.

However, after 9/11 when Pashtun tribes refused to cooperate with the Pakistani state and its pro-US agenda, the army deployed aerial bombardment and heavy weapons in Pakistan's tribal

areas destroying homes, marketplaces and murdering innocent men, women and children. Many disappearances took place and tribal peoples' history, social, cultural and economic life were uprooted in Waziristan, Malakand and Swat Valley.

Pakistan's state controlled media defends and glorifies military operations against civilians and bans public debate on questions of nationhood and language. However, when the issue of Kashmir arises, the state opportunistically praises Pashtun bravery, since using Pashtuns for war and violence is settled state policy.

Since 2005 over 70,000 Pashtun Pakistanis have lost their lives, many of them elderly, women and children. Not a single case was publicly condemned by the state or media.

Compare this horrific statistic to the blanket coverage of several notorious killings in 2019 in Punjab. Salah ud Din, a young man with mental health problems was murdered in police custody. Zainab Ansari, a young girl was abducted, raped and murdered. Mohammad and Nabila Khalil, and their 13-year-old daughter Areeba were executed by police who were allegedly targeting a terrorist. These cases were treated with exemplary importance and state controlled media demanded justice for the victims. Such a media response only applies in Punjab, not to thousands of cases of police killings of Pashtuns, the nation to which I belong.

Instead of economic development and compensation for war-affected areas, the onslaught against Pashtuns intensified. The abduction and extra-judicial murder of Naqibulla Masood on 13 January 2018 in Karachi by a police superintendent, Rao Anwar, was a flashpoint that united Pashtuns in a historic protest. Even so, Rao Anwar went free. We were told the police superintendent is 'like a son' to Pakistan's ex-president Zardari. But how is it possible for the state to send ex-president Zardari to jail and yet permit Rao Anwar to remain free?

Last year Nasir Hussain from Kurram district (a Federally Administered Tribal Area in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province until 2018) also died from torture in police custody. Not a single report appeared in state controlled media.

When Anwar-ul Haq, a resident of Swabi was killed in a staged police shootout in August 2018, Pakistan's

state media also remained silent.

In Loralae district, Balochistan, Professor Arman Loni a supporter of our Pashtun Tahafuz Movement (PTM) was beaten to death by police during a protest rally against state terrorism. For two months, police not only refused to register the death, but also arrested those demanding a Fatal Injury Report on Arman Loni's case be officially registered.

In Peshawar, during a political rally Haroon Bilor, provincial spokesperson of the Awami National Party (ANP) and 22 other activists were murdered in a terrorist bomb attack, but no suspect was arrested nor any committee established to investigate the act of terrorism.

In November 2018, senior Pashtun police officer, Tahir Dawar was kidnapped in Islamabad, Pakistan's capital and most high-security city. His mutilated corpse was found days later in Afghanistan. Pakistan's official media and the state both treated this extraordinary event as relatively unimportant. The Prime Minister promised justice, but as of today, no committee of investigation has been set up.

A few months ago, the president of ANP in Peshawar district was murdered in broad daylight, without a word of condemnation from Pakistani state officials or media. Even more tragically on 26 May 2019 in North Waziristan military forces fired on a PTM protest gathering. 15 PTM supporters were killed and over 31 others injured in the Khar Kamar massacre. Mohsin Dawar and Ali Wazir, both elected National Assembly members were arrested, detained in prison and mistreated while their trial hearing was delayed.

Most tragic of all was the Taliban massacre of 149 people (including 132 schoolchildren) at the Army Public School in Peshawar on 16 December 2014. Incredibly, the Taliban mastermind Ehsanullah Ehsan arrested two years ago, is still held in army custody without any public trial.

Pashtuns are treated as mere statistics in police killings, or terrorist bombings in Pakistan. This ethnic cleansing of Pashtuns is a well-planned, but never admitted state policy. In North and South Waziristan, local houses were bulldozed in military operations against Taliban, leaving women and children without shelter and vulnerable in deserted villages.

Continued overleaf



Hegemonic competition v peace

Stavri Kalopsidiotou

THE PREVAILING situation in the wider region of the Eastern Mediterranean, the Middle East and North Africa is increasingly deteriorating. The creation and exacerbating the problems, unfortunately, there are not powerful states on the planet that insist on abolishing, disregarding and ultimately violating basic rules of international law that prohibit interference within states, in particular the use of aggressive force.

To the inability of the international community to peacefully respond effectively to the crisis that has plagued Yemen for some years now, the criminal tolerance to the illegal occupation of the Palestinian territories by Israel and the continuing violations of the human rights of the Palestinian people, the scant

combating of mass poverty that millions of people are suffering all over and in every corner of the world, we can also add the actions and omissions of powerful states that have turned Syria into a bloody theatre of geopolitical competition. At the same time, the aggressive actions of the United States in relation to Iran, having already withdrawn from the nuclear deal, have led to escalating tensions between the two states. Once again, as it seems factors interconnected with the domestic political climate in the US, which supplement the timeless goals of the US' foreign policy, are plunging humanity into dangerous adventures.

