



### CORONAVIRUS

Poverty, misogyny and crisis: Three women interviewed



### CYPRUS

Struggling to reunify the island nation



### MIDDLE EAST

Iran, Iraq, Turkey surveyed in Liberation reports

# Liberation

Journal of Liberation formerly the Movement for Colonial Freedom

£1 or solidarity price

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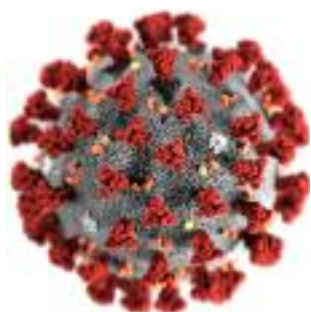
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## Our mission is 'Liberation'

It is no exaggeration to claim that the world we live in has been experiencing unprecedented trauma and upheaval. The Covid pandemic has fundamentally challenged the capacity of most governance structures in the Americas, Europe, Africa and Asia. The neo-liberal orthodoxy of recent decades has been exposed.

While China, Vietnam, Laos and Cuba excelled in controlling the spread of COVID-19, the governments in the US, UK, Brazil, India and Iran have acknowledged their marked failure. The figures are there to tell the story. The prime importance of state-controlled health systems and the provision of well-planned and adequately financed public services is now acknowledged globally.

The US administration under Donald Trump has not only been a disaster for the Americans but created havoc in the Middle East, Latin America, Africa and Asia. The US Administration's dealing with international agencies, international treaties and its complete disregard for diplomacy has made a world a less safe place in which to live. Trump's expressed aim of "making America Great" has brought a new cold war with China. It has given a green light to the right-wing reactionary government in Israel to show flagrant disregard to all UN resolutions regarding the right of the Palestinian people to a viable independent state and to live in peaceful co-existence side by side Israel.

The US under Donald Trump has mortgaged its foreign policy to the Saudi Arabian and Persian Gulf Arab kingdoms in exchange for lucrative arms deals. In such a climate, autocratic regimes in Turkey and elsewhere have brazenly pursued adventurist plans that can only mean more terror and bloodshed.

Britain has continued its policy of supporting any dictatorial government that is prepared to purchase British arms and military technology. Yemen has been turned into a killing

field by the Saudi war machine using British weapons. And in Britain itself, in the midst of a pandemic and with the economy in free-fall, Boris Johnson has announced a mammoth increase of £16.5 billion to the military budget. This is on top of the annual rise of 0.5% to the MoD's existing £41.5 billion.

Liberation's mission has always been to contribute to a safer and more equal world. It was founded in 1954 as a campaigning human rights organisation, the non-sectarian Movement for Colonial Freedom. As such we vigorously campaigned for an end to colonial rule. When we changed our name in 1970 to LIBERATION our focus was expanded to address the legacies of Britain's colonial past.

This change was in recognition that, while colonial empires were in decline, they had been replaced by a new neo-colonialist imperialism. Economic and political exploitation and racism continued. Today, fifty years on, imperialism still inflicts harm on the peoples of many lands and still menaces the global environment.

The government of the USA and its allies are ignoring or undermining international agreements which seek to develop peaceful cooperation and coexistence between independent nations and protect the global environment and climate.

In Cyprus the US and Turkey have taken over where British colonialism left off. In Azerbaijan and the Caucasus, they are stoking up war against Armenia. In the East Mediterranean grave conflicts are emerging in pursuit of oil. At the same time threats against Iran and the violation of the human rights of the Palestinian people continue to destabilise the whole Middle East.

Liberation is committed to economic and political self-determination and independence as a basic human right.

Liberation will always defend asylum seekers and economic refugees seeking safety from imperialist and neo-colonialist violence.

Liberation stands firm against all forms of racism, abuse and discrimination. Public awareness, education and active public opposition on these and many other issues is vital to building a safe future for all people and our planet.

Join with us, affiliate your organisation, encourage your democratic representatives to support the work, actions and campaigns of Liberation. **Jamshid Ahmadi**



# news/liberation

Education has the potential to galvanise the links of shared history between the working class in Britain and the former colonies

## Colonialism, education and Liberation

For **Harsev Bains** Liberation is a campaigning body for democracy, freedom and human rights and supports the notion for education at all levels about the imperialist past of Britain

ignorant of the realities of the British empire and the impact on its subjects in the colonies. From India, the jewel in the crown, £43 trillion was expropriated, millions died in famines as a result of over taxation to fund wars, with an equivalent number killed in massacres and partition, the parting gift of colonialism, thriving industries destroyed, national economies made destitute, religious and cast divisions exploited and reinforced.

There is a new yearning for the Raj, with films and TV media extolling the virtues of the colonial past. Retelling the dreams of the British empire, where the sun never sets, so glorious, so poignant, so bittersweet, against the backdrop of the resentful realities of contemporary Britain.

Liberation as a campaigning body for democracy, freedom and human rights supports the notion for education at all levels about the imperialist past of Britain. To learn how those dreams of the ruling few turned out to be the nightmares for the many colonial subjects. Only then will there be an authentic, genuine atonement for the colonial past, providing a meaningful consideration of historical responsibility, rather than a political gesture with admission of guilt.

This will create the prerequisite awareness of Britain's contemporary society and a sound foundation for all our future generations. Education at all levels is absolutely necessary to overcome imperialism's selective amnesia of the brutality, massacres and exploitation that took place under colonialism, slavery and indentured labour. Some people will find the historical truths uncomfortable. However, we have to examine and learn from the past to understand the present and shape the future.

Generations of Afro Caribbean, Asian, Irish and minority ethnic people will be better placed

to understand why they are in Britain. "We are here, because you were there". Education has the potential to galvanise the links of shared history between the working class in Britain and the former colonies.

The virtual world of webinars and meetings using media to connect with the world has opened up new platforms and provide unprecedented opportunities. Up until now our deliberations with well intentioned resolutions were confined to our organisations and aired by the Morning Star, the only daily paper of the left in Britain. Now we can reach out and connect with like-minded people around the world.

Education, which hitherto was delivered to suit the ruling classes to produce and exploit a labour force which supports the neoliberal agenda, no longer remains the sole domain and prerogative of the bourgeoisie representatives.

We cannot rely on influencing the national curriculum alone to do the work for us in teaching colonial history. They will do no different to what has have done to previous history. The total amnesia to the contribution of Indian soldiers killed in the First World War. Distorting the historic sacrifice of the people of Soviet Union in the defeat of fascism. Ignoring the heroic struggles of the anti-fascist brigades in Spain and other European countries.

Liberation will make its contribution to education by initiating and supporting future education events independently and in partnership that help to interpret world events, educate and seek common solutions.

**Harsev Bains** is a council member of Liberation, National Vice President of the Indian Workers' Association and trustee of the Marx Memorial Library



### Liberation AGM Save the Date!

Liberation's Annual General Meeting will be held on 13 March 2021.

We will be holding it using an online platform – probably zoom

There will be plenty to discuss and agree in what has been a historic and dramatic year for Britain and the world. Liberation will be reporting on our activity since the last AGM in Oct 2019 and presenting our draft strategy to inform and shape our work in 2021 and beyond.

It will also elect a new Liberation Council.

It will be shorter than previous AGMs given we won't be meeting face-to-face.

More information – including the process for submitting motions and how members stand for council – will be circulated to members in due course.

Please keep the date clear in your diary .

Furthermore, make sure you are a signed-up member of the Liberation by January 1 2021 to be able to participate (including present and voting on motions) and stand for council.

You can be a member as an individual or as an affiliated organisation, like a union branch.

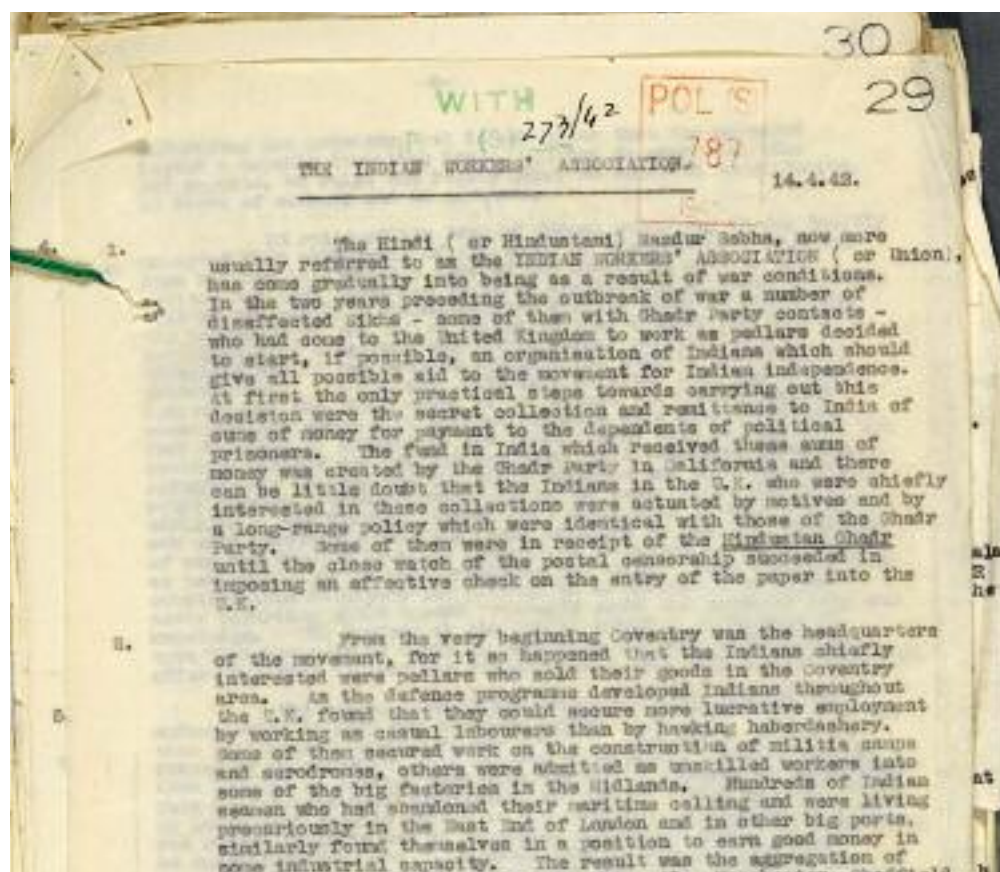
You can join and renew your membership at our website ([www.liberationorg.co.uk](http://www.liberationorg.co.uk)) ; if you are having any difficulties signing/renewing online, please email us at [info@liberationorg.co.uk](mailto:info@liberationorg.co.uk)

We'd like to apologise to existing members that we were unable to hold an AGM this year as we have been holding off organising it since Spring in the hope that the situation with Covid-19 improved to the point that enabled a face-to-face meeting. However, it has become clear this was not possible.

Above: General secretary Maggie Bowden with former Liberation chair Jeremy Corbyn who paid a surprise visit to our AGM in 2018 and remains an active Liberation council member

The Labour manifesto of 2019 contained a number of vital pledges, including commitments to an unequivocal apology for the massacre at Jallianwala Bagh and teaching children about colonialism, injustice and the role of the British empire. Jeremy Corbyn, the Labour leader in April 2019, offering his apology for the Jallianwala Bagh Massacre, suggested the need to start teaching unromanticised colonial history in British schools as a form of atonement.

People in Britain are kept in the dark, blissfully



### Does the British secret state still spy on the Indian Workers Association?

The British Library contains intelligence reports which show that the Indian Workers Association in Britain was subjected to intense surveillance by the secret police in Britain. The India Office documents offer extensive details of the IWA and its activists in the British labour movement and the community.

The India Office Record files link the organisation to the Ghadr movement; and reveal that the state spied on the undraising activities for the families of Sikhs who had been imprisoned or executed in India by the colonial authorities. The India Office kept the organisation under close surveillance, fearful of the IWA's agitations in Britain.

The files are held by the British Library. To see them quote the reference Shelfmark IOR/L/PJ/12/645



# internationalism/Labour

Boris Johnson talks of a new “global Britain”, a prospect which will hardly be welcomed in those considerable parts of the globe which have experienced what British imperialism means in practice



## What now for the Labour movement

**Corbyn has been replaced by Starmer as Labour leader but pressure from the mass of the movement on the key issues – no more wars of intervention, support for the Palestinians, no cold war with China – can make a difference.**

by **Andrew Murray**

**T**he pandemic put paid to the usual conference season for the British labour movement in 2020. Many union conferences were postponed, and the TUC Congress was held in an abbreviated form and mostly online. Labour’s conference was scrapped altogether in its normal form, and was replaced by a “Labour Connected” online event, with no policy-making powers.

The usual review of the international situation at these conferences did not take place therefore. World politics has proceeded regardless however, albeit under the shadow of coronavirus, and the labour movement is having to orient itself in a changing situation.

The changes apply to Labour itself. In April, Jeremy Corbyn, long-standing champion of liberation struggles around the world, was replaced as Labour leader by Sir Keir Starmer, a man without much profile on these issues. Corbyn’s staunch anti-imperialist and anti-war campaigning was his quality which the hostile establishment liked least of all.

Nevertheless, Corbyn’s views chimed with Party members. A survey conducted earlier this year found that the most popular campaigning organisations amongst the Labour membership (other than the big affiliated trade unions Unite and Unison) were the Stop the War Coalition and Palestine Solidarity. The least liked was Labour Friends of Israel.

### New directions

The new Shadow Foreign Secretary Lisa Nandy has seemed to move in a different direction – her pronouncements on China, Russia and other issues have hewed close to establishment consensus thinking. The drift back towards foreign policy bipartisanship is unmistakable.

This will doubtless be further encouraged by the election of Joe Biden to the US Presidency. The traditional Atlanticism which has formed a large part of the outlook of the Labour right-wing for seventy years or more, and has led to

British participation in calamities like the Iraq War of 2003, was a harder sell when Donald Trump was in the White House. But linking up with US Democrats has traditionally been the default position of the centre and right of Labour.

### Business as usual Biden

Biden signals a return to “business as usual” after four years of the racist authoritarianism of Trump. However, business as usual under Democrats and Republicans alike has meant one war of intervention after another this century, and Biden’s foreign policy team seems full of “liberal interventionists”.

Starmer pledged, when standing for election as Labour Leader, to oppose any more such aggressions, particularly in the Middle East. As noted, they are overwhelmingly opposed by the Party membership. However, the desire to align with a Biden presidency could undermine such good intentions.

Likewise, the Party will face pressure to dilute its solidarity with the Palestinian people. One of the demands raised by Jewish communal bodies and others for putting Labour’s convulsions over anti-Semitism behind it has been that the Party should return to being an “honest broker”, even-handed between Israel and the Palestinians.

### Palestine

What this means is abandoning any sympathy for the Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions (BDS) campaign which has put some international pressure on the Israeli government and mouthing “two state” platitudes which are increasingly at odds with the reality on the ground as Israeli settlement in the West Bank proceeds apace, backed by plans for full annexation of most of the territory of a putative Palestinian state.

Here the labour movement has clear policy. The following resolution, moved by Unite, was adopted by the TUC at its online conference in September:

*“Congress stands united in its full opposition to the Israeli government’s declared intention to annex great swathes of the West Bank, a move that is illegal under international law and that makes clear there is no intent on the part of the Israeli government to end the occupation and recognise the Palestinian people’s right to self-determination. It will be another significant step in the creation of a system of apartheid. For too long the international community has stood idly by as the Israeli state has been allowed to carry out its crimes and this cannot be tolerated or accepted any longer. Decisive action is now urgently needed in relation to Israel’s illegal actions against the Palestinians. Congress therefore resolves to:*

*i. fully support and play an active role in the Palestine Solidarity Campaign’s actions to build a broad coalition against the proposed Israeli annexation and to urge all affiliates to do likewise*

*ii. send a letter to the prime minister*

*demanding that the UK take firm and decisive measures, including sanctions, to ensure that Israel stops or reverses the illegal annexation, ends the occupation of the West Bank and blockade of Gaza, and respects the right of Palestinian refugees to return*

*iii. communicate its position to all other national trade union centres in the International and European Trade Union Confederations and urge them to join the international campaign to stop annexation and end apartheid.”*

Thus the labour movement maintains its robust stance in support of the Palestinian people and against Israeli colonialism.

Biden is unlikely to make a significant difference here. His view was made clear more than thirty years ago when, justifying US military aid to Israel, he said: “If there weren’t an Israel, the United States of America would have to invent an Israel to protect her interests in the region.” No significant pressure on Israel to abide by international law can be expected – will Labour take a stronger position?

Understandably, Labour will align with Biden on other issues, like trying to revive the nuclear arms agreement with Iran, rejoining the Paris Agreement on climate change and reviving nuclear weapons talks with Russia. But then again, the Tory government will support these positions too.

### Bad moves

Boris Johnson of course talks of a new “global Britain”, a prospect which will hardly be welcomed in those considerable parts of the globe which have experienced what British imperialism means in practice. However, his rhetoric is belied by the reality of Britain’s position, outside the EU, somewhat estranged from the new US administration on account of the Withdrawal Agreement’s impact on Ireland amongst other things, and drawn into a quasi-confrontational stance against China.

Alienation from the three largest economic blocs in the world is not a good place to start to assert a new world role. But Labour has to provide its own alternative version for Britain’s place in the world. Corbyn clearly did that, with his emphasis on the peaceful resolution of disputes, and addressing the roots of global poverty, injustice and environmental despoliation.

This should not be left to Starmer and Nandy. Pressure from the mass of the movement on the key issues – no more wars of intervention, support for the Palestinians, no cold war with China – will be what can make the difference. The years of knowing that the anti-war and solidarity movements had a supporter in the Labour Leader’s office are over, but campaigning pressure can still ensure that Labour plays a progressive part.

**Andrew Murray** is a former adviser to Jeremy Corbyn



# partition/Cyprus

We need British politicians, unions and activists, to stand by us in demanding a solution that will demilitarize Cyprus and put an end to the anachronistic guarantees of the three guarantor powers as well as to any -intervention rights.



Reunifying  
Cyprus is the  
only way  
forward



**Turkey's provocative actions earlier this month mean partition of Cyprus is now a looming threat but Cypriots - both Turkish Cypriots and Greek Cypriots - are refusing to surrender our common country to the NATO member.**

by **Vera Polycarpou**

**F**or Cypriots, this 15 November was worse than in any previous year. The date marks the illegal proclamation of a so-called "state" in the occupied part of Cyprus, a secessionist move taken in 1983 under Turkey's guidance. The illegal proclamation came nine years after the 1974 fascist *coup d'état* and the Turkish invasion, both part of the NATO plan to divide the island of Cyprus between Turkey and Greece, which at the time was suffering under the military junta. Forty-six years of occupation of 37% of the land mass of Cyprus have since passed; thirty-seven since the illegal proclamation. Yet, this 15 November proved extremely painful for all Cypriots, both Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots, who believe in a reunified Cyprus.

You may have seen images of Turkish President Erdogan walking through Varosha, the "ghost city". This is the fenced-off area, the southern, the former tourist quarter of the coastal city of Famagusta under Turkish military control where houses and buildings stand empty since their owners fled as Turkish troops entered. This provocative act on the infamous anniversary was designed to signal Turkey's intention to re-open Varosha

and followed the opening on 8 October of the city's coastline coastal front. It constitutes a flagrant violation of UNSC Resolutions, especially 550 and 789, which stipulate that Varosha should be returned to its lawful inhabitants and definitely not be reopened while under occupation. Erdogan and Ersin Tatar, the new right-wing nationalist Turkish Cypriot leader and Erdogan's obedient servant, celebrated the anniversary of the illegal proclamation by leading the way to a "picnic" under the rain on the Varosha coast; in declaring their intention to open the fenced-off suburb part of the city, they also stated they would work for a two-state solution.

Turkey's aim to control hydrocarbon resources beyond its waters, has caused a tense situation in the already troubled Eastern Mediterranean. The international community and the EU, to no avail, repeatedly called on the NATO member to stop illegal drilling in the Exclusive Economic Zone of the Republic of Cyprus. It would have been more effective if they had all stopped arms sales to Turkey, which is the world's fifth largest importer of major weapons, and heavily reliant on US and western European suppliers.

This situation casts serious doubt on the resumption of meaningful negotiations for a comprehensive solution of a bizonal bicommunal federation (BBF), which has been the intention of the UN Secretary-General.

Partition of Cyprus is a looming threat which has to be curbed and reversed. Turkey has been pursuing a policy of moving settlers to Cyprus, with the aim of assimilating the Turkish Cypriot community and eventually annexing the occupied part. Nonetheless, in a significant move, while when Erdogan was imposing Tatar (as leader of the Turkish Cypriot community) and "picnicking" with Tatar in Varosha, thousands of Turkish Cypriots demonstrated in protest, refusing to surrender our common country to Turkey.

We believe that the only way to stop partition is to insist on the resumption of substantive talks in line with prior agreements on the agreed basis and from where they were left off in Crans Montana in 2017. At that time a significant degree of important convergences had been reached between the two sides and the UN Secretary-General had presented a framework that could pave the way to a solution. We - all Cypriots who believe in a reunified Cyprus - need to insist on that. We need the international community to insist on that too, along with the respect of the agreed basis: The framework can be no other but a BBF, a united state with a single sovereignty, a single citizenship, a single international personality and with political equality, as described in the UN texts, with the human rights and fundamental freedoms of all Cypriot citizens guaranteed.

When in 1960 Cyprus finally gained independence from the UK, it was left with a bitter colonial legacy: a treaty of guarantee and British military bases that are used against the peoples of our region and beyond.

Today, perhaps more than ever, we also need British politicians, unions and activists, to stand by us to demand a solution that will demilitarize Cyprus and put an end to the anachronistic guarantees (in place since the 1960 Treaty of Guarantee setting the UK, Turkey and Greece as guarantor powers), as well as to any intervention rights. We want you to join with us in fighting for a reunified Cyprus that is a bridge of peace, cooperation and understanding in the trouble Eastern Mediterranean.

**Vera Polycarpou** is the head of the International Relations Bureau and central committee member of Cyprus' AKEL party

Left: Cypriots demonstrate for unity  
Above: Cyprus under occupation



## interview/women's voices /

Support networks are being formed by women, especially in the poorest neighbourhoods. Our COVID experience has made us determined that there will be no return to "normality" since a society of social apartheid is not normal.

### A view from Brazil, India and the Lebanon



**The current economic crisis of capitalism, which followed years of neo-liberal austerity and gathered momentum from mid-2019 onwards, was already taking an enormous toll when COVID-19 struck with devastating effect.**

Marie Nassif-Debs – left  
Annie Raja – centre  
Socorro Gomes - right

**P**re-pandemic, millions of people, most of them women, in many parts of the world, were being lined up, as always, to pay the heaviest price for an economic depression they bore no responsibility for creating – through massive job losses and, for those still in work, huge pay cuts, a sharp deterioration in conditio

ns and an explosion of insecure contracts. The pandemic broadened and deepened the crisis, especially for the peoples of countries still suffering from the legacy of colonial exploitation and impacted by the continuing economic, political and military interventions of foreign powers and the ravages of reactionary regimes at home - all in pursuit of mega profits, without regard for the needs of the majority of citizens. Both the economic crisis and pandemic have had a disproportionate and crushing impact on the world's women and particularly on the poorest and those who are dispossessed. But their struggle continues.

