



The new  
Palestine  
catastrophe

Dr Aqel Taqaz



Tanks don't  
fill lunchboxes

Peter Mertens MP



Kashmir crisis

Arun Kumar

# Liberation

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## For peace and justice.

### End the genocide! Recognise the State of Palestine!

Also inside: John Foster on British imperialism and the Middle East  
and Steve Bishop on the bleak outlook for the Syrian people

# editorial/Liberation

In Iran, Palestine, and throughout the Middle East, the key to peace and democracy is the recognition of the independence and sovereignty of nations. Britain needs an independent non-aligned foreign policy free of US diktats. In contrast, the current policy of the UK government rests on a dangerous axis portending a global disaster!

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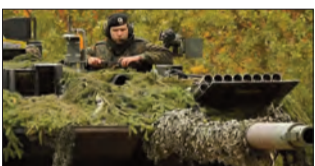
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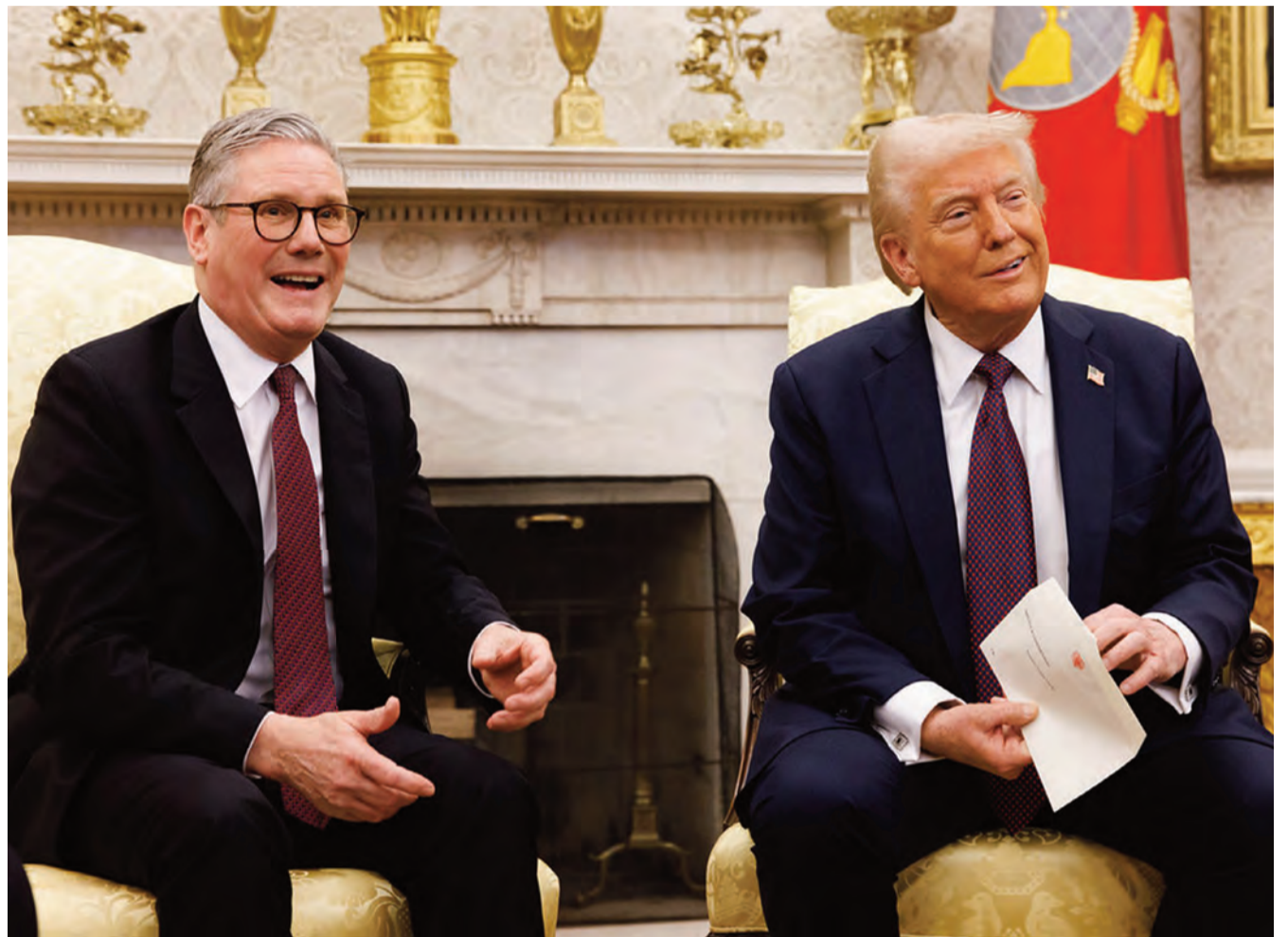


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Cover photo: Nicosia protest against Cyprus government's role in Gaza genocide



## Resist the Axis of Danger

THE DECISION OF the British government, together with its counterparts in Australia, Norway, Canada and New Zealand to impose sanctions on two far-right warmongering Israeli ministers is a welcome small step in support of the Palestinian people and their noble cause. It is, however, long overdue and should only be considered as a start in reversing the egregious entrenched complicity of the UK government in the Israeli genocide perpetrated against the people of Gaza.

The two ministers in question are notorious extremists who prop up the government of Israeli PM Benjamin Netanyahu who has been indicted by the International Criminal Court as one of the principal architects of the genocide. Ending trade with and vital military support for Israel - along with the breaking-off of diplomatic relations with the apartheid state, just as many countries did during the 1980s with then apartheid South Africa, is a wholly legitimate demand by all those who support the freedom and independence of the people of Palestine.

Liberation views the recent half-hearted retreats by Starmer's front bench as some of the fruits borne of the efforts of the hundreds of thousands of us across Britain who have persisted over the past dark 20 months to march and advocate for justice and peace, as well as a vindication of their principled stance that there can be no justification for standing by the ultra-right government currently in power in Israel and its perpetrating of crimes against humanity. We believe emphatically that history stands on our side!

Elsewhere Starmer is attempting to build another international coalition, but its aims are far from peaceful. Together with France and other European states he is pursuing a path of jingoism vis-à-vis the conflict in Ukraine by seeking to create an anti-Russian alliance prepared for war, which could ignite worldwide catastrophe.

Liberation has consistently argued that the current drive to war in Ukraine, Gaza, Lebanon, Congo and Sudan is pushing the world towards a Third World War-type scenario. Sale of arms and military technology by the US, UK, France, Turkey, and other merchants of death and destruction has ensured these violent conflicts are continually expanding and that their tragedies are repeated over and over.

Sudan, in the heart of Africa, a country in the throes of revolutionary change just five short years ago, is now being made to bleed to death before the eyes of the world. The weapons are provided by the US via the UAE, Saudi Arabia, as well as by Iran and others.

In Congo, a war for to plunder the rich resources of minerals and rare compounds of this devastated African country has continued on for three decades now. This issue of Liberation Journal exposes the current war as one actively sponsored by imperialist countries in Europe and North America, rather than merely reflecting a local conflict with Rwanda.

Meanwhile, US President Donald Trump has issued new threats and deadlines against the theocratic dictatorship in Iran. His concerns are not the rights of the Iranian people, but to keep Iran subservient to US-Israeli geostrategic designs and interests in the region including the new Middle East Plan.

The world has already had a glimpse of the US' 'vision' with the December 2024 regime change in Syria, where Ahmed al-Sharaa, a wanted terrorist leader, was enthroned in power without any concern for the rights, wishes and wellbeing of the Syrian people.

Such brinkmanship in international relations is no substitute for open transparent negotiations which could serve to prevent further war.

In Iran, Palestine, and throughout the Middle East, the key to peace and democracy is the recognition of the independence and sovereignty of nations. Britain needs an independent non-aligned foreign policy free of US diktats. In contrast, the current policy of the UK government rests on a dangerous axis portending a global disaster!

Jamshid Ahmadi, Editor



# Liberation/news

Liberation's new parliamentary chair, Brian Leishman MP, stressed the importance of utilising the options which Parliament presented to raise questions regarding the position of the UK on international developments, as well as emphasising the need to continue building upon the positive relationships with trade unions and partner solidarity organisations



Liberation returned to UCU this year with a stall and engaged with delegates from the higher education union

## Warning over the New Right

Liberation condemned “the scourge of fascism in all its manifestations and forms, including its precursors and prototypes, as well as its natural companion, imperialism.” in a statement marking the 80th anniversary of the Victory over Fascism on May 9.

“We recognise the monumental importance of the Victory over Fascism 80 years later and the galvanising example it set for the

movements around the world struggling for peace, social and economic progress, and national liberation. We restate the importance of never forgetting the toll and sacrifice of that era, or overlooking the still-pertinent lessons and warnings it holds for the world of today and the future,” it stated.

It warned against “the evident and growing trend over the last 30 years of a New Right in the politics of several countries and increasingly

acquiring traction internationally.” It stated that it was “borne of the abject failure of Liberal Democracy – along with the closely associated models of neoliberal economics and an unfettered free market – to provide any real solution to the myriad challenges facing so many, enabling the scourges of extreme nationalism and religious fundamentalism to gain traction.”

Read the full statement at [liberationorg.co.uk](http://liberationorg.co.uk)

## Liberation AGM highlights need for peace to make progress

Liberation's Annual General Meeting took place in May with keynote speeches from Brian Leishman MP and Professor John Foster.

As the new Parliamentary Chair of Liberation, Mr Leishman emphasised the need to grow the numbers of MPs associated with the organisation's work, in order to develop a greater understanding of the importance of international solidarity.

Mr Leishman stressed the importance of utilising the options which Parliament presented to raise questions regarding the position of the UK on international developments, as well as emphasising the need to continue building upon the positive relationships with trade unions and partner solidarity organisations.

Professor Foster gave an overview of the history of Liberation,

established as the Movement for Colonial Freedom in 1954, stressing the ongoing importance of its role today as the world faces a new Cold War with pressure from the West on China and the Global South.

On behalf of the Liberation executive, Liz Payne, chairing the AGM, welcomed the contributions of both speakers.

“We have had some excellent input from our keynote speakers, which has underlined the significance of the work of Liberation to date and emphasised why we need to build our strength as we go forward”, she said. “I am confident that our influence and contribution to meeting the challenges of campaigning and international solidarity work, will continue to grow in the coming year.”

The AGM went on to adopt key motions on resuming talks on the

creation of a bizonal bicomunal federal Cyprus and the closure of British bases there; to support the peace struggle in Sudan; to continue to support the struggle of the Iranian people against theocratic dictatorship and foreign intervention under any pretext; and to strengthen the role of Liberation organisationally.

An emergency motion opposing the Israeli blockade of humanitarian aid to Gaza and the continued incursions of the Israeli Defence Force (IDF) was agreed unanimously.

The motion called for “the immediate cessation of all military cooperation and arms trade with Israel on the part of the British government”, as well as demanding that the British government “press for an end to Israel's blockade of food and medical assistance to the Palestinian people.”



## For train drivers, trade unions and the Labour Party since 1880

*‘I always enjoy reading Liberation, and ASLEF has supported the organisation since it was founded as the Movement for Colonial Freedom, in 1954.’*



**Mick Whelan** general secretary **ASLEF**  
**David Calfe** EC president **ASLEF**  
**ASLEF THE TRAIN DRIVERS' UNION**

## Liberation merchandise

[shop.morningstaronline.co.uk/collections/liberation-merch](http://shop.morningstaronline.co.uk/collections/liberation-merch)

Liberation T Shirt £20

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Liberation Hoodie £35



Liberation has updated succinct briefings on Iran, Sudan, the new scramble for Africa and the need for an independent foreign policy. Take a look and share with colleagues, friends and family members to enable better understanding of these issues from the perspective of Liberation's anti-imperialist and pro-peace, social justice and human rights stance. [liberationorg.co.uk/briefings](http://liberationorg.co.uk/briefings)

# Nakba/In focus

Against a backdrop of unrelenting bleakness - one that understandably portends fatigue as well as a sense of despair among progressives - a glimmer of hope is represented by the ongoing popular and principled solidarity campaigns with the Palestinian people and against war, genocide, and starvation. And in recognising this, the international progressive movement must redouble in its efforts

## The new Palestinian catastrophe

The Tel Aviv regime continues with its campaign of genocide and inflicted starvation in Gaza, brutal forced displacement of Palestinians in the occupied West Bank and expansion of illegal Israeli settlements there - all played out on television screens before the eyes of the world and under the nose of the international community. But the state of Israel and its backers cannot hope to sustain this approach in the longer term. Nor will the courageous struggling peoples of the region be cowed in the

face of continuing occupation, injustice, and menace indefinitely.



By **Dr. Aqel Taqaz**

Picture: Palestinian car set on fire by Israeli settlers 14 April 2024, Jordan Valley  
Wikimedia Commons



**O**VER THIS past month, the Palestinian people have solemnly commemorated the 77th anniversary of the Nakba [meaning "Catastrophe" in Arabic], which officially took effect on 15 May 1948 when the jurisdiction of the state of Israel was declared on Palestinian land - including more than half the area on which the state of Palestine was supposed to be established pursuant to Partition Resolution 181 issued by the United Nations on 29 November 1947.

Fast forward to when the Oslo Accords were signed in 1993 and many believed that a solution to the conflict was on the horizon, especially with the Palestinian negotiators having made a historic concession by agreeing to the establishment of a Palestinian state on less than half the area allocated by the 1947 partition resolution.

However, the reality was that the Israeli right used Oslo and its apparent goodwill as a smokescreen to forge ahead with its nefarious designs. Yitzhak Rabin, who signed the agreement on behalf of Israel, was promptly assassinated paving the way for the most extreme and right-wing currents in Israeli politics to make inroads to the corridors of power and, over a course of years, manipulate the political and societal consensus to their own ends - hastening Israeli society's slide towards extremism, even outright fascism - while obstructing and excluding any rational voice calling for moderation or restraint, let alone a political resolution with the Palestinian people and their legitimate representatives.

Despite more than a year and a half having passed since the beginning of the current Israeli onslaught against the population of the Gaza Strip, in the wake of Hamas' attack on 7 October 2023, the Tel Aviv regime continues with its campaign of genocide and inflicted starvation, as well as the brutal forced displacement of Palestinians in the occupied West Bank and expansion of illegal Israeli settlements there, all played out on television screens before the eyes of the world and under the nose of the international community.

Meanwhile, the so-called "leader of the free world" seemingly gives Israel a carte blanche to continue with its wanton carnage and ethnic cleansing, buffering it from any meaningful censure or sanction, at the same time as projecting grotesque visions of a Middle Eastern "Atlantic

City" built on the skulls and corpses of Palestinian children in Gaza.

Against this already nightmarish backdrop, Israel is preparing to implement the most bloody and heinous phase in its war of extermination against the people of Gaza, to empty-out and then occupy the territory's population centres and inflict a calculated campaign of mass murder against those civilians who remain - under the guise of "rooting out" and "eliminating" an already largely-defeated Hamas - as entailed by plans agreed with the Trump administration for the permanent displacement of the Gazans under the false slogan of "voluntary migration".

This catastrophe, the new Nakba, takes place amid a deafening silence on the part of the Arab, regional, and wider international community - other than mere utterances of and references to the need to uphold international law and resolutions. This despite Israel having never respected any such charter, law, resolution, or treaty since its very inception - nor having been materially brought to account for its many egregious and flagrant violations of them. No, the message to the state of Israel has essentially remained unchanged. That it may do its worst, unimpeded!

However, owing to the mounting pressure of ordinary public opinion in a number of Western countries, not least in Europe, there has been a perceptible shift in tone of the debate vis-à-vis Israel - and in turn one in the positions and rhetoric adopted by some high officials in those countries. However, this has not yet proceeded to the point it exercises any deterrent effect on Israel thereby compelling a halt to the genocide or the material provision of humanitarian aid to avert a famine in Gaza. Instead, alternative "aid implementation" mechanisms have been devised that exclude responsible international organisations, furnish private US corporations to reap a profit at the expense of the lives of Gazan children, and which ultimately accord with Israel's aim of ethnically cleansing the territory. Indeed, several humanitarian agencies of international repute have refused to partake in these mechanisms for precisely this reason.

While a body of opinion optimistically, or rather naively, hedged their bets on Trump's self-touted nous as regards the "art of the deal" - as well as his desire to secure an agreement to which

he can stamp his name and brand - to reach a breakthrough and bring about an end to the onslaught during his recent visit to the region, these hopes proved to be in vain. Trump's primary concern was the trillions he would raise in trade agreements, while the leaders of the countries he visited seemingly fell over themselves to bow to their imperial master rather than trouble themselves with issues pertaining to human dignity and lives, sovereignty, and the stability of the region.

Despite some initial optimism regarding the negotiations between the Trump administration and the Islamic Republic of Iran on the latter's nuclear program, the threat of an outbreak of war continues to loom amid renewed threats by Israel to launch an attack on Iran. This is something that could simply not take place without the US' green lighting and participation. Suffice to state that such a scenario would throw every equation as well as expose all countries and peoples of the Middle East to a major catastrophe, fallout, and lasting instability - the likes of which do not bear contemplation.

In the occupied West Bank, the situation is becoming ever more volatile by the day, as the Tel Aviv regime exploits the continuing fallout and instability from Gaza to wreak havoc through its occupying army laying siege to refugee camps, villages, towns and cities and enclosing them behind iron gates - the number of which has reached more than 900.

Regular violent incursions have resulted in the killings of hundreds of Palestinians in their own homes and neighbourhoods, as well as the displacement of many more - people who are already refugees.

Meanwhile, armed extremist settlers are given free rein to attack Palestinians, their homes, and properties in furtherance of Israel's wholly illegal colonisation of Palestinian territory. None of this is remotely hidden or obscured from the attention of the international community - it is in the open for all to see.

This continued and unrestrained creation of facts on the ground renders a solution based on international law and legitimacy increasingly unattainable. Israel is effectively killing the two-state solution - one accepted by the vast majority of UN General Assembly member states that observe and seek to uphold international law and the supposed rules-based order.

While the prevailing backdrop seems to be one of unrelenting bleakness at present - and one that understandably portends fatigue as well as a sense of despair among progressives - a glimmer of hope is represented by the ongoing popular and principled solidarity campaigns with the Palestinian people and against war, genocide, and starvation. And in recognising this, the international progressive movement must redouble in its efforts and resolve... For eventually they will bear fruit in the influencing of the powers that be in the Western countries that a continuation of the current situation is neither tenable nor in their material interests and that Israel must be accordingly reined in.

The bleak alternative is one of continuing grave and existential danger for all peoples of the long-volatile Middle East, including the people of Israel itself. The state of Israel and over backers cannot hope to sustain this approach in the longer term. Neither will the courageous struggling peoples of the region be cowed in the face of continuing occupation, injustice, and menace indefinitely.

**Dr. Aqel Taqaz** is co-ordinator for international relations of the Palestinian People's Party and a member of the secretariat of the World Peace Council.

This article is an abridged version of a longer piece to be published on Liberation's website in due course.

# Liberation hero/Sahbaa Al-Barbari

Mahmoud Darwish, the poet of Palestine, saw in Sahbaa Al-Barbari a relic of a bygone era, a "dinosaur" whose example had long vanished. Yet, to her fellow inmates within the harsh walls of Qanat prison, she was nothing less than "the breeze that softened the harshness," a testament to her enduring spirit



'The breeze that softened the harshness'

Sahbaa Al-Barbari was a Gazan woman who, despite societal pressures and political upheaval, clung to her communist ideals, a lone ember in a society increasingly defined by religious authority. The bearer of the carbuncle, the first communist activist and political prisoner in Palestine, Sahbaa remains a potent symbol of resilience, intellect, and an unyielding spirit that continues

to resonate, writes  
**Jamshid  
Ahmadi**



FROM THE sun-drenched alleys of old Gaza, a singular voice arose, a woman whose life echoed with a resonance unlike any other. Sahbaa Al-Barbari, a name that would become synonymous with unwavering conviction and quiet strength. Mahmoud Darwish, the poet of Palestine, saw in her a relic of a bygone era, a 'dinosaur' whose example had long vanished. Yet, to her fellow inmates within the harsh walls of Qanat prison, she was nothing less than "the breeze that softened the harshness," a testament to her enduring spirit.

Her story began in the 1930s, in the al-Daraj neighbourhood of Gaza Hashim, a place steeped in the scent of spices and the rhythmic creak of ancient olive presses. Here, young Sahbaa, with her brothers, would seek out her grandfather at his sesame mill, the air thick with the nutty aroma, a small hand reaching for his, a coin for her pocket before the school day began. This idyllic childhood, however, was soon fractured by the seismic shift of the Nakba. The sea brought with it waves of refugees, and young Sahbaa, alongside her grandmother, aunt, and mother, became a silent witness to their plight, their nimble fingers sewing clothes, their hearts offering what little solace they could. From that moment, the Palestinian cause etched itself onto her young soul, a defining mark.

Illness steered her family away from Gaza, towards the bustling metropolis of Cairo. There, within the walls of Princess Fawqia School, her intellect blossomed. The words of Mikhail Naima and Gibran Khalil Gibran opened new vistas,

igniting a thirst for knowledge and a broader understanding of the world. This intellectual awakening deepened when she enrolled in the Faculty of Literature at Cairo University, her focus settling on sociology. It was through her brother, Farouk Al-Barbari, that the seeds of political consciousness truly took root. She joined the Palestinian Students' Association, a crucible where her communist ideals were forged. A visit to a Palestinian refugee camp in Cairo with fellow students solidified her commitment, bringing the abstract realities of displacement into sharp focus.

Fate, it seemed, had a dramatic script in store. During the March 1955 uprising against the proposed settlement of refugees in Sinai, Sahbaa, along with other university students, visited the detainees in al-Qanater prison. It was there, amidst the stark reality of confinement, that she first encountered Mouin Bseiso. The poet, his eyes holding a depth that mirrored her own burgeoning convictions, inquired about her future. "I want to return to Gaza," she declared, her voice imbued with purpose, "because I want to benefit the female students and Palestinian society with what I learned." Within a year, their paths intertwined further, culminating in their engagement.

Returning to Gaza, Sahbaa embraced her calling as a teacher in the very school where she had once been a student. She envisioned herself as a catalyst for change, striving to cultivate the minds of young girls, nurturing their cultural awareness and instilling in them a profound sense of national identity. Her aim was to forge a new generation of women, equipped to champion the Palestinian cause. Yet, the political winds were shifting, and her communist beliefs soon cast a shadow over her aspirations.

Following the failed coup in Mosul in 1959, a wave of anti-communist sentiment swept across the Arab world, reaching even the Gaza Strip. The very students she sought to empower turned against her, their youthful voices chanting denunciations, their gestures laced with disrespect. The ensuing crackdown led by Nasser ensnared Palestinian communists in Gaza, and Sahbaa found herself imprisoned alongside her fiancé, Mouin.

Forty-two harrowing days in solitary confinement in a men's military prison followed. The walls echoed with the moans of fellow prisoners, the chilling sounds of dogs a constant reminder of the brutality inflicted just beyond her cell. This isolation was a torment in itself. Then came the transfer to the women's prison in Qanater, a place that, paradoxically, became a crucible of unexpected growth. Surrounded by Egyptian communist women – Engy Aflatoun, Thuraya Shaker, Jane Sedaros, and the actress Mohsena Tawfik – Sahbaa found camaraderie and intellectual stimulation. Jane Sedaros taught her English, while Sahbaa, in turn, shared the intricate art of Palestinian peasant embroidery and the flavours of her homeland, preparing Maqlouba and ingeniously transforming their meagre milk rations into buttery richness. These women became her companions, her teachers, and she, in their eyes, their "balm."

Upon her release, Sahbaa returned to a Gaza that had shifted. Rejection from neighbours and dismissal from her teaching post were harsh realities. Yet, her spirit remained unbroken. With

quiet courage, she faced a society that sought to ostracise her for her unwavering beliefs. Her life with Mouin took them from Gaza to Cairo, then Beirut, a nomadic existence dictated by the political currents, yet she remained the steadfast anchor of their family, creating a haven where Mouin could nurture his poetic gifts. To their close friends, she was the "unknown soldier" in the poet's life, her strength a silent force enabling his creative endeavours.

Najah Awadallah's documentary film beautifully captures the essence of Sahbaa's journey. Through evocative imagery – the gentle hues of sunrise and sunset, the changing seasons, the familiar streets of Gaza and Cairo – and the poignant voice of Souad Massi, the film weaves a tapestry of a life lived with fierce conviction. The director's initial struggle to separate Sahbaa's identity from that of her famous husband underscores the very essence of Sahbaa's story: a woman whose individual strength and unwavering commitment deserve recognition in their own right.

Sahbaa's initial reluctance to be the sole focus of the film, her insistence on the integral role of Mouin in her life, speaks volumes about her humility. Yet, as she delved into her archives, sharing faded photographs and yellowed clippings, she began to understand the power of her own narrative. The year spent recording her memories onto cassette tapes became the foundation for the film's structure, a testament to the richness of her experiences.

In the end, Najah Awadallah's perseverance ensured that Sahbaa Al-Barbari's story would not be lost to the relentless march of time. The film stands as a powerful testament to a Gazan woman who, despite societal pressures and political upheaval, clung to her communist ideals, a lone ember in a society increasingly defined by religious authority. Sahbaa, the bearer of the carbuncle, the first communist activist and political prisoner in Palestine, remains a potent symbol of resilience, intellect, and an unyielding spirit that continues to resonate.

Adapted from a longer Arabic language article by Tamer Fathy on Sahbaa Al-Barbari, dated 2012, and incorporating other sources of information.

Photo: With thanks for permission to publish from the family of Sahbaa Al-Barbari

## UNITE!

Come along to our discussion organised by the Campaign for Anti Racist Immigration and Nationality laws on **June 18, 2025 6.30PM**

We need to challenge the anti-migrant rhetoric and government policies.

The language used by the prime minister and other politicians is incendiary. Already people on work visas are victimised. Already people wait too long to get a right for British citizenship. Britain has many problems which won't be solved by attacking the most vulnerable.

**CHAIR**  
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Member of the European Roma Centre for Arts and Culture (ERIAC)

**OUR SPEAKERS**  
Harsev Bains Indian Workers Association  
Nadine Finch Snr Policy Fellow Uni of Bristol  
Luke Daniels President Caribbean Labour Solidarity  
Tony Conway Status Now Network  
Other speakers invited

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# Syria/analysis

Any energy the Syrian government had for reconstruction following the wars of intervention was sapped by the US block on UN development aid, Western sanctions and the regular bombing of civilian and military targets by Israel. It is little wonder that discontent simmered and laid the groundwork for the HTS takeover in 2024, an outcome the West may yet come to regret

**Stop This Terrorist**

**MUHAMMAD AL-JAWLANI**

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**Up to \$10 Million Reward**

Muhammad al-Jawlani, also known as Abu Muhammad al-Golani, also known as Muhammad al-Julani, is the senior leader of the terrorist organization, the al-Nusra Front (ANF), al-Qaeda's affiliate in Syria. Under al-Jawlani's leadership, ANF has carried out multiple terrorist attacks throughout Syria, often targeting civilians. The U.S. Government is offering a reward of up to \$10 million for information about al-Jawlani. Absolute confidentiality is assured and relocation may be available. If you have information, please contact the nearest U.S. embassy or consulate or info@rewardsforjustice.net.



Qaeda, in a \$1 billion programme, Operation Timber Sycamore. Britain's MI6 played its part, using its base in Cyprus to pass intelligence to CIA backed rebels. By 2012 the so-called Free Syrian Army had seized a number of Syrian towns and parts of the country's main cities.

In spite of the massive external intervention on the part of the so-called rebels the Syrian government, with assistance invited from Russia, not only withstood the bombardment but was beginning to bring about some stability to large parts of the country by 2018.

While the prospect of a united and peaceful Syria had certainly suffered massively following the wars of intervention waged since 2011, there was scope for a turning point in 2018. During the war the United Nations had delivered a programme of wartime humanitarian aid, to a country which had seen 600,000 dead and over half of its 23 million strong population displaced. When Syria asked the UN to switch its programme of wartime humanitarian aid to one of development in 2018, this request was blocked by the United States.

This brake on rebuilding was only one element of the ongoing regime change strategy of the West for Syria, following the failure to remove Assad militarily. The Islamist Hayat Tahrir al-Sharaa (HTS), an Al-Qaeda offshoot publicly branded terrorist by the West but in reality part of the covert funding of opposition to Assad, had been largely driven to the province of Idlib, bordering Turkey.

While containing the jihadi elements to one area of the country solved an immediate problem, allowing the Syrian government to give what little energy it had left to reconstruction, it simply stored up another. Idlib became a recruiting ground for jihadi fighters from across the globe, under Turkish protection, and the regrouping of these forces was a key factor in the final push towards Damascus in December 2024.

In reality any energy the Syrian government had for reconstruction was sapped by the US block on UN development aid, ongoing Western sanctions to undermine the regime and the regular bombing of civilian and military targets by Israel. It is little wonder that discontent simmered and laid the groundwork for the HTS takeover in 2024, an outcome the West may yet come to regret.

For the moment, Donald Trump is prepared to bask in the success of the long-running regime change operation in Syria, in spite of the HTS being potentially unstable allies. The persecution of minorities in Syria, previously unheard of, is underway, the segregation of women in public places is being enforced and Palestinian organisations in Syria have been forced to shut down. It is without any hint of irony that Donald Trump, in spite of these characteristics of the HTS regime, states that "we will be dropping all of the sanctions on Syria...to give them a chance at a fresh start."

In reality HTS is itself made up of diverse factions and is unlikely to be capable of overseeing national cohesion, being reliant on its backers in the US, Turkey and Israel. Syria becoming another fragmented country in the Middle East, like Libya and Iraq, is a distinct possibility, directly as a result of US and Western foreign policy.

However the regime change may be portrayed in the Western media, the outlook for the Syrian people is bleak and the prospects for peace in the region severely weakened, due to the US insistence on imposing its hegemony on the region.

**Steve Bishop** is a Liberation member and senior executive member of Liberation affiliate. CODIR. Read his review of a new book on Syria by former ABC News Chief Middle East Correspondent, Charles Glass, on our website.

## Bleak outlook for the Syrian people

However the regime change may be portrayed in the Western media, the outlook for the Syrian people is bleak and the prospects for peace in the region severely

weakened, due to the US insistence on imposing its hegemony on the region, writes **Steve Bishop**



Above: The two faces of Ahmed al-Sharaa

**T**HE WARM WORDS of US President Donald Trump for current Syrian leader Ahmed al-Sharaa, describing him as "a young attractive guy...he's got a real shot at pulling it together", reflect the extent to which the United States has succeeded in manipulating regime change in Syria. Trump's assessment came during his tour of the Middle East in mid May, a trip which resulted in a staggering \$142 billion arms deal with Saudi Arabia.

As part of the trip the US and the United Arab Emirates agreed that Abu Dhabi should be the site of the largest artificial intelligence (AI) campus outside the US. The deal reportedly allows the UAE to import half a million Nvidia semiconductor chips, considered the most advanced in the world for the creation of artificial intelligence products. Saudi Arabia struck a similar deal for semiconductors, obtaining the promise of the sale of hundreds of thousands of Nvidia Blackwell chips to Humain, an AI startup owned by its sovereign wealth fund.

These deals, which will see a further concentration of power and influence in the hands of a few super rich companies, were with already established US allies. The Trump tour was essentially an exercise in keeping the oil rich gulf states tied in more closely to reliance on US AI and weapons technology.

In many respects Syria was a far greater prize, given the efforts that the US has put in over many years to gain control of this most significant Arab state. The first CIA backed coup in 1949 ended in failure and subsequent efforts to prise Syria away from a path of independent development have not been successful, until now.

The coup which brought Hafez al-Assad to power in 1970 may have left little breathing space for

internal opposition but it did establish Syria as a secular Arab state, tolerant of the diverse range of ethnic and religious minorities which co-existed within its borders. In the wider politics of the Middle East Syria was supportive of the Palestinian cause, being home to training camps and resistance group headquarters.

Succeeded by his son, Bashar al-Assad, in 2000 the regime inevitably took on a dynastic aspect which did not appease the internal opposition. Reforms to introduce a more liberal atmosphere were introduced in 2010 but that did not prevent an outbreak of protests in the city of Dera'a in March 2011.

While the Syrian government response to these protests may have been heavy handed they were not in themselves insurrectionary. However, the pouring in of weapons from the Gulf states and the Western powers quickly turned what started as demands for greater liberalisation into a major war of intervention, characterised by the Western media as a civil war, in Syria.

As well as Syria's support for the Palestinian cause the regime supported Hezbollah, from its foundation in Lebanon in 1982, and was a key conduit for weapons from the Iranian dictatorship to reach the so called Axis of Resistance of Hamas, Hezbollah and the Houthis in Yemen. For the hardline religious fundamentalists in Israel this was viewed as an existential threat, while the West regarded any threat to Israel as potentially undermining its own 'interests' in the Middle East.

For the US this justified intervention, covert or otherwise, and regime change was clearly the agenda. Using Jordan as a base the CIA trained Syrian opposition, including those affiliated to Al-

# Middle East/history

Today British capitalism remains imperialist but its power is exercised in subsidiary alliance with the US. With its overseas bases, international weapons sales, the City of London and UN security council seat, it has the trappings of a 'great power'. But its capital is externally owned, overwhelmingly from the US, and its policy assets conflicted. In any Marxist analysis its state power is compromised

## British imperialism's dangerous role



Britain remains an imperialist power. Although much reduced in financial and military potential, it has played, over recent years, a particularly dangerous role in the Middle East - a role which can only be understood in the context of what went before during Britain's

two centuries of 'regional dominance'.  
**John Foster writes**



**T**HROUGH THE eighteenth century Britain and the Netherlands together developed a new specifically capitalist world market.

Symbolically, this was initiated by the 1713 Treaty of Utrecht which decreed that 'peace', meaning Anglo-Dutch international market dominance, would be sustained by an 'equal balance of power'. Britain's access to Mediterranean and Middle Eastern markets was guaranteed by the handover of Gibraltar.

While the century did see two wars in which the French lost first their Indian and then most of their American colonies, it was primarily marked by Britain's transformation into the world's first industrial superpower – part made possible by market dominance, part by the Atlantic slave trade and part by the loot of India. It was this industrial power that then enabled Britain to defeat a resurgent France under Napoleon - including his bid to seize Egypt and Syria in 1800-01.

The following half-century saw Britain's assertion of more permanent territorial influence within the Middle East. It started with Persia. The 'Preliminary Treaty' of 1809 initiated an on-off relationship that began by training Persia's first professional army. This was followed by treaties with the 'Gulf States'. The 'General Treaty' with Bahrain in 1820 initiated further treaties with the rest of the small sheikdoms down the coast to Oman. In 1839 Aden was added - administered from Bombay.

In all this the control of India remained paramount, an imperative that continued through the second half of the nineteenth century. The joint Anglo-French invasion of Crimea in 1856 marked the first major action to thwart Russia's advance into the Ottoman empire and onwards to India. The second major intervention was against France. Through the later 1850s and the 1860s France sought to re-assert its power in the Middle East through a commercial alliance with Egypt and the construction of the Suez Canal.

Britain saw this as threatening its interests in India and the far east. Exploiting France's defeat by

Germany in 1870, and the financial debts of both the Canal construction company and the Egyptian government, Britain had by 1882 seized control of both Egypt and the canal.

This period also saw the carve up of Africa at the 1878 Treaty of Berlin. Britain's new African colonies gave still greater importance to control of the canal and the east Mediterranean. In a bid to maintain British support the Ottomans offered to cede Crete. The Foreign Office replied they would prefer Cyprus. As revealed in Foreign Office papers, Cyprus's ethnically divided population was seen as easing political control.

The next period began in 1903 and marked a decisive shift. In that year the Navy decided that oil-fuelled turbines would give their battle-fleet significant speed advantages over Germany's. Anglo-Persian Oil (later BP) was established in 1909. By 1913 'Persia's' Ibadan oil refinery was on-line - soon to become the world's biggest.

As revealed in the Secret Treaties published by the new Soviet government in 1918, the First World War was largely fought over Middle East oil. The defeat of the Ottomans was brutal. But the subsequent control was more so. During the war Britain and France agreed to divide the Middle East so that France got the north, including Syria, and Britain the south. It was this area that contained most of the oil. Through the 1920s Britain imposed its rule over what is now Iraq by aerial bombing with poison gas and motorised machine gun units.

However, it was an additional and more sinister tool of control that was ultimately even more troubling. Just one day after the first decisive defeat of Ottoman forces in Palestine, on 2 November 1917, the Foreign Secretary Balfour sent Lord Rothschild his declaration about providing a homeland for the Jewish people. For Britain the object was to subdue these largely hostile territories by exploiting the same divide and rule principle as used in Cyprus (and equally in India and many other parts of the empire).

The 1930s saw the height of Britain's imperial power. Britain was largely protected from the ravages of the economic crisis seen elsewhere by its control of key empire commodities and by the effective exclusion of the United States and other powers from a market that included just over half the world's population.

In response US used the Second World War to assert access to this empire – particularly the Middle East and its oil. The 1944 Bretton Woods Agreement created a world currency system based on the dollar that required the dismantling of tariff barriers and the use of the 'managed dollar' to sustain world liquidity – effectively enabling an inflation-driven redistribution of income in favour of those countries, principally the US, whose businesses exercised monopoly power.

It was within this environment that Britain emerged from the war. Territorially its empire was at its climax – now including Libya and other formerly Italian territories. But its political and economic foundations had been torn away. Economically subordinate to the United States, the 'wind of change' mobilised popular revolt – a wind at least in part resulting from the overthrow of reactionary regimes across Europe in face of Soviet-led liberation.

Across the Middle East Britain lost control: in Iran (1951), (Libya 1951), Egypt (1952), Sudan (1956), Iraq (1958). In some countries, such as Iraq, there were mass-based revolutions in part led by Communist Parties. In others, such as Egypt, movements were led by radical army officers. All at this stage advocated some brand of socialism. While in Iran the newly elected democratic government was overthrown by US intervention, alliances were formed elsewhere that created the United Arab Republic. Based in Egypt, it included at its height Syria, Libya and Iraq. In Palestine, a British UN mandate, the Israeli state was created in 1948 and the

original Palestinian population largely expelled.

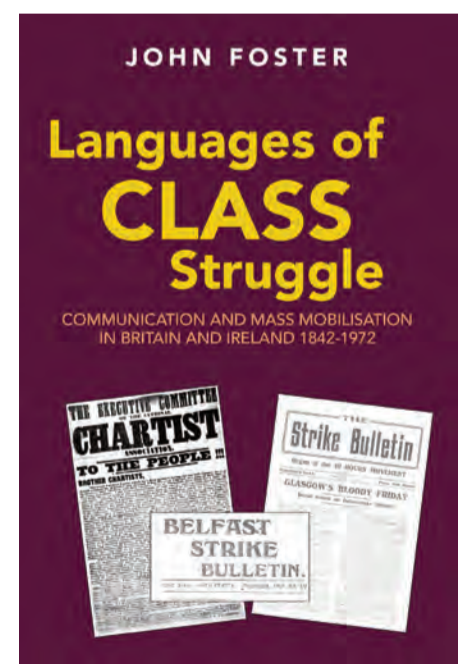
The British response, under the 'ultra-colonialist' government of Anthony Eden, was, in 1956, to form an alliance with France and Israel to reverse the nationalisation of the Suez canal and overthrow Nasser. Its failure, in face of US intervention, ended independent British power in the Middle East. While Britain sought to maintain its colonial base in Africa, in Hong Kong and parts of the far east, the old 'empire' was effectively over. Army numbers were cut from a million in 1959 to less than 150,000 by the 1970s.

Today British capitalism remains imperialist but its power is exercised in subsidiary alliance with the US. Its territorial bases, in Cyprus, the Chagos Islands and Oman continue. It sells weaponry and military expertise to Israel and Arab dictatorships. The City provides a place of deposit for financial assets and luxury consumption, physical, cultural and educational. While Britain maintains its UN Security Council seat and the trappings of a 'great power', in any Marxist analysis its state power is compromised. Its capital is externally owned, overwhelmingly from the US, and its policy assets conflicted. Its role in the Middle East, from Blair to Starmer, has too often been to give legitimacy to policies of mass murder.

A final example would be the recent dismemberment of Syria, a long-term US ambition. For over a decade British special forces helped the US detach the rich agricultural and oil-bearing lands of the east. In 2024-25 Britain, with the US, helped train jihadi forces and then, jointly with Israel, secure a coup against a bankrupt government. Britain has the skills to do this – but now only as a mercenary.

**John Foster** is a historian of the working class movement. His most recent publications are *The Great Tradition of Independent Working Class Power* Volume IV of the *Unite History* (Liverpool UP 2022) and *Languages of Class Struggle in Britain and Ireland* (Praxis 2024).

Listen to John Foster on Liberation's history at [liberationorg.co.uk](http://liberationorg.co.uk)



This is a study of five key moments in the history of the British and Irish working class movements. John Foster applies some of the key insights of Soviet Marxist thinkers on language to the 1842 General Strike, the Councils of Action 1920, the Glasgow and Belfast General Strikes of 1919 and the 1972 UCS work-in on Clydeside.

[www.manifestopress.coop](http://www.manifestopress.coop)

# Europe/militarism

Tanks don't fill lunchboxes. Higher military spending won't raise living standards. Building tanks, bombs or missile systems contributes nothing to the broader economy. The myth of job creation is equally false: €1 invested in hospitals creates 2.5 times more jobs than €1 in weapons. In terms of employment efficiency defence ranks 70th out of 100 sectors



## Tanks don't fill lunchboxes

Berlin rearms, Washington directs – but who pays the price? Money for pensions, healthcare, and public services is now funneled into tanks, missiles, and

frigates. We must reject a model that reforges plowshares into weapons.



By Peter Mertens

THE REARMAMENT of Europe is not meant to replace NATO but to strengthen and diversify it. It will allow the U.S. to focus on the Pacific and East Asia while Europe concentrates on defending NATO's eastern flank," says Belgium's defense minister, Theo Francken, who is also vice-chair of NATO's Parliamentary Assembly.

According to Washington, the U.S. is currently "overstretched" in the Indo-Pacific. Here, it is working to militarily encircle China. It already has bases in Japan, South Korea, and the Philippines, patrols the South China Sea, has partnerships like AUKUS (with the UK and Australia) and QUAD (with Australia, India and Japan), and an unwavering focus on Taiwan. But these military initiatives demand colossal resources: money, personnel, and logistics.

Washington's response? Europe should handle Russia. The consequence? Europe must cut pensions, privatise public services, and dismantle social protections—to meet NATO's demands, while the U.S. prepares for confrontation with China.

### The Failure of Europe's strategy

In *Mutiny* (2023), I argued the war in Ukraine always had a dual nature. On one side, Russia's violation of Ukraine's territorial integrity is a clear breach of international law. On the other, it's a proxy war between the U.S. and Russia, fought at Ukraine's expense—with thousands of lives lost in a geopolitical conflict.

Washington now acknowledges this. Trump, however, claims it was the wrong proxy war. He says the real enemy is China. His proposed "peace deal" would let Europe foot the bill while the U.S. gains control of Ukraine's resources—treating it like a neo-colony, just as it has done in the Global South. This reveals the war's true nature: it's not about values, but about geostrategic interests, as well as control of resources and fertile land.

Europe's failure to pursue serious diplomatic initiatives for a ceasefire over the past three years is now backfiring. From the start, the EU refused to consider any resolution beyond escalating war. In Europe's narrative, the words "peace" and "negotiations" became taboo. Europe's refusal to pursue serious diplomacy is now backfiring. Despite this failure, Europe clings to a broken strategy.

When German militarism gazes east

When German militarism gazes eastward, Europe picks up the pieces. This summarizes the two World Wars of the 20th century. In World War I, German youth were mobilised against "Russian despotism." In the second war, the sons of German workers were sent to the front to suppress the "Bolshevik threat." The slogans changed, but the goal of eastward expansion remained.

Many who grew up in the 20th century learned that the combination of Germany, chauvinism, and militarism is a bad idea. The Ruhr Valley's arms manufacturers fueled two of history's most devastating wars. Post-1945, Europe agreed: never again German militarism.

Suddenly, the world feels like a bad B-movie. Here it is again: Germany must rapidly reassert itself. Germany must embrace its "historic role." Germany must militarize. We must "do whatever it takes" to counter the "Russian threat." These words echo again in the Bundestag. It's a déjà vu.

It's not that Germany doesn't have an army today. To the contrary, Germany already ranks fourth globally in defense spending, up from the seventh place. Now, it's turbocharging its "war readiness" to get kriegstüchtig.

Parallel to this, the European Commission unveiled "Readiness 2030," a €800 billion militarization plan, partly funded by debt and loans, partly by pillaging cohesion, climate, and development funds.

The military arm of an Imperial Europe While the EU speaks of peace and security, its policies say otherwise. Commission President Ursula von der Leyen is clear: The EU must not only develop the means to defend its global interests but also to be ready to deploy them. In short, the EU wants to be a geopolitical actor alongside the U.S. and China.

But no EU state is willing to dissolve its own army. Instead, joint "battle groups" and command structures are layered on top—without real democratic oversight. National militaries face some accountability, but EU-level control remains opaque. The European Parliament lacks power and transparency, raising the risk of troop deployments without public awareness.

In 2024, EU warships were sent to the Middle

East—not to stop Israeli bombings or annexations, as urged by the International Court of Justice, but to secure "free passage" in the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden, crucial trade routes. Military ships protect European interests, not people.

Germany continues arming Israel; France arms Cameroon and Indonesia. European companies sell weapons to India, Pakistan, and Nigeria despite wars and oppression. In the Sahel, EU military missions over two decades have brought instability, not stability. The EU cares not for human rights but resources, trade routes, and spheres of influence.

EU rearmament isn't just about freeing the U.S. to focus on the Indo-Pacific; it's about building a European military layer for interventions beyond defense. Some dream of a strong military arm for a new imperial Europe.

### Arms production won't save the economy

The theory that increased militarization will boost the economy is an evergreen of the military-industrial complex. They proudly call it "military Keynesianism": have governments massively subsidize the arms industry. Now that Europe's auto sector is floundering and Germany faces its third consecutive year of recession, they want us to believe switching from cars to tanks is the solution.

This is nonsense, of course, because families don't buy tanks. You don't drive a tank to grandma's house. Yet these tanks must be sold. To sustain this industry, they must be used — otherwise, the sector collapses. In other words, militarizing the economy creates permanent pressure for war. A war not meant to be won, but to be endless, because peace threatens profit margins.

Tanks don't fill lunchboxes. Higher military spending won't raise living standards. Building tanks, bombs, or missile systems contributes nothing to the broader economy. The myth of job creation is equally false: €1 invested in hospitals creates 2.5 times more jobs than €1 in weapons. In terms of employment efficiency, defense ranks 70th out of 100 sectors.

The billions funneled to arms manufacturers don't 'flow back' to society. They flow to one group: the arms makers themselves. Profits for Rheinmetall, Dassault, BAE Systems, Leonardo, Thales, and Saab have reached astronomical levels.

### Peace builds care, war builds ruin

History teaches us: Wars and arms races are not stopped from above. Those in power halt militarization and war only when pressured from below. It is the people who pay the price—with their livelihoods, their futures, their children—who can make the difference. If the labor and peace movements join hands and unite, much becomes possible.

The left must resist the new military consensus. It must challenge the West's hypocrisy, its imperial double standards, and its addiction to rearmament. German poet Bertolt Brecht warned: "If we prepare for war, we will have war." He was right. Those who want peace must prepare for peace, not war.

Peace is the result of struggle. A struggle that embeds demands for social progress into a different logic, one daring to think beyond the constraints of capitalism. This system, where powerful monopolies impose profit-driven domination through conquest, war, and an economy of destruction, offers no future for humanity or the planet. Instead, we choose the side of labour, peace, and socialism.

Peter Mertens is a Belgian MP and leader of the Workers Party of Belgium. He has authored numerous books, on the Euro, trade unions, fascism, class and capitalism. His latest book *Mutiny* is now to be published in English.

# interview/**Arun Kumar**

The history of Kashmir and the circumstances in which the province agreed to become part of the Indian Union need to be understood. The people fought against the feudal king and demanded the implementation of radical land reforms at the time of their accession. The aspirations of the Kashmiri people can be realised only when the promises made by the Indian state at the time of accession are honoured

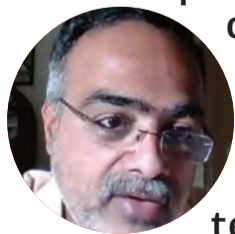


## Kashmir crisis must be solved through bilateral talks

**Durable peace is possible only when the root causes for its absence are addressed. India and Pakistan should sit, discuss and sort out all pending issues. The people of both countries**

**want peace and are against persisting tensions,**

**argues Arun Kumar**



**Liberation** Regarding UN resolutions on Kashmir, particularly the call for a plebiscite, what is AIPSO's understanding of a progressive Indian position that could accommodate Kashmiri aspirations for greater autonomy or self-determination?

The AIPSO is of the strong opinion that the aspirations of the Kashmiri people can be realised only when the promises made by the Indian State at the time of accession are honoured. The history of Kashmir and the circumstances in which the province agreed to become part of the Indian Union needs to be understood. The people of Kashmir fought against the feudal king and demanded the implementation of radical land reforms at the time of their accession. In spite of the raging religious sectarian violence around Indian independence, Kashmir remained largely unaffected. Most importantly, the fact that the king was a Hindu and majority of the peasants were Muslims, also did not create a division in the society on religious lines. The struggle against the King remained a struggle against feudal oppression and for freedom from his tyrannical rule. It is against this background that the decision of Kashmiris to join the Indian Union has to be understood. All they demanded at the time of accession was to respect their culture, the particularities of their society, a recognition of their struggle and a system that would enable the realisation of the demands of that struggle. Article

370 in the Indian Constitution guaranteed them all these things through granting them autonomy in many aspects of governance, within the broad framework of Indian Union.

**Liberation** How does AIPSO analyse the motivations and consequences of the Indian government's 2019 decision to revoke Kashmir's autonomy and reorganize the region? What have been the impacts on local rights and dissent?

The AIPSO was always against the abrogation of Article 370, while the BJP and its parent organisation the RSS were always for its removal. So the positions of the government and the AIPSO and many other peace-loving, progressive sections of the society are always diametrically opposite on the question of Kashmir. It should be remembered here that the RSS and its sister organisations were supporting the King during the anti-feudal struggle of the Kashmiri peasants. In fact, the RSS was always in support of all the Hindu-ruled princely States in British India, which in reality meant almost all of them, except like Hyderabad (a notable exception). The RSS was unable to accept the loss of a Hindu ruler and the granting of autonomy to the only Muslim majority province in independent India. The dream of the RSS, as was recently expressed by its Supremo Mohan Bhagwat is the establishment of a Hindu Rashtra (A Hindu State). It is not for India remaining as a secular state. It is in this framework we have to locate their deep-rooted hatred for Article 370.

Once the Article 370 was abrogated, people in Kashmir and also all of us who love this country for its rich diversity were appalled. This is reneging on the promise made to the people of Kashmir. We of course recognise the fact that the Union governments since independence did not put in a real effort for implementing the provisions specified in the Article 370. We, and the people of Kashmir, were always demanding the implementation of the Article 370 in letter and spirit. The more it is violated the more dejected the people of Kashmir became. The more their demand for autonomy was suppressed, the more the sense of betrayal engulfed them. The capitalist path of development adopted by the Indian state also created inequalities and discontent among the people. Pakistan, all kinds of religious fundamentalist elements and extremists, fished in these waters and tried to sow seeds of dissension. The abrogation of Article 370 and suppression of dissenting voices increased the sense of alienation in the people of Kashmir.

**Liberation** Has AIPSO been involved in or aware of any dialogues or initiatives between progressive forces in India and Pakistan aimed at finding a peaceful path forward that respects the rights of the Kashmiri people?

Unfortunately, there has been no dialogue between the people of both the countries for many years, as people-to-people relations were the first casualty of tensions.

**Liberation** Considering the rise of nationalism in both India and Pakistan, particularly in India, what is AIPSO's assessment of the prospects for a durable peace in the region, especially concerning the heightened risk of military or nuclear confrontation?

Durable peace is possible only when the root causes for its absence are addressed. The two countries should sit, discuss and sort out all pending issues. The people of both countries want peace and are against persisting tensions. People, particularly those residing near the borders, know the costs of war or the price of tensions at the

border. It is the common people who are losing their lives, homes and livelihoods due to constant shelling. Reports in the media indicated that due to the closure of border at Attari, nearly 5,000 workers who are dependent on cross border trade, lost their employment. So, nobody wants a war.

**Liberation** Given China's presence in Kashmir and India's evolving strategic alignment with the US (including the Quad), how does AIPSO view the potential for India adopting a more independent foreign policy to de-escalate tensions and foster a resolution in the region?

India's strategic alignment with the US and membership of QUAD occurred in the wake of the collapse of the Soviet Union. One needs to remember the role of the US, when India was supporting Bangladesh's liberation struggle in 1971. The US sent its warships to threaten India from assisting Bangladesh's liberation struggle against Pakistan. The US was always considered close to Pakistan, rather than India. Furthermore, the US did not like India playing a leading role in the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM). India was not only a founding member of the NAM, but also one of its important voices. It is for this reason, countries in the global South considered India to be their friend. All this changed after the collapse of the USSR and the introduction of neoliberal policies. India gradually moved closer to the US and post-2008 (when India signed the civil nuclear deal with the US), it became its strategic partner and a key cog in its Indo-Pacific strategy. Though the US continues its relations with Pakistan, the weight of India grew. Now, with China emerging as the main competitor, the importance of India for the US increased. Indian foreign policy underwent a drastic revision and is now completely aligned with the US interests. So much so that US claims that it had played a crucial role in enforcing the ceasefire between India and Pakistan.

**Liberation** UN Security Council Resolution 80 called for the demilitarization of Jammu & Kashmir. Does AIPSO support this resolution, and what are its views on the high levels of military presence and associated human rights concerns in the region?

AIPSO is against internationalisation of the Kashmir issue. We want the issue to be settled bilaterally, through negotiations between India and Pakistan. Once talks take precedence and issues are gradually sorted out, terrorism will not find a fertile ground in this region. Then, there will be no reason for military presence and no excuse for violating human rights.

**Liberation** Considering the historical context of British colonialism and the partition, what is AIPSO's perspective on the long-term impact of these events on the current Kashmir issue? Does AIPSO believe there is a role for the UK to play in addressing this historical legacy?

All the existing tensions/conflicts anywhere in the world today are thanks to lingering colonial legacy. As stated earlier, any issue between India and Pakistan can be and will be settled bilaterally. There is no space for any third party intervention or mediation, be it the US or the UK. We have seen enough of colonial/imperial meddling in our region. Hopefully, our governments too, have learned their lessons and will honour the popular consensus against third-party intervention.

**Arun Kumar** is General Secretary of the All India Peace and Solidarity Organisation (AIPSO). Founded in 1951, AIPSO is a key member of the World Peace Council.

# Africa Day/comment

If South Africa accepts Musk's Starlink, this would amount to acceptance of the foreign expropriation of its digital control - a move that cannot be undone once embedded. Imperialist history teaches us that the railroads of the colonial empires were not built out of love for, or the benefit of, indigenous populations, but to extract minerals and resources for the colonial power



## Africa's liberation 62 years on

Africa Freedom Day or African Liberation Day, marks its founding by 31 independent countries of the Organisation of African Unity (OAU), on 25 May 1963. This year the AU commemorated the 62nd anniversary of its founding with a call for justice, unity, and progress. By



**Dikobe Ben Martins**



**A**FRICA DAY, originally known as Africa Freedom Day or African Liberation Day, marks its founding by 31 independent countries of the Organisation of African Unity (OAU), on 25 May 1963.

At present, the AU consists of 55 sovereign member states that act in accordance with the concept of "an integrated, prosperous and peaceful Africa, driven by its own citizens and representing a dynamic force in the global arena."

The AU's objectives include strengthening unity and solidarity, developing cooperation between African nations, protecting the independence and members' territorial integrity, eliminating all forms of colonialism, preventing interference in internal affairs, and settling conflict in a peaceful way.

Africa continues to strive towards freedom from underdevelopment, conflict, and war.

The AU commemorated the 62nd anniversary of its founding with a call for justice, unity, and progress.

In claiming Africa's future, revolutionaries seek not only to commemorate its past, but to mobilise and march forward, as internationalism is not an act of charity but a revolutionary duty that transcends borders.

As a continent, African countries share the same destiny. In West Africa, the Alliance of Sahel States

(AES) - comprising Burkina Faso, Mali, and Niger - ended their neo-colonial relationship with France and ended their membership of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). The AES was created as a mutual defence pact in September 2023 that was formalised into a confederation on 6 July 2024, to expand cooperation in defence, economic, and social sectors.

Africa's last colony, Western Sahara, led by the Polisario Front, seeks to end its occupation by Morocco through self-determination and armed resistance.

On 28 May 2025, in line with the 62nd Anniversary of the OAU theme, "Justice for Africans and People of African Descent through Reparations", the President of Namibia, Her Excellency Dr Netumbo Nandi-Ndaitwah, by Proclamation number 19 of 2024, declared the date as a day of Remembrance of the 1904-1908 Genocide of the OvaHerero and Nama people by the then German Empire. President Nandi-Ndaitwah reminded Namibians of a bloody chapter in their history, that of the first genocide of the 20th century, unleashed and perpetrated by German Imperial Forces 121 years ago - when, beginning on the 2 October 1904, General Lothar Von Trotha gave the order for the extermination of the OvaHerero people.

The same General Von Trotha issued a second extermination order, this time against the Nama people, on the 22 April 1905.

Between 1904 and 1908, more than 100,000 OvaHerero and Nama people were massacred at the behest of the German colonial government.

Hundreds of OvaHerero and Nama people were forced into concentration camps and systematically starved to death.

Many of the victims' skulls were subsequently taken to Germany for so-called "scientific research".

These horrendous acts are part of Namibia's history of resistance and resilience and will never be forgotten as the emotional, psychological, cultural, and economic scars remain etched in the histories of the OvaHerero and Nama people and that of the broader national fabric of Namibia.

The 1904-1908 Genocide reminds Namibians of the historical injustices that were cruelly visited upon them, as well as the need for a shared understanding and appreciation of Namibia's collective history.

28 May, marking the date on which all the German concentration camps in Namibia were closed, was chosen as Remembrance of Genocide Day following numerous parliamentary debates and national public consultations. Namibia has gone through German colonisation as well as Apartheid occupation and domination. However, since its independence in March 1990, it has fostered unity and nationhood and this has formed the solid foundation for peace and stability in the country.

Elsewhere in Southern Africa, an absolute monarch bans and crushes any attempts at fostering democracy - and in doing so, unmasks the real face of tyranny... Swaziland is a country in the throes of a severe political and economic crisis. King Mswati presides over a nation in distress, wracked by inequality and wanton repression. The king's lavish lifestyle stands in stark contrast to the poverty of the 1.2 million people he rules over. Political parties are banned. Freedom of speech, association and assembly are denied. Political opponents are regularly jailed, driven into exile, or assassinated - like Thulani Maseko, a respected human rights lawyer and outspoken critic of the monarchy.

With regard to Swaziland's neighbouring country, South Africa, President Cyril Ramaphosa recently led a Government of National Unity delegation to the White House. That engagement with US President Donald Trump laid bare the reality that democracy ends where the economic

interests of the Military Industrial Complex begin.

The most important issue that was unfortunately not raised in the exchange, but which hangs over South Africa like the Sword of Damocles is Elon Musk's Starlink satellite internet constellation - which is fraudulently touted as a solution to rural disconnection and the enabling of rural clinics, farmers, and schoolchildren.

Mr Sizwe Sikamusi, a noted commentator on telecommunications among other issues in South Africa, argues cogently that Starlink is not just about bandwidth for rural areas in the country, but is actually a Trojan Horse designed to facilitate and further 21st century US domination.

Starlink's holding company, SpaceX, is part and parcel of the US military-industrial complex.

Its satellites are integrated into NATO-linked defence networks.

Thus, Starlink is not merely a system for telecommunications but one geared for the US' geopolitical domination masquerading as a broadband outfit.

If and when South Africa agrees to Starlink, the Independent Communications Authority of South Africa (ICASA) will be rendered irrelevant and sidelined by Starlink - with the latter answering to the US Pentagon and not the South African government, therefore free of any issue of accountability under South African jurisdiction.

If South Africa accepts Starlink, this would amount to acceptance of the foreign expropriation of its digital control - a move that cannot be undone once embedded.

Imperialist history teaches us that the railroads of the colonial empires were not built out of love for, or the benefit of, indigenous populations, but to extract minerals and resources for the colonial power.

South Africa, having taken Israel to the International Court of Justice (ICJ) on charges of genocide, essentially exemplified the moral leadership that most Arab and Middle Eastern countries, most European Union countries, and the United States desperately need.

Israel's continuing wanton genocide in Gaza reveals the hollowness of the United Nations Security Council's pretension to support the upholding of international law.

In conclusion, a question that cartographers have debated for centuries still remains relevant for Africa on the 62nd anniversary of Africa Day... Can anyone accurately depict a three-dimensional spherical world on a flat surface and have a precise representation?

The Mercator projection is the most lingering lie about Africa and yet remains the most common version of the world map.

It shrinks Africa and much of the Global South, while disproportionately enlarging dominant superpower-controlled regions of the world.

Europe, for example, is portrayed as larger than South America, whereas it is actually half its size.

This is contrary to the Gall-Peters 'equal area' map projections, which more accurately represent the size of the African continent.

According to the Gall-Peters map projection, the US, China, and India could actually fit within the African continent!

The Mercator projection is of course Euro-centred and its continued use is inherently political.

The AU needs to resolutely articulate this continuing gross discrepancy and be particular about how the African continent is properly represented on the world map going forward.

**Dikobe Ben Martins** is Co-ordinator of the South Africa Peace Initiative, former minister in the ANC government, former member of South Africa's parliament and a member of the Secretariat of the World Peace Council.

# DRC/neo-colonialism

Peace in DRC cannot be imposed by foreign powers with vested interests. Western imperialism counts on Africans killing each other so it can continue to plunder the continent. Yesterday they supported one side, today the other, in order to divide and conquer. We need to put an end to the interference and complicity of the United States and the European Union in destabilising the region



## The West's role in the struggle for Congo's riches

For nearly three decades, the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) has been a theatre of conflict, largely fuelled by the vast mineral wealth hidden beneath its soil. Central to this turmoil is Rwanda's persistent role in destabilising the region—an involvement sustained by tacit and explicit backing from Western powers, notably Europe and the United States



writes **Marc Botenga**

**S**INCE THE late 1990s, Rwanda has repeatedly supported armed groups operating across the North and South Kivu provinces in the East of the DRC. The first wave of this destabilisation occurred between 1998 and 2003, when Rwanda, alongside Uganda, occupied large swathes of eastern Congo. This occupation aimed to challenge the independent policies of then-President Laurent-Désiré Kabila and only ended after regional peace accords and political agreements such as the 2002 Sun City agreement in South Africa.

The second wave followed in 2004, when troops loyal to the rebel leader Mutebuzi—once again backed by Rwanda—seized control of Bukavu, plunging South Kivu into chaos. In 2009, Laurent Nkunda's offensive on Goma marked the third wave of destabilisation in North Kivu. By 2012, the M-23 rebel group, heavily supported by Rwanda and emerging from the ashes of previous rebellions, captured Goma before being repelled by the Congolese army and the United Nations peacekeeping force MONUSCO, with South African forces playing a leading role.

Since 2021, a revitalised M-23, now allied with the Alliance Fleuve Congo (AFC), has seized ever more territory, advancing towards Bukavu and the mineral-rich Katanga region. The United Nations has reported that Rwanda not only supplies arms and funding but also deployed up to four thousand soldiers on Congolese soil. The human cost has been catastrophic: over six million deaths and more than seven million displaced refugees.

### Western finance, arms, agreements

Despite repeated denunciations by the United Nations and others, Kigali continues to enjoy robust support from the West. The United States has provided Rwanda with substantial financial aid—around \$1.3 billion annually in recent years, equating to roughly one-third of Rwanda's government budget. The European Union has also deepened its engagement, signing a significant Memorandum of Understanding focused on natural resources and pledging nearly €900 million in investments through the Global Gateway initiative.

This funding supports Rwanda's budget and infrastructure while enabling European firms to access vital mineral supplies. Concurrently, the EU provides about €20 million annually to the Rwandan army under the guise of promoting regional stability. Poland has pledged to supply Rwanda with some of its most advanced weapons and military technology. These forms of support reveal a stark double standard: while the West publicly calls for peace in the DRC, it simultaneously empowers one of the region's chief destabilising actors.

### Minerals engine of conflict

The West's support for Rwanda cannot be understood without seeing how Kigali's backing of the M-23 rebels facilitates the illegal smuggling of critical minerals. The mineral wealth of eastern DRC is immense and strategically critical. The country holds over 70% of the world's cobalt reserves, but also wields huge reserves of other critical minerals essential for electric vehicle batteries, renewable energy technologies, and military hardware. The provinces of North and South Kivu are especially prized for deposits of coltan and cobalt.

Western countries always kept their eye on that prize. During the drafting and adoption of the DRC 2018 Mining Code—a major overhaul of the 2002 law—Belgium and other Western governments reportedly exerted pressure on the Congolese authorities to moderate royalty increases and avoid measures that could “threaten” the business climate for foreign investors, thus guaranteeing Western corporate profits over local development.

The destabilization of the east of the DRC allowed Rwanda to surpass the DRC in exports of certain minerals—an extraordinary feat given Congo's far larger resource base. The EU-Rwanda Memorandum of Understanding on critical raw materials even emboldened the M-23 and their Rwandan supporters. Just two months after signing the agreement, M-23 forces seized Rubaya, a strategic Congolese town responsible for 15% of the world's coltan production.

### US-China rivalry

The M-23's attempted march southward along Lake Tanganyika towards Katanga province equally transcends local conflict. Katanga is one of the DRC's most mineral-rich regions, endowed with vast deposits of cobalt, copper, and other strategic minerals.