The geostrategic competitions and rivalries in the wider region are primarily intertwined with the efforts by powerful states to maintain and/or create new spheres of influence that, inter alia, will

secure them with a role in the division and exploitation of natural resources (natural gas, oil) and in the efforts by the powerful states in the region, namely Turkey and Israel, to maintain their supremacy. The multiple benefits which these states have always aspired to from the direct or indirect control over the region have led to numerous military interventions and attempts to replace regimes not under their control, precisely just as in the case of Syria where millions of people have been displaced and forced to become refugees in a confrontation of foreign interests and the de facto dismemberment/disintegration of the country into spheres of influence.

The situation that exists in Libya is also similar, with the responsibility of NATO and the international community for the bloody tightening of the grip threatening to undermine the hope for



are forcing Pashtuns out of their villages making them Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) facing food and other insecurities.

In 2009 army operations in Malakand forced three million people to become IDPs. Punjabi Army personnel were deployed in a deliberate policy intended to sow fear and persuade Pashtuns to accept Punjabis as their masters, although thousands of Pashtuns are enlisted in Pakistan's army .

For Pakistan's state security agencies, our Pashtun Protection Movement (PTM) has committed a crime simply by sharing these facts with the people.

Despite PTM's demands for landmine clearance to protect civilians, particularly children, the state refuses to acknowledge this as a human rights issue.

PTM demands that the thousands of Pashtuns arrested by intelligence agencies be brought to court, or released. But for the state all is fair in love and war.

PTM has demanded fact-finding and conflict resolution commissions, but the state arrests and imprisons elected National Assembly members Ali Wazir and Mohsin Dawar. When National Assembly members from central Punjab and Sindh provinces were released from prison in 2019 to attend a parliamentary session, Mohsin Dawar and Ali Wazir were refused release.

In Khyber Pukhtunkhwa almost all industrial zones have stopped work. Factory buildings lie deserted leaving skilled workers without the means to live with dignity. Government employees' salaries remain unpaid. PTM is demanding compensation for those

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The two Pakistans

More than 8,000 young Pashtuns have been picked up by Security Agencies. Many are still held in custody. Local markets have been destroyed, schools and colleges closed for several years. These actions by Pakistan's Army



peace. Even the recent Berlin conference on the future of Libya has been a reflection of the international situation in recent years. That is to say, foreign countries, depending on their country's particular interests and power, are dividing states and spheres of influence over the country's ravaged territory in the absence of its very people. The failed imperialist interventions of foreign powers in Libya, as well as in Syria, have brought havoc, civil war, destruction and the collapse of whatever state structures. This is also a reality that exposes the European Union too, which remains a supporter of these interventions without having drawn any lessons from its own nightmarish past.

Cyprus is also part of the very same complex contradictions and competitions that are developing with the powerful states of the world leading the way. Parallel to the recent discovery of natural gas deposits in the Exclusive Economic Zone of the Republic of Cyprus, the efforts of the United States to create the conditions for fostering their influence have intensified. Unfortunately, in cooperation with the current government of our country, the deepening of US

influence as reflected in the EastMed Act is being promoted, without any preconditions being created for a solution of the Cyprus problem. Instead, this is all about exporting the interests of the US, by promoting the creation of an arc of military and energy cooperation that invests in the contradictions, while at the same time aiming at the exclusion of the Russian Federation and at the creation of conditions for the control of the region by the US and NATO.

These are machinations that in no way whatsoever promote the creation of bridging policies between all the states in the region, which unfortunately are having a negative impact on the prospects for a solution of the Cyprus problem as well. Particularly when competition on energy in the region as it currently being driven by the US (and Israel too), together with the participation of Cyprus and Greece on the one hand and Turkey's illegal reactions on the other may further complicate the already difficult situation on the ground. The fact that the US, as a distraction to Russia-Turkey relations, is trying to forge an alliance between the US-Israel-Cyprus-Greece is particularly dangerous for the prospects of the solution of the Cyprus

problem. Indeed, when one takes into account the situation in the wider region, it is clear that these plans are exacerbating the precarious conditions in general that are prevalent and are primarily victimizing the peoples of the region.

In conclusion, what is taking place demonstrates the following. Namely, that the only way to solve the problems is first and foremost for the mighty of the world to abandon the hegemonic competitions around what they perceive as some geopolitical chessboard. Today, as humanity must come together to tackle the existential threat of climate change, the chessboard of contradictions must at long last be abandoned and preconditions be created for sincere understanding and cooperation for the peaceful resolution of disputes, with respect to the particular interests of every people within the framework of international law and for the salvation of the global common home of all people which today is in danger. ■

Stavri Kalopsidiotou is a member of the Central Committee of AKEL, the Progressive Party of Working People of Cyprus

who suffer financially and materially.

The reality of two Pakistans is abundantly clear. The dangerous aspect of this state policy of control and subjugation of Pashtun land is that a Taliban operating under state control (so-called 'good Taliban') is reorganising from Waziristan up to Bunir. Targeted bomb blasts and kidnappings have started again.

Repression against PTM and Pashtun nationalist parties, while allowing terrorists to reorganise is the consequence of two Pakistans. Our Pakistan is full of misery, war, terror and violence. PTM rose up against this discriminatory policy and we will continue until this discrimination ends. Our demands are simple. We want peace on our land. We demand the state of Pakistan to stop turning our land into a factory of war.

PTM is committed to the principle that Pashtuns do not accept undemocratic, unconstitutional rule, nor do we accept the Taliban as representatives of the Pashtuns, or rulers of our land.

PTM demands the international community shows solidarity with the Pashtuns. The United Nations thus far has ignored the tragedy of the Pashtuns over the last 15 years.

Equally, progressive parties of the left, including Marxists, have not responded to our plight. International media organisations in the west cover events in the Middle East, but never our tragedy when Pakistan bombs its own people. It is time the international community (including the UN) demands that Pakistan rehabilitates the Pashtun people and compensates us for the damage inflicted by the state.

Pashtuns will never forget the tragedies of terrorism and atrocities committed during Pakistan's internal military operations. Our struggle continues for the elimination of the two Pakistans, so that all can live with honour, peace and prosperity as citizens of one Pakistan.

PTM plans further public protests to expose this invisible suffering. Pakistanis are rising up. As Pashtun philosopher, poet and politician Ghani Khan wrote, "Pashtuns are a rain-sown wheat: they all came up on the same day; they are all the same. But the chief reason why I love a Pashtun is that he will wash his face, oil his beard, perfume his locks and put on his best pair of clothes when he goes out to fight and die." ■

Manzoor Pashteen@ManzorPashteen



2019 AGM

LIBERATION'S Annual General Meeting was held on 26 October 2019 at the National Education Union's main hall in London. A good number of representatives from British trade unions and international campaigning organisations heard a welcome from Maggie Bowden, current general secretary, and Kelvin Hopkins MP, Chair, followed by speakers on a wide range of important world issues.

Jamshid Ahmadi, Assistant General Secretary of CODIR, spoke on the complex situation in Iran and the need to halt the drive to war and for opposition to economic sanctions in the interests of diplomacy and peace. Mr Ahmadi cautioned, "The very last thing this already hugely tense region needs are bellicose statements and warmongering regardless from which quarter!"

A speech by Nawal Moussa from the Palestine Committee for Peace and Solidarity followed but, sadly, Ben Jamal from the Palestine Solidarity Campaign was unable to make it at the last minute. Irving Huerta presented a video on the forced disappearance of students in Mexico.

Christine Blower, International Secretary of the National Education Union had been an international observer on the Mexican election. She addressed the meeting before lunch and later chaired the post-lunch session, which included a speech by Mick Whelan, General Secretary of ASLEF. Both spoke about their participation in a Trade Union Solidarity Mission to Palestine and their observations about the reality of life for Palestinians in the occupied territories.

A full analysis of the struggle against right-wing forces in Chile was presented by Dr Francisco Dominguez, a well-known campaigner for peace and progress in Latin America. A representative of the Kurdish in London spoke on the recent Turkish invasion into North East Syria and the tragic consequences this represents for the Kurdish people in Syria and peace in the region.

Kelvin Hopkins resumed the chair for the final AGM session dealing with motions. Resolutions on Sudan, Iran, Cyprus and Kashmir were carried without opposition, and an emergency motion on the Kurdistan area of Syria was remitted to the Central Council. This marked the final contribution to Liberation by Kelvin who has been a stalwart supporter of the organisation.

First elected as a Labour Member of Parliament for Luton North in 1997, in his youth, Kelvin was a semi-professional jazz musician. But most of his career prior to becoming an MP was spent within the trade union movement, at the TUC, NALGO, and Unison.

Finally, Peter Talbot, Treasurer of Liberation, presented the annual financial report for the year up to end of September 2019. The report was approved, and it was agreed that the Central Council membership and officer positions be rolled forward pro-tem until elections could be held in 2020. ■



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Kevin Courtney *Mary W. Boustad.*

Kevin Courtney and Dr Mary Boustad
Joint General Secretaries, National Education Union





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