Here, Liz Payne of Liberation (LP) talks with three world-leading politicians and campaigners from different continents about

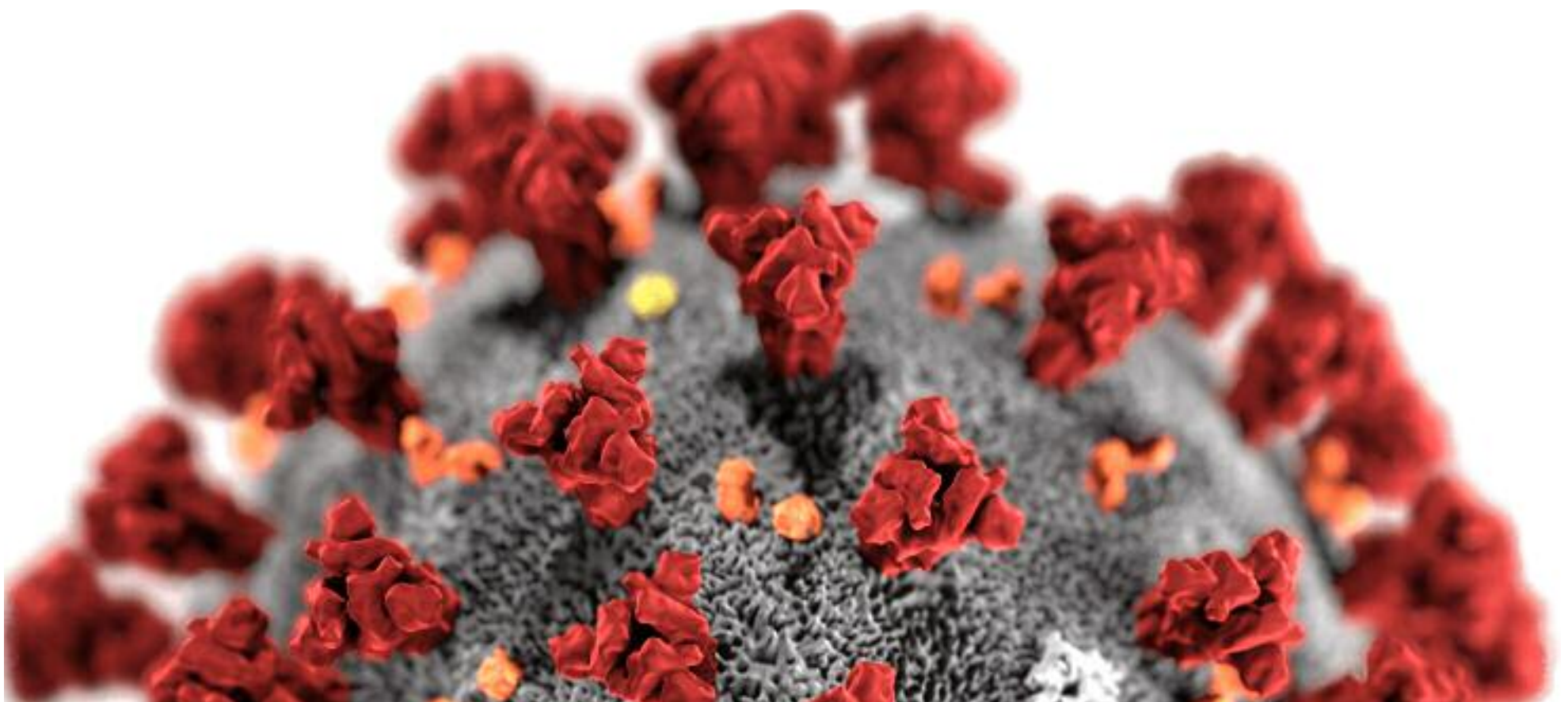
female poverty and misogyny in the context of the current crisis. Annie Raja (AR) is general secretary of the National Federation of Indian Women and a vice-president of the Women's international Democratic Federation. Marie Nassif-Debs (MND) is a politician and president of 'Equality: The Wardah Boutros Association for Women's Rights' in Lebanon. Socorro Gomes (SG) is president of both the World Peace Council and Cebrapaz, the Brazilian peace and solidarity movement. Liberation wishes to thank them all for their contributions and, at the same time, pledges its support for the ongoing struggle for justice and equality for women everywhere.

**LP: It is well known that women across the world are disproportionately affected by poverty. Can you comment on this in respect of women in your country and say something about the way in which the current economic crisis has impacted on them?**

**MND:** Women are the poorest of the world's poor and women in Lebanon are no exception. They are held back by illiteracy and unemployment. The majority of women who do work are low paid, receiving less than 70% of male earnings. Most are not registered for social security. In the current economic crisis, which exploded in October 2019, more than half of all Lebanese people live without work, below the poverty line.

According to the Ministry of Labour, there are more than a million unemployed people, 65% of the adult population. Most are women and young people. A UN study reports that the number of out-of-work women has increased by 106,750 in a year.

**SG:** Women in Brazil are the greatest victims of the economic crisis and disastrous neoliberal policies, such as cuts in social provision, for example to child education and health. This is made worse by the pandemic, with the piling up of responsibilities onto women, such as childcare and looking after the elderly. This takes its toll on women's participation in





# poverty, misogyny and crisis

What is needed also is the establishment of anti-discrimination discourse by cultural and civic institutions and the removal of barriers and restrictions on women's civic, cultural and political participation, freedoms and activities

the labour market, as evidenced by a drop in the employment rate in 2020 to the lowest in 30 years. These policies have also led to greater exposure to the COVID pandemic.

**AR:** In India, exclusion of the poor and marginalized and unprecedented inequality are the hallmarks of neo-liberalism. Instead of safeguarding lives and livelihoods, government policies are aimed at perpetuating corporate profits.

As a result, 96% of women have been pushed into the unorganized sector, without rights and solely for exploitation. Women's participation in the workforce has fallen drastically to 20% in 2018-19. The government has stepped away from basic sectors such as health, education, and employment. New legislation has been passed, for example the Aadhaar Act, making personal digital identity registration mandatory for accessing basic constitutional rights. It excludes millions and the biggest victims are women and children.

**LP:** To what extent does misogyny, both institutional and individual, play a role in limiting the possibility for achieving justice and women's equality in your society?

**SG:** Brazil has one of the worst murder rates for women, with a femicide once every nine hours. Corrosive prejudice against women is deeply rooted in the country and a backward misogynistic culture prevails. This permeates the current government, which is revoking public policies achieved through decades of struggle on the part of Brazilian women in areas such as female health, inclusive education, and other important affirmative policies. This systematic attack is resulting in a huge reversal of hard-won gains. Attempts to make violence against women socially acceptable have been given weight by a government known for opposing women's emancipation and equal rights.

**AR:** Even in the 21st century India maintains its patriarchal, feudal attitude towards women. It creates every type of barrier against women's achievement of their full potential. The Indian Constitution assures equality and justice to all citizens, but governments have not translated this into affirmative policies and actions impacting the lives of women. Today women are challenged with fundamentalist 'manuwadi' ideology, which resembles Hitler's vision of women. Women's struggles had succeeded in pressurizing the State to pass numerous 'women friendly' laws, including equal pay, which serve to ensure dignity and a better position. But the present government is dismantling all

such legislation. Misogyny has become the norm, and this reinforces women's secondary position in society.

**MND:** Misogyny is one of the main causes of widening inequality. In Lebanon, it arises from the sectarian political system and the various Christian and Islamic personal status laws which differentiate between women and men and ascribe secondary status to women. Their position is reflected in both public and private life - starting with parliament and ending with domestic violence - as well as in the role of women in the production process. It is also reflected in a number of civil laws, including denial of the right of women to pass their nationality to their children.

**LP:** In what ways has the COVID-19 pandemic been particularly detrimental to the lives of women and their families and how will this affect the women's struggle going forward?

**AR:** COVID has accelerated discrimination and devastation, destroying the livelihood and income of all sections of women, who have become the shock absorbers of the family. As hospitals turn away patients, other than those with COVID, the additional responsibility of looking after the elderly and sick has fallen to women. Women have become unpaid care-workers. The situation debars them from participating in collective bargaining for their rights as citizens/workers. During the pandemic, violence against women has increased.