Over the past decade, Chinese companies have established a prominent role in Katanga's mining sector, with state-owned and private Chinese firms controlling many key concessions. The United States and Europe perceive this Chinese presence as a threat to their own monopolistic access to vital raw materials.

Western governments and corporations have sought therefore to strengthen their foothold in Katanga through partnerships with the Congolese government, aiming to secure mining rights. An M-23 advance towards Katanga would directly challenge Chinese-controlled mining operations.

### Tshisekedi's peace offer to Trump

In a desperate bid for stability and to secure his presidency, Congolese President Félix Tshisekedi offered former U.S. President Donald Trump exclusive access to critical mineral deposits in exchange for security assistance against the Rwandan-backed rebels. This proposal involved sites controlled by the M-23—such as the coltan deposit at Rubaya and pyrochlore at Lueshe—as well as lithium reserves at Manono in Tanganyika province. The Manono lithium project already benefits from a \$1 billion investment by KoBold Metals, backed by Bill Gates and Jeff Bezos.

Although the U.S. has long supported Rwanda, it has recently shown explicit interest in backing the Congolese government against M-23, negotiating mining deals and providing military aid. Private military contractors linked to the U.S. are training Congolese forces, ostensibly to combat rebels but also to secure resource-rich areas. The scale of military support under discussion reportedly includes \$800 million in contracts covering combat aircraft, drones, and training for thousands of special forces troops. Notably, U.S.-linked private military firms such as Erik Prince's Frontier Services Group—known for its controversial mercenary history—are involved.

### Weakening the Congolese state

The Western establishment might present the deals as a pathway to peace. In reality, they are likely to undermine Congo's sovereignty. Western military contractors and Congolese forces under foreign influence might end up managing or at least controlling the country's resources, with potential state revenues siphoned off to multinational corporations.

Estimates of Africa's revenue losses due to multinational corporations evading their fair tax share are staggering. According to the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa and other analysts, the DRC loses approximately \$1 to \$2 billion annually due to tax avoidance and illicit financial flows. Reports by Global Financial Integrity highlight that illicit flows related to the mining sector rank among Africa's highest. These include transfer mispricing by multinational mining firms, under-invoicing exports, and over-invoicing imports. A 2023 report by the African Tax Administration Forum emphasised that transfer pricing abuses in the DRC's mining sector alone result in hundreds of millions of dollars of lost tax revenues annually.

A permanently weakened Congolese state will never be able to govern effectively or secure its territory, thereby inviting further rebel activity and external interference. The cynical pattern of supporting Rwanda's attacks on Congo, only to subsequently offer support to Kinshasa in exchange for mineral access, is deeply troubling.

### African role crucial

Western governments must face pressure to fundamentally change their policies towards Rwanda and the DRC. Rather than treating Rwanda as a “partner,” the EU and the U.S. should leverage their influence to compel Kigali to halt its military incursions and support for armed groups in the DRC. A coherent Western policy, including a military embargo on Rwanda, could play a pivotal role in stabilising the region. Rather than pushing for “business environments” that facilitate the plunder of natural resources, we need to demand that Western governments support international initiatives for fair taxation of multinational corporations.

But the real alternative will come from Africa itself. Peace in the east of the DR Congo cannot be imposed by foreign powers with vested interests. Western imperialism counts on Africans killing each other so it can continue to plunder the continent. Yesterday they supported one side, today the other, in order to divide and conquer and to position themselves as masters of the game. To get out of this war that has been ravaging the region for far too long, we need to put an end to the interference and complicity of the United States and the European Union in destabilising the region.

Lasting stability demands dialogue and agreements among local communities, factions, and neighbouring states. Stabilisation will allow to build infrastructure and develop a real economy that creates jobs and lays the foundations for harmonious coexistence. Only pan-Africanist, sovereignist and anti-imperialist forces that choose the path of unity and peace can bring peace.

**Marc Botenga** is MEP for the Workers' Party of Belgium (PVDA-PTB), sits on the parliament's Committee on Foreign Affairs and Subcommittee on Security and Defence, parliamentary delegations for relations with Palestine, the Africa-EU Parliamentary Assembly, and to the OACPS-EU Joint Parliamentary Assembly, which strengthens cooperation between the EU and the Organization of African, Caribbean, and Pacific States.

Above: Luwowo Coltan mine near Rubaya, North Kivu

# Liberation/in parliament

The UK must forge a new direction in international relations that means breaking away from American influence and wishes. Safeguarding and protecting human rights, upholding international law and using our position in the world as a force for peace and justice should be at the heart of our international policies

## Liberation

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## For a new sense of solidarity

**Brian Leishman**  
Liberation's new parliamentary chair explains the need for a new approach to foreign policy in the UK and highlights some initial for his work on behalf of Liberation in in Westminster

**W**E LIVE IN extremely volatile and turbulent times. Anger and discord are dominating the political landscape both domestically and internationally. People are feeling disenfranchised, disillusioned and millions are in despair.

My community has been let down by successive governments. It has been ravaged from four decades of deindustrialisation. Once vibrant and lively places have been decimated because of political choices and the creation of a society that has left workers and their communities behind as victims of the corporate greed those political choices promoted.

Low paid employment, reduced public services, terrible transport links, closed leisure facilities, limited access to GP's and dentists, an explosion in alcohol and drug addiction rates that often lead to domestic violence incidents. The deadly societal consequences of austerity, and they are prevalent all across the UK.

The same consequences that many politicians today are trying to convince people are the fault of immigrants.

Let me be clear, the way that the government is talking about immigration is wrong.

As the descendent of an immigrant, I was appalled at the deplorable language used by the Prime Minister when he described the possibility of the UK becoming an "island of strangers".

However, the risk of becoming a nation of communities at odds with each other is real. But it is not because of immigration.

The growing disconnect felt between working class communities and the politicians elected to serve them is because of the gross inequality that has been created through the erosion of industry, opportunity and the public services that people rely on and help to civilise our society. That is the root cause of division in today's UK.

I'm of the opinion that the rise of extremist right wing politics that we see here and across Europe and the subsequent pandering to these views from our own government only serve to legitimise and allow these feelings of intolerance to become mainstream, normalised and ultimately, accepted.

With political parties going down the route of appeasement to far right sentiment, then it falls on the trade union movement and organisations like Liberation to show the leadership that working class people and communities need.

The alarming division, poverty and injustice we are seeing at home is even more apparent in many other places around the globe.

The original aims of campaigning for the rights to self-determination of colonial peoples and the struggle against imperialism are as relevant now than ever before. It is incredibly important that parliamentarians use our platform to highlight dire humanitarian issues, and campaign to advance peace, political freedoms and social justice across the world.

That is what I want to do in my role as Liberation parliamentary chair.

Because the need for the UK to take a new approach to international relations is manifest. It is time for a new internationalism.

The UK must forge a new direction. Fundamentally that means breaking away from American influence and wishes.

Safeguarding and protecting human rights, upholding international law and using our position in the world as a force for peace and justice should be at the heart of our international policies.

Human rights and humanitarian law are cornerstones of democracy. These principles are in grave danger. The UK is selling arms to states that are abusing human rights, ethnically cleansing areas and committing genocide.

British made weapons are being used to target oppressed people and our government are allowing this to happen, complicit in crimes against humanity.

We need to campaign to secure accountability for breaches of human rights and international law, for example sexual intimidation and violence, starvation and other abominable threats and deeds.

We must also challenge our government to prioritise conflict prevention and to become peace builders. We are seeing tensions escalate in many places with military action looking almost inevitable. Our government should be at the forefront of international diplomacy that would avert war, with us being advocates for peace.

There is no denying that this will require a shift from our government, and not just internal change in foreign policy. The size of the challenges humanity currently faces is incredible. There are political tensions, conflicts and a world economy that benefits a select few with inequality forcing millions into poverty.

The principles of redistributing wealth and power to achieve equality and of ending imperialism motivate us as much today as they ever have.

The need to achieve social justice has never been greater.

Comrades, as the Liberation parliamentary chair, I want us to work together, so Liberation members are heard in Westminster. I wish to represent our values in Parliament and speak for all of us on a wide range of issues that we as Liberation members hold dear.

Alongside comrades on the Executive Committee and Central Council I want us to try and impact UK foreign policy and promote international solidarity and the advancement of the working class.

I have identified and engaged with parliamentary colleagues who share the same ideals of achieving peace and human rights for oppressed, disadvantaged and vulnerable people and could add their voice to calling for self-determination and justice.

Building a wide support base is obviously of paramount importance.

In Parliament, I will continue to utilise methods that are open to me, including:

Written Parliamentary Questions, Oral Questions on the floor, submitting requests for Urgent Questions and Statements in the House, applying for Westminster Hall Debates, Adjournment Debates and Backbench Business Debates.

I am willing to host events, discussions and presentations from affiliated organisations within Parliament and to invite fellow parliamentarians to attend.

An example of how impactful gatherings like these can be was at the event in Parliament for International Women's Day in March that saw women from Gaza, Sudan, Iran, Iraq and Western Sahara speak so powerfully about the realities of life for them. Their contributions left an impression on everyone that was in attendance as to the issues facing women in the Middle East and North Africa.

Comrades, it is an honour to represent Liberation in Parliament and I want to effectively highlight issues that mean so much to us in Liberation. Another world is possible.

In solidarity,

**Brian Leishman** is the Labour MP for Alloa and Grangemouth, and was elected in 4 July 2024. He is a member of the Socialist Campaign group of Labour MPs. He was confirmed as the parliamentary chair of Liberation at Liberation's AGM in May 2025.