From the Editors

written by Editors | February 8, 2024

We are living in awful, yet hopeful, times. As we go to press, several wars are raging. One of them, Israel's ferocious assault on Gaza and its systematic, genocidal massacre of Palestinians, is exacting a greater civilian toll than any conflict in recent years. Another, Russia's invasion of Ukraine, has been going on for almost two years, with huge numbers of casualties and no end in sight. And there are also conflicts taking place in multiple locations in Africa.

These wars are not just humanitarian disasters, they are also entrenching and solidifying foreign occupation (in Kashmir and Western Sahara, as well as Palestine and Ukraine), while making it more likely that powerful states will flout international law in the future.

Simultaneously, authoritarianism has been growing worldwide. In Argentina, a Trump-like character has become president. In India, what was known as the world's largest democracy is moving in an increasingly authoritarian direction. In Europe, far right parties have been surging and entering governing coalitions; Italy has Western Europe's first far-right prime minister since World War II, and in Hungary, Viktor Orbán has become a role model for would-be authoritarians around the world.

In the United States, Trump remains a looming threat, and the Democrats' institutional inability to offer a progressive alternative seriously endangers even the limited democracy of our capitalist system. Meanwhile, the conservative-dominated Supreme Court continues to thwart the popular will as well as suppressing democratic rights.

The Democrats' chances of preventing Trump's return are further diminished by their support for the Israeli war on Gaza. A growing powerful movement — often led by Palestinian groups, Jewish progressive organizations, and diverse young people — has arisen to support Palestine and oppose Washington's scandalous support for Israel's crimes. The left's ability to support — materially and critically — this movement in the heart of the U.S. empire, stands as one of the most urgent tasks of our moment.

The U.S. left can also take heart from a significant renewal of labor activism and militancy over the past year. This has included growing efforts by young workers to unionize their workplaces, strike victories by several large unions (including the Writers Guild of America, SAG-AFTRA, National Nurses United, and the UAW), and a wave of organizing and strikes in higher education. Some union leaders, including the new UAW president Shawn Fain, have also joined the call for a ceasefire in Gaza.

These wars, social struggles, and rising authoritarianism, all take place as the climate crisis

continues to worsen, with the burning of fossil fuels continuing to outpace mitigation efforts, and as international climate conferences like COP28 are dominated by corporations and the oil-producing monarchies of the Middle East. Meanwhile, 2023 has now been designated the hottest year in recorded history.

In this issue of *New Politics* we take up many of these themes. We have a section on Israel's war on Gaza, featuring interviews with two leading experts, Toufic Haddad and Joel Beinin, and a reflection from Leena M. Leena has asked us not to use her real name due to the growing persecution of pro-Palestine activists in the United States, in attacks on academic freedom and civil liberties not seen in decades. There has been an upsurge of antisemitism and Islamophobia since October 7, but there has also been an exponential increase in spurious charges of antisemitism designed to silence criticism of Israel's crimes.

We continue to publish articles on the situation in Ukraine from a socialist perspective. Hanna Perekhoda explores Russia's attitude toward Ukraine and Emily Channell-Justice looks at the role of self-organization and the new left in Ukraine since 2013. In addition, in order to understand one of the chief examples of growing worldwide authoritarianism, Aparna Sundar examines the meaning and record of the Modi government in India.

Dan La Botz surveys the political scene in the United States, highlighting some of the challenges and the responses. Howie Hawkins, a Green Party veteran, discusses the Cornel West and Jill Stein third party campaigns, while Kim Moody offers a critique of left electoralism. Elizabeth Rapaport shows how some of the jurisprudence of the new Supreme Court threatens democracy, while James Gray Pope contributes some lessons from the recent, and successful, Rutgers University strike.

Due to the colonial context of capitalist extraction, struggles for climate justice and decolonization intersect in various ways. Brian Ward looks at the Standing Rock struggle in the United States and Rafael Bernabe focuses on Puerto Rico and the need for political and energy transformation.

To meet these challenges, the left needs to expand its theoretical and political understanding. To that end, we present a debate on the historical record of one of the international left's iconic figures, Che Guevara. Several years ago, Samuel Farber wrote a book-length critique of Guevara. Jeanette Habel and Michael Löwy challenge Farber's interpretation and Farber responds to them. Gar W. Lipow makes a case for using proxies in the democratic structures we want for a future socialist society (as well as in our movements today), and Charles Post turns a critical eye to the ideology of neoliberalism.

Our issue concludes with three reviews. John Marot offers a critique of Simon Pirani's account of early dissent during the Russian Revolution. John Feffer reviews Kevin Funk's account of how Arab immigrants have come to play leading roles in Latin American economies. And John Clarke looks at how the Western surveillance state has been founded on, and expanded, racist logic.

We hope these articles contribute to helping us address these awful times by planting seeds of protest that grow into hopeful futures. We have purposely chosen as our Champion of Justice for this issue a group of Palestinian journalists who have become heroes to many of us. We see in them, and in their efforts to show us and warn us about a genocide happening in real time, the humanity we will need to build a socialist future.

Hind Khoudary, Motaz Azaiza, Plestia Alaqad, and Bisan Owda *are four of the many Palestinian reporters and photojournalists risking their lives to report on the dire conditions in Gaza. At least 63 journalists have been killed as of December 2023. Hind Khoudary's home was destroyed, friends killed, and her family separated. Plestia Alaqad decided wearing her Press vest and helmet was too dangerous, and soon after, temporarily left Gaza because her reporting was endangering her family. Bisan Owda, 25, said, "I no longer have any hope of survival."*

November: "I'm **Bisan Owda** and I'm escaping South. Thousands are walking for three or four hours. Many places are bombed. Even the road around us is being bombed during our walking... I don't have any place to go. I'm going to the unknown. Nowhere to go. Nowhere."

Hind Khoudary: "For the past 28 days I've been exposed to horrifying scenes that have been breaking my heart." "Can you imagine there are people still under the rubble. 24 family members under this rubble." "Last night was a deadly night. It's heartbreaking." "My colleagues and I are literally homeless right now. We don't have any place to work... We've been cut off from electricity and Internet." On the deaths: "No, we are not used to it. Every single time it feels like it's the first time." Her sign-off: "This may be the last."

Plestia Alaqad: "Since I was seven years old I witnessed the brutal killing of my own people and what for— because they are Palestinian civilians. Today is my birthday and I turn 22. All I wish for is to have some joy, all I wish for is Palestine to be free." "How many Palestinians are supposed to die for this to end!"

Motaz Azaiza: "Hi, I'm Motaz. No one is safe... No place in Gaza is safe. I'm asking you all, as humans, to act and protest, to stop this genocide, this killing." "Every day hundreds of Palestinians are getting killed in Gaza and also the West Bank...I hope this is not my last video."