While schools remain closed, online education will see an increased drop out of girls, millions of whom live in huts without smart phones, electricity, or internet. Their future will become a major challenge.

**MND:** In Lebanon too, the impact of the Corona pandemic on working women has compounded that of the economic crisis in terms of job loss and hence loss of income, high rates of dismissal, and increased family and childcare duties, which already placed a much greater burden on women than on men. Hence, our priority in the future will be a return to the slogan "Regulate the labour market and provide social protection for working women!"

**SG:** The pandemic does not discriminate, but it does disproportionately affect the poor, those living on the margins and in the slums of Brazil, completely unprotected and without access to any publicly funded assistance. COVID has placed a huge extra burden on the shoulders of women, who are caring for children and other family members and supporting their families,

## A view from Iran

The spread of coronavirus has impacted every aspect of people's lives and affected their livelihoods. Iran's economy was in a dire state already before COVID-19.

by Dr Azar Sepehr

The rate of unemployment among the population of working age is reported to be 12.4%, at 3 million people.

The percentage of women in unemployment is twice that of men. The most significant areas of employment where women are represented in larger numbers are in education and the health service. Although women do participate in higher education, they are not able to access appropriately paid work in their fields. The pay gap between men and women is very high. University graduates with postgraduate degrees have to work for minimal pay, no health insurance and no holiday pay. Recruitment agents exploit these young people by only offering below minimum pay. The supply is high, and employers have no incentive to pay any more. High inflation further reduces the actual value of any earnings. Job opportunities are fewer for women as many employers, in the public and private sector, prefer men for permanent posts.

Privatisations in the health service have also led to the worsening of the conditions of the workers and the poor, as profits are prioritised over the needs of patients, and the pay of nurses and medical staff are cut. In recent weeks news of the dismissal of nurses at a private hospital and the adjustment of the pay scales, while nurses are on the frontline of the battle with COVID 19, has puzzled the public in Iran. Temporary contracts are the norm, not only in private hospitals, but also in state-run hospitals attached to universities. Limited 89-day contracts predominate for nurses, the majority of whom are women.

Employers prevent the nurses from qualifying for the benefits that contracts over 90 days would afford them. In addition, poverty adds a new dimension to the threat of COVID-19. It is no secret that death from coronavirus is more prevalent among the poor because they do not have access to healthcare. The deputy Head of the Health Service in the country has admitted as much.

Women have been also impacted due their role in the home looking after their children, the unpaid housework, and the need to keep a paid job in order to look after themselves and their families. Women dominate the number of street vendors who sell their wares on pavements or on the Metro. The reduction in the number of people travelling, and a reluctance to purchase things due to the threat of the virus, has meant serious loss of income for these poverty-stricken women.

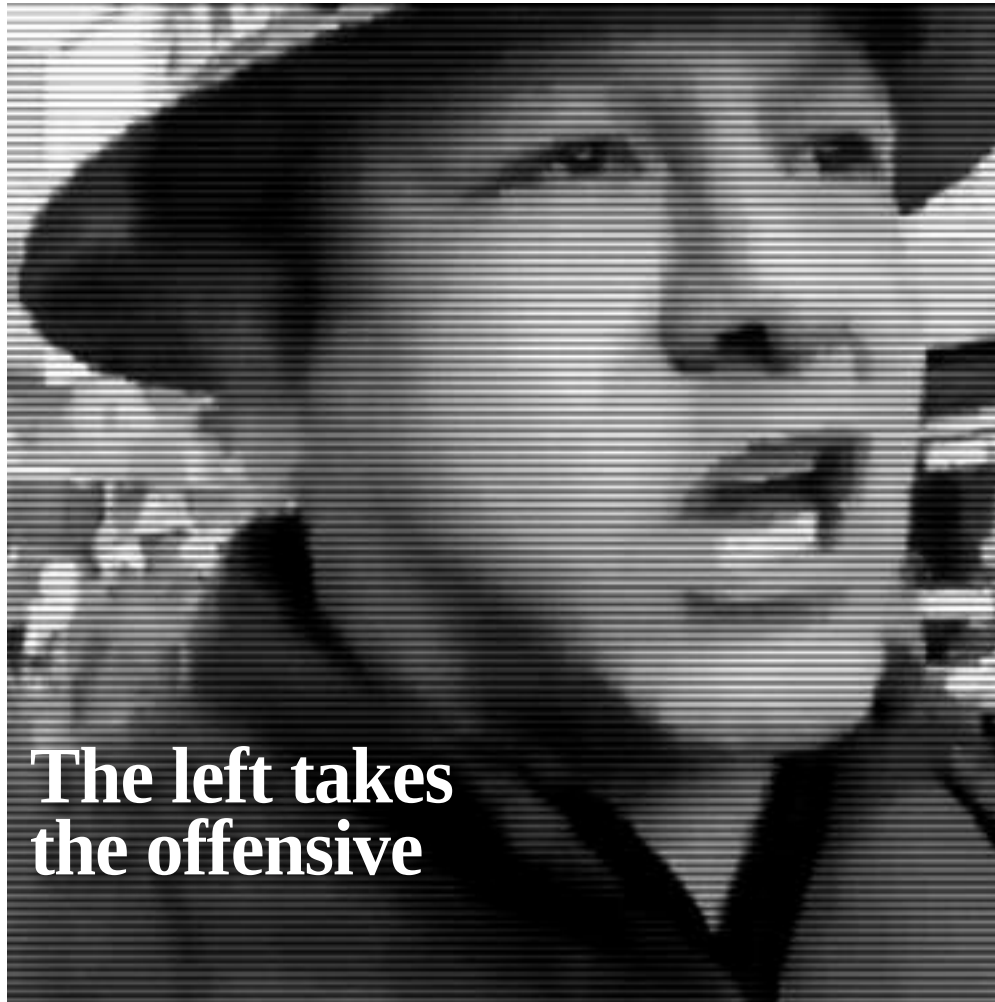
My organisation, the Democratic Organisation of Iranian Women (DOIW), continues its work campaigning for equal rights, fighting misogynistic laws, child marriage, segregation laws that deprive women of the right to education, and social, cultural and political life. DOIW continues to oppose the regressive and discriminatory Family Protection Law, its campaign against child marriage and promotion of UN initiatives against violence against women are as relevant today as ever. In its most recent statement, our organisation has condemned the horrific murder of the young girl, Romina Ashrafi, at the hands of her father, under the pretext of 'honour' killing, an event that shook Iran and yet is all too common under the Islamic Republic's laws that do not value girls and women.

What is also needed is the establishment of anti-discrimination discourse by cultural and civic institutions and the removal of barriers and restrictions on women's civic, cultural and political participation, freedoms and activities. The Islamic Republic must be made to ratify and implement international conventions to which it is signatory, such as ILO C87, C98. The regime has obstinately refused to sign the Bill for an end to violence against women. It must be made to do so. The government must take measures to deploy women's abilities - their knowledge, expertise and skills - to assist with macroeconomic and social development goals. Social, economic and political participation of women should be recognised as an undeniable right for them and the society as a whole. Segregation must end in higher education. The limits for the number of female students that gain access to university, some at 10%, must end. Employment law must cease to discriminate against women and their access to employment.

This is an edited version of an interview published in *Iran Today*

## analysis/Latin America

Mass resistance, especially from the poor and the indigenous population in Ecuador, Honduras, Costa Rica, Chile, Paraguay, Colombia, Brazil, Guatemala, the United States and so forth, followed the positive developments in Mexico and Argentina



### The left takes the offensive

**Donald Trump's electoral defeat at the 3 November 2020 elections may offer opportunities for the Latin American Left to strengthen its slow, though visible, political recuperation.**

by **Francisco Domínguez**

Since the 2008 world economic crisis that hit Latin America hard, US imperialism and its oligarchic allies in the region, have been able to score substantial victories against the Left and the advance of democracy and social progress in the region.

In 2009 these retrograde forces managed to oust Honduras' president Manuel Zelaya; in 2010 they waged a near successful coup d'état against president Rafael Correa in Ecuador. They succeeded in carrying out a 'constitutional' coup against president Fernando Lugo in Paraguay in 2012.

In 2015, after four years of destabilisation against president Cristina Fernandez, right wing Mauricio Macri, became president of Argentina; in 2016, through the most systematic use of lawfare, right-wing parliamentary and judicial forces impeached Dilma Rousseff, the first ever female president of Brazil; they falsely indicted former president Lula, imprisoned him and prevented him from being a presidential candidate, which would eventually lead to the election of fascist Jair Bolsonaro as Brazil's president in 2018.

In Ecuador, after being elected with the votes of the Left in 2017, Lenin Moreno betrayed and joined forces with the most reactionary forces in his country; in 2018 the Left was defeated at the polls in El Salvador leading to the election of extreme right winger Nayib Bukele.

Also in 2018, Uribista Iván Duque, elected as president of Colombia, would renege on the peace process, and under his mandate hundreds

of social activists are being murdered; in the same year, pro-Pinochet politician, Sebastian Piñera, was elected president of Chile; and last but not least in November 2019, with the complicity of the Organization of American States (OAS) General Secretary, Luis Almagro<sup>1</sup>, Bolivian president, Evo Morales, was ousted in a coup d'état inaugurating a de facto racist and highly repressive government.

#### Trump

Furthermore, extreme right winger Donald Trump was elected to the White House, whose government launched a host of economic sanctions against Cuba, Nicaragua and especially Venezuela, setting in motion and financing violent "regime change" offensives in Venezuela in 2016 and Nicaragua in 2018. The offensive against Venezuela continues today.

Some superficial commentators have sought to explain these setbacks by what they call the end of the "progressive cycle" as though, the class struggle was a biological phenomenon. But recent developments have demonstrated that there was more biology than class struggle in the content of their inadequate analyses.

The Covid-19 pandemic threw the right wing victories, including that of Trump in the US, into turmoil and disarray. The utter inadequacy of putting profits first when dealing with the pandemic has exposed not only how useless right-wing governments are at providing a well worked out and comprehensive plan, but also how unfair capitalism is. This incompetence has dramatically affected right wing administrations the world over, from Poland to the U.S., Latin America above all. But whereas Trump has been criminally irresponsible in disparaging all protective measures to reduce viral transmission, Bolsonaro has publicly stated people should not be afraid of Covid-19 for "Brazil is not a country of queers."

#### First fightback

Perhaps the first instance of progressive forces fighting back against the nasty neoliberal wave that had descended on the region since 2008-09, was the election in July 2018 of left wing politician, Andrés Manuel López Obrador (or AMLO as he is popularly known), to the presidency of Mexico, a country that had been under the grip of neoliberalism and under the thump of US imperialism at least since 1994. AMLO also won absolute majorities in Congress and Senate, and most of the governorships.

Ever since, he has implemented a slow but steady reversal of decades of brutal neoliberal policies, and is substantially contributing to the regrouping of the Latin American Left by setting up the Puebla Group<sup>2</sup> that opposes external (primarily US) interference in the internal affairs of the region's nations. Key members of the Puebla Group are Lula, Rafael Correa and Evo Morales.<sup>3</sup>

This was followed by the election of

Peronista Alberto Fernández as president and Cristina Fernández (no relation) as vice-president of Argentina in October 2019. They inherited a country in complete social and political mess, with a staggering external debt of US\$270 bn, accumulated in barely 2 years thanks to Macri's criminal irresponsibility and aggravated by the pandemic. Thus the conditions for reversing neoliberal policies are difficult but as with AMLO, Alberto is slowly steering Argentina in the right direction. It is important to stress that had it not been for both AMLO and Fernández, who offered asylum and used their influence and good offices, Evo Morales and many of his key ministers would have probably been arrested, maltreated, and possibly even assassinated. And both have publicly opposed Trump's interference and aggression against Venezuela.

#### Mass resistance

Mass resistance, especially from the poor and the indigenous population in Ecuador, Honduras, Costa Rica, Chile, Paraguay, Colombia, Brazil, the United States and so forth, followed the positive developments in Mexico and Argentina. They came onto the streets by their millions to condemn the uselessness of right wing administrations in dealing with the pandemic, reject the policies that favoured the interests of big capital over those of people, and demanded specific actions to remedy the situation.

They were thoroughly justified. In many countries the informal sector of the economy is significant and if people cannot work daily, they simply cannot eat. Furthermore, anger was fuelled by the death and criminal neglect of hundreds of thousands of Covid-19 patients who, in some cases, were not even buried. Privatisation has become very unpopular.

Mass rebellion in Chile<sup>4</sup> led the masses to demand and win the right to hold a referendum to change not only the constitution bequeathed by Pinochet but also the economic model: free-market neoliberalism. On October 25, over 77% voted for this change, throwing into turmoil the 'most successful' neoliberal experiment in the world.

Even more significant, on October, the mass movement supportive of the MAS, Evo's political party, won the general elections with 55% (larger than the vote Evo obtained in November 2019 - 47%) and absolute majorities in both Congress and Senate. Bolivia's new president is Luis Arce, former minister of economics in Evo's governments and architect of the country's extraordinary economic performance for over a decade<sup>5</sup>.

In mid-November, in Perú in reaction to the right wing controlled Congress' decision to impeach president Martin Vizcarra, a mass movement took to the streets forcing the resignation of Congress' appointee, president Mario Merino, who lasted only 3 days. The masses are now in the streets demanding a constituent assembly.



## comment/Guyana

The focus of the new PPP government of President Mohamed Irfaan Ali has been to respond responsibly to the health crisis and reboot the economy, relieve citizens' burdens, restore hope, rebuild confidence and re-engineer development to the benefit of all Guyanese

These developments halt the recent reassertion of US hegemony in the region; if not in tatters, it is moving rapidly in reverse. Furthermore, despite Trump's strenuous efforts to bring about 'regime change' in Nicaragua, Cuba and Venezuela, the US President has failed resoundingly, even though he has caused a great deal of harm. The OAS is to a large degree neutralised as a US weapon of intervention and the Lima Group, set up by Trump to overthrow President Maduro's government, is crumbling.

As we write news broke out of mass rebellion in Guatemala against the government budget. The police are using brutal repression and live ammunition (several gravely wounded and many arrests). The parliament building has been set on fire and the country's vice president, Guillermo Castillo, is publicly calling for himself and president Alejandro Giammatei to resign "for the good of the nation."

President Luis Arce has restored full diplomatic relations with Venezuela and Cuba; these had been severed by Bolivia's de facto racist regime. Bolivia and other Latin American governments are reinitiating UNASUR and CELAC, regional multilateral bodies central to economic integration. And TELESUR, cut off by Macri under orders from Pompeo and the diabolical machinery in the US State Dept., has reopened in Argentina. After 6 December, Venezuela will have a new National Assembly, politically pulverising Guaidó6, Trump's fictional 'president'. And soon Trump will no longer be in charge. Nevertheless, Uncle Sam is likely to continue interference and aggression in his 'backyard', so solidarity will be needed more than ever. Venceremos!

- 1 Luis Almagro must resign  
<https://peoplesdispatch.org/2020/10/25/calls-intensify-for-resignation-of-oas-secretary-general-luis-almagro/>
- 2 <https://www.grupodepuebla.org/en/a-un-ano-de-su-creacion-el-grupo-de-puebla-se-instala-como-el-bloque-progresista-con-mas-impacto-politico-de-iberoamerica/>
- 3 There is a string of excellent articles on AMLO's policies by David Raby in <https://prruk.org>, which I strongly recommend everyone to read to immunize themselves from the mainstream media.
- 4 <https://prruk.org/the-battle-for-chile/>
- 5 <https://www.coha.org/eleven-years-of-the-process-of-change-in-evo-morales-bolivia/>

**Dr Francisco Dominguez** is head of the Research Group on Latin America at Middlesex University where he is secretary of the Venezuela Solidarity Campaign. Dominguez came to Britain in 1979 as a Chilean political refugee. Active on Latin American issues, he is co-author of *Right Wing politics in the New Latin America*.

Above left: Bolivian miners march in support of MAS. Telesur image.

## Guyana government

### Promising prospects with new People's Progressive Party administration

by **Gail Teixeira**

The new Government of the Cooperative Republic of Guyana came into office on 2 August 2020. This came about after what are considered historic and unprecedented circumstances, even at the global level, following the

2 March General and Regional Elections and a fourteen month struggle to hold free and fair elections prompted by the successful passage of a no confidence motion on 21 December 201

In the midst of these events, Guyana was also experiencing the spread of the Covid-19 pandemic within its borders with no annual budget for 2020 and no sitting of the Parliament for over a year with a caretaker government shamelessly engaged in corruption, squander mania, unauthorized forays in the public purse and the unlawful disposal of public resources.

The focus of the [new PPP government of President Mohamed Irfaan Ali *pictured above left*] has been to respond responsibly to the health crisis and reboot the economy, relieve citizens' burdens, restore hope, rebuild confidence and re-engineer development to the benefit of all Guyanese.

#### Responding to health crisis and immediate challenges

The former government's response to the Covid 19 pandemic was hopelessly inadequate and irresponsible; valuable time was lost in the early stages to put the health sector across the country in order with adequate drugs, medical supplies, equipment and staff. The interior regions suffered the most from neglect; the fact that the some of the highest number of the cases are emerging from the three of the four interior regions is not surprising.

The new government of foremost priority has been to craft a response that is comprehensive and multifaceted. A national multi-stakeholders taskforce was assembled; increased testing capacity and turnaround



time with the procurement of equipment and supplies; acquired adequate supplies of personal protective gear; procurement of ventilators, oxygen concentrators and other equipment necessary for treating patients; enhanced capacity of regional hospitals to treat coronavirus patients; acquired much needed drugs to improve patients' recovery. Guyana has also signed on to the facility being provided by the Vaccine Alliance to allow it to access a COVID-19 vaccine.

Due to the closure of schools and limited access to connectivity in several regions and levels of poverty, the government has used a multi-faceted approach to provide children with lessons through radio stations, the Learning Channel (tv), newspapers and worksheets. Face-to-face classes resumed for Grades 10, 11 and 12, only under strict COVID-19 protocols.

#### Rebooting the economy, relieving burdens

Within 21 days in office, the new government was able to craft an Emergency Budget which was passed the National Assembly on September 30, 2020. It is aimed at rebooting the economy - stimulating productive sectors, attracting new investment, creating employment (930,000 jobs were lost under the former government) and improving the economy's competitiveness- while ensuring that people benefitted from relief measures.

The government launched an almost five billion-dollar COVID-19 relief grant which is providing every household with G\$25,000 (\$125USD); almost 60% of the population have already benefitted. Frontline workers will benefit from a G\$150M risk allowances. It removed the unconscionable VAT on water, electricity and data services and restored tax exempt status on essential items. We have restored free water for pensioners and increased the government-funded old age pensions.

Farmers will also benefit as fees for drainage and irrigation services and land leases were reversed to the pre-2015 rates. Small grants are available to micro and small businesses through the government.

The government reintroduced the education cash grant and increased the amount to every child registered in school; the universal school uniform allowance was also increased.

#### Restoring Guyana's Confidence

In the first 100 days, the government has begun to lay the groundwork for transformational infrastructural change including the new Demerara River Harbour Crossing, a bridge link between the Republic of Surinam and Guyana, a new four-lane highway to open up new areas and improve traffic, a 250 MW gas project, a mix of energy-generation projects, including hydro and solar power. Guyana's Low Carbon Development Strategy which was banished by the former government will be updated and be the underpinning of Guyana's environment friendly transformational developmental path.

The Guyanese people want the opportunities and chances to improve their lives and those of their children; whilst ethnic insecurities, real and perceived, do exist these can be overcome with good governance - equal access to government goods and services, equal access to redress, equal opportunities for training, scholarships and business development.

As Guyana's President Irfaan Ali said on his government's first 100 days in office: "Guyana's prospects have never been more promising."

**Gail Teixeira** is Minister of Parliamentary Affairs and Governance *pictured above right*

This is an edited version of an article published on Liberation website.



The legitimate demands and aspirations of the young protesters can only be achieved through defeating the corrupt ethno-sectarian power-sharing system and laying the foundations for the democratic alternative

## Turkey Neo-Ottoman designs and the war in the Caucasus

In recent years, there has been an alarming and increasingly fierce assertion of Turkey's supposed interests on the international stage by the autocratic administration of Recep Tayyip Erdoğan

by **Payam Solhtalab**



Right: US and Turkish troops meet in northern Syria  
Wikimedia Commons/ US government image

## Iraq Popular protests continue despite repression

Rising repression, killing and the intimidation of civil activists since last year's uprising has strengthened the resolve of the protesters to struggle for change

by **Liberation's Iraq correspondent**

The first anniversary of the October 2019 uprising in Iraq, an unprecedented event in the country's modern history, was celebrated on 1 October 2020 with mass rallies in Baghdad and other provinces, demonstrating beyond any doubt that the spirit of the uprising is still alive.

On 25 October 2020, thousands of students, youth and women, supported by workers and professional unions, marched to Liberation(Tahrir) Square in central Baghdad and in other major cities in central and southern Iraq. They demanded once again that the criminals responsible for killing more than 700 young protesters be brought to justice. Other demands included investigating corruption cases, putting an end to the militia-

type armed formations, asserting the rule of law and ensuring free and fair early elections. However, an election law that has been recently endorsed by the parliament only serves the ruling blocs and perpetuates the ethno-sectarian power-sharing system installed in the aftermath of the US war and occupation of Iraq in 2003 and the overthrow of Saddam Hussein's dictatorship.

### Repressive measures

The government responded in the early hours of Saturday 31 October 2020 by sending security forces into Tahir Square in Baghdad to dismantle by force the tents of protesters who had been staging a sit-in during the previous months. In Basra, live

## Iran Change is possible

The final weeks of Donald Trump's hold on the White House are fraught with danger but a new administration in the United States holds out the possibility of change

by **Jane Green**

The Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), widely known as the Iran nuclear deal, agreed between the Western powers, including the United States, and the Islamic Republic of Iran in 2015 was one of the first foreign policy casualties of the Donald Trump presidency. Since the United States' withdrawal from the JCPOA, in May 2018, a period of uncertainty has existed in relations between the two countries and across the Middle East.

The United States has used the demonisation of the Islamic Republic as cover for changing the balance of forces in the Middle East, in particular the negotiation of agreements with the United Arab Emirates

and Bahrain to recognise and trade with Israel. At a stroke Trump has blown apart the fragile alliance of Arab states supporting the rights of Palestinians to self-determination, in opposition to the illegal Israeli occupation of Palestinian territory.

The prospect of normalising relations between Saudi Arabia and Israel, already united in their opposition to the spread of Iranian influence in the region, and with it the possibility of military action against Iran may not be far away. The dangers are underlined by the recent mission of two US B52 bombers which conducted a surprise, round-trip to the Persian Gulf area allegedly "to deter aggression and reassure U.S. partners and allies".



# the Caucasus and the Middle East

The position of the Iranian people continues to be that of being squeezed between the incompetence of the government inside the country and the threat of economic and military actions from those outside the country

This aggressive manoeuvring, while evident throughout Erdoğan's tenure at the top, has seemingly moved up a gear since the 2016 failed coup d'état attempted by sections of the country's armed forces in July 2016. This event gave added impetus to the Erdoğan administration's "2023 vision", a list of purported goals and objectives to be achieved by the time of the centenary of the founding of the Turkish Republic - also coinciding with the country's next scheduled general election.

The international dimension of this vision entails a resurrection of Turkey's stature as the power in the region and reclamation of the mantle it lost upon the defeat and demise of the Ottoman Empire a century ago.

On 29 August 2018, in a message marking the 96th anniversary of Turkey's "Victory Day", Erdoğan stated, "Turkey reaching its goals for 2023 will shape the future of our entire region along with that of ours."

As part of this neo-Ottoman outlook, Erdoğan's Turkey is looking eastwards and to a reassertion of its perceived "natural" position and role in the Turkic-populated lands of the former Soviet Union, towards the western frontiers of China - and, of course, immediately so to the Caucasus region.

Thus, the Armenian people have once more found themselves bearing the brunt of Ankara's malevolent designs and intent - with Turkey

looking to cement its influence and prestige in the Caucasus at the expense of a Russian Federation perhaps perceived as more vulnerable and pre-occupied with the situations elsewhere in the former Soviet Union (Belarus and Ukraine), not to mention its continuing engagements in the ongoing conflicts in Syria and Libya.

This was made abundantly clear by Turkey's pivotal role in the recent renewed offensive by the Republic of Azerbaijan on the territories in and around the ethnic Armenian populated and administered enclave of Artsakh (Nagorno-Karabakh). Under the oft-repeated slogan of "Two States, One Nation", Erdoğan encouraged and facilitated a move by President Ilham Aliyev in Baku to break what was essentially a stalemate over the issue and its resolution, by means of force. Indeed, all major outbreaks of fighting (April 2016, July 2020, and September 2020) since the 1994 ceasefire that brought an end to the first conflict over the area following the collapse of the Soviet Union were provoked by offensives from the Azerbaijani side of the line of contact, with overt backing from Turkey.

Following the cessation of fighting in summer 2020, Turkey conducted joint military exercises with the Azerbaijani armed forces. It is now known that a significant swathe of the military personnel involved in these exercises remained behind in Azerbaijan to oversee the

planning and execution of the autumn offensive - including a tactical battalion, high-ranking officers, and instructors. Air cover was to be provided by Turkish warplanes and attack helicopters. A large amount of high-grade military hardware was also built up during this time, including of "Bayraktar TB-2" and "Hermes 900" military drones - supplied by Turkey and Israel respectively - which were deployed to devastating effect.

## Islamist fighters

Turkey also recruited upwards of 2000 Islamist fighters from Idlib in Syria, with a smaller contingent from Libya, for deployment in Azerbaijan as forward units in the offensive. Captured Syrian fighters have confirmed their brief was to "cut the throats of the kafirs [non-Muslims]". Their deployment, particularly around the south-eastern flank of Artsakh (Nagorno-Karabakh) meant the presence of roving bands of Sunni Arab jihadis within just a few miles of Iran's north-western border, further destabilising an already volatile area. Turkey has previous form here, having helped to assemble a murderous umbrella force - comprising of Grey Wolves ultra-nationalist paramilitaries, Chechen militia, and Afghan mujahedin - to act in a similar capacity during the war in the 1990s.

Also fanned by Turkey, the fiery rhetoric that accompanied this conflict served to incite ethno-sectarian sentiment unsettling a small but vocal part of Iran's huge Azeri ethnic minority population leading to several demonstrations in the country in support of Azerbaijan's offensive.

While, tellingly, the Aliyev regime has refused to be drawn on the number of its military casualties; it is clear that the Armenian forces and Artsakh Defence Army were unprepared to sustain a similar level. Since then, the Armenian government has continued to publicly reveal numerous instances of atrocities and human rights abuses perpetrated by the Azerbaijani forces as they advanced. The spectacle of Aliyev gloatingly mocking Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan in a televised address following the ceasefire should leave no one in any doubt as to the nature of this supposed victory and what it represents.

Russia may have moved to bring a halt to the war and re-establish itself as the de-facto power broker on the ground in the South Caucasus, yet this episode has served to underline Turkey's mal-intent and bolster its influence in the region. And, the menace of a revived toxic pan-Turkism does not portend well for anyone.

Payam Solhtalab is a campaigner for peace and détente in the Middle East

bullets were used and a young protester was killed. These attacks were a culmination of concerted efforts by ruling forces to put an end to the uprising, using various means to sabotage and contain the protest movement. They also exposed the duplicity of the current interim government towards the protesters and their just demands.

## Us/Iranian consensus

The interim government headed by Prime Minister Mustafa al-Kadhimi had been approved by parliament in June 2020 after six months of deadlock. But his nomination was a result of an American - Iranian consensus and came as a compromise

among the dominant ruling blocs.

The recent repressive measures against the peaceful protesters show that the al-Kadhimi government, despite claiming otherwise, has effectively served the agendas of the forces that brought it to power.

The illusion that the protest movement would end by forcibly removing sit-in protesters was soon shattered when thousands demonstrated in Baghdad demanding jobs.

On 15 November, the media reported that 7,000 unemployed university graduates and engineers staged sit-ins in front of three ministries. Another cause of mounting popular anger is the deterioration of health services, with hospitals losing control as coronavirus cases surge.

With just under two months left in office, there remains the danger that Trump will take a military foreign policy initiative that will damage the chances of a new administration being able to chart its own course.

## Continuity

The Biden-Harris ticket will not break with US foreign policy in its support for Israel but is unlikely to be quite as reckless towards Iran. As Vice-President to Barack Obama, Biden was part of the administration which orchestrated the Iran nuclear deal. That Biden is unlikely to view the deal in hostile terms will not be lost on Trump. A last-ditch spanner in the

works to pitch the new administration into immediate crisis, should not be ruled out.

Trump will also be aware that the ongoing struggle to control the COVID-19 pandemic will be a major priority for a Biden administration. With the US still the world leader in the death count from the disease, Biden is unlikely to want to risk body bags returning from a bloody conflict in the Middle East. The regime in Iran may be many things but it would not be a pushover militarily. Trump will know this and a final act of provocation could be his legacy.

For the people of Iran, the situation remains bleak. Widespread protests against economic mismanagement and corruption

The dire economic conditions have been further aggravated by a deepening financial crisis caused by the sharp fall in oil prices. Iraq's rentier economy relies heavily on oil revenues to fund 95% of the budget and state expenditure. These revenues have plunged to an average \$3.5 billion a month, half the \$7 billion a month needed to pay urgent expenses. As a result, in recent months the government had difficulty in paying the salaries of more than 4 million government employees on time.

## Democratic Alternative

The escalation of repression and the killing and intimidation of civil activists has only strengthened the resolve of the protesters

to continue their peaceful, multi-faceted struggle for radical change.

It has helped to highlight the need to learn vital lessons from their own experience, address the weaknesses in the protest movement, especially unifying its ranks and developing more effective forms of leadership at local and national level. It has shown, once again, that the legitimate demands and aspirations of the young protesters can only be achieved through defeating the corrupt ethno-sectarian power-sharing system and laying the foundations for the democratic alternative: a civil democratic state and social justice.

continue. The tightening of economic sanctions by the Trump administration has only served to make what was already a bad situation for the Iranian people even worse. The inability to trade major commodities, oil in particular, has plunged the economy into near hyper-inflation with the associated redundancies, job insecurity and impoverishment which inevitably follows.

The position of the Iranian people continues to be that of being squeezed between the incompetence of the government inside the country and the threat of economic and military actions from those outside the country, seeking to determine Iran's future direction.

That future direction is one which should be in the hands of the Iranian people themselves. Increasingly the voice of the opposition in Iran is being heard. Continued solidarity from the Labour and trade union movement in the UK remains a vital element of support for the people of Iran. Every effort to generate support as well as putting pressure upon the UK government to press Iran on its human rights record must be taken. The long-suffering people of Iran deserve no less

Jane Green is campaign organiser of the Committee for the Defence of Iranian Peoples' Rights



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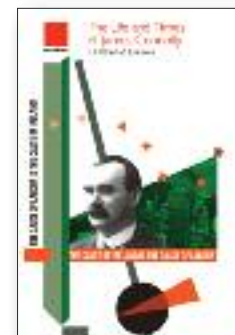
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