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Assemble 12 noon at Parliament Square, London SW1P 3JX ● March to Hyde Park ● For details go to stopwar.org.uk

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ISRAEL KILLS A GAZA CHILD EVERY 10 MINUTES



IN THE CROSSHAIRS

PALESTINIAN CHILDREN murdered by an Israeli air strike on the al-Maghazi refugee camp, central Gaza, on 5 November 2023

MURDER MADE IN THE WEST

RISE UP AND PROTEST FOR PALESTINE

FIGHTING OPPRESSION

How the right spreads lies about gender

RIGHT WINGERS are trying to paint “gender” and “gender ideology” as a threat to humanity. In their new book *Who’s Afraid of Gender?* Judith Butler exposes the bigotry and the lies that surround such claims.

We need to unite against attempts to set the working class against each other.

>>Pages 14&15

RESISTANCE



US campuses rise in revolt for Palestine

“SOLIDARITY encampments” at United States’ universities were spreading at the start of this week.

Students and workers have defied police and management repression to stand with Gaza and demand disinvestment from firms that profit from Israeli apartheid.

>>Page 3

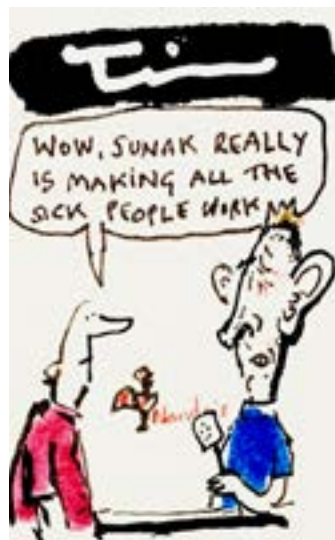
EYEWITNESS IN CAIRO

Egyptian people are ‘desperate and furious’

WILL THE slaughter in Gaza, and economic crisis at home, see Egyptians rise against the regime?

In 2015 the poorest Egyptians spent a quarter of their income on food. Now they spend half. Phil Marfleet writes from the capital, Cairo.

>>Page 17

**THE THINGS THEY SAY****'Take matters into your own hands to get them out of the way'**Republican senator **Tom Cotton** is infuriated by Palestine protesters blocking traffic across the US**'We should have seen a lot more revenge, a lot more rivers of Gazans' blood'**Israeli Today journalist **Yehuda Schlesinger** thinks that over 33,000 dead is not nearly enough, and that there are 'no innocent people in Gaza'**'This has been a very difficult week for me'**Former Tory MP **Mark Menzies** asks for privacy—and £5,000 in unmarked tenners—as he resigns from the party following the latest scandal**'Integrity, professionalism and accountability at every level'**How prime minister **Rishi Sunak** promised to reshape government after taking office in 2022. Some 18 Tories have so far had to resign the party whip, been suspended from it, or had it totally withdrawn in this parliament

Israel's war is one of mass graves and playground killing

PALESTINIAN civil defence crews uncovered a mass grave inside the Nasser Medical Complex, in Gaza's Khan Younis, last week with at least 180 bodies recovered so far.

The horrendous evidence of Israel's crimes came after its military withdrew troops from the southern city on 7 April.

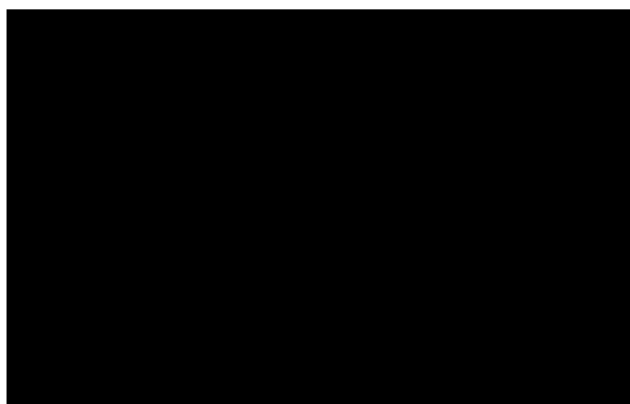
Much of the Khan Younis is in ruins after months of relentless Israeli bombardment and heavy fighting.

Mahmud Bassal, spokesperson for the civil defence agency, said, "There were no clothes on some bodies, which certainly indicates the victims faced torture and abuse."

Some of the bodies had their hands tied behind their backs.

Earlier last week, another mass grave was discovered at al-Shifa hospital.

It was one of several mass graves found after the

**DEAD PALESTINIAN children from last week al-Maghazi massacre**

two-week siege there. Hamas condemned what it said was a "mass grave of those executed in cold blood and buried with military bulldozers in the hospital's courtyard".

Horror

News of further horror came from the UN Agency for Palestine Refugees (Unrwa). It said that a child is

now killed every ten minutes in Gaza. Earlier, the UN Children's Fund (Unicef) said children "are dying at an alarming rate" in Gaza.

"Reports are now that more than 14,000 girls and boys have been killed in Gaza" since 7 October, Unicef spokesperson **James Elder** said on Twitter.

"Perhaps we should say

that slowly. Fourteen thousand. Perhaps we should do something.

"And surely that 'something' is not a military offensive in Rafah," **Elder** emphasised.

He called for an immediate ceasefire, adding that Gaza "is not a place for children right now, but there are more than a million children" there.

Israeli bombs slaughtered at least 11 children at a playground in the al-Maghazi refugee camp on Tuesday of last week.

Witnesses said that following a drone assault, the playground was a "horrific scene of children torn apart".

Al Jazeera's Hani Mahoud said the playground had been set up near a camp for displaced people.

He said it was where parents would send their children for a small break from their lives as displaced people forced to live in tents.

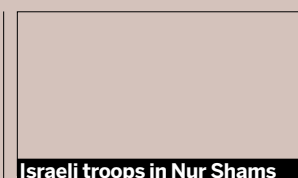
Resistance defiant after West Bank raid

THE ISRAELI state has failed to destroy Palestinian resistance in the West Bank.For 50 hours last week, the Israeli forces targeted the **Nur Shams** refugee camp in **Tulkarm City**.It was reported initially that Israeli soldiers killed the leader of the **Tulkarm Brigade**, **Mohammed Jaber**, known as **Abu Shujaa**.

But he later appeared at the funerals of other resistance fighters who had been killed.

In a statement **Abu Shujaa** said the fight in the West Bank will continue.

"They invaded the camp and the invasion lasted between 50 to 55 hours. It is true that God has chosen martyrs from us, but praise be to God, there was confrontation from our fighting brothers.

**Israeli troops in Nur Shams****"Their side was killed and wounded, but the enemy did not admit to them.****"We challenge the enemy's institutions to admit what happened in al-Iyada neighbourhood, and al-Manshiya neighbourhood and other regions in the camp."****PROTESTERS in London are planning a picket of the BBC on the night of the Eurovision Song Contest.****Activists want British entrant Ollly Alexander to boycott the programme.**

Gather on Thursday 25 April, 6pm, at BBC, Portland Place, London W1A 1AA

Aid trucks waiting to bring food and supplies to Gaza

Starvation in Gaza is a deliberate policy

UNRWA HAS denounced Israel for refusing to let it deliver the food and clean water needed to avert starvation."Across the border, food and clean water wait—but Unrwa is denied permission to deliver this aid and save lives," said Unrwa chief **Philippe Lazzarini** last week.

He added that the horrors of starvation happen in the context of relentless bombing and a "merciless siege that have transformed Gaza beyond recognition".

US national security spokesman **John Kirby** was quick to defend Israel and to argue that**American pressure works.**

He said last Monday that aid into Gaza had "increased and quite dramatically in just the last few days".

Israel claimed 468 aid trucks crossed into Gaza on Tuesday last week, the highest number since 7 October.

Capacity

But Unrwa said that an average of just "181 aid trucks per day" had made it to Gaza in April.

That remains "well below the operational capacity of both border crossings and the target of 500 trucks per day," it said.

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Growing danger of Rafah attack

ISRAELI PRIME minister Binyamin Netanyahu continues to push for a ground invasion of Rafah, in the south of Gaza.

"In the coming days, we will increase the political and military pressure on Hamas because this is the only way to bring back our hostages and achieve victory," he said last Sunday.

"We will land more and painful blows on Hamas, soon."

Officials from Israel and the United States met last week to discuss Israel's military operation in Rafah.

A summary of the meeting said, "US participants expressed concerns with various courses of action in Rafah, and Israeli participants agreed to take these concerns into account."

Separately, another US official said that Israel had presented a plan that would see a gradual operation which targeted specific neighbourhoods in Rafah.

**Biden—'Iron clad' Israeli support**

The Egyptian state also believes that the invasion is imminent.

The New Arab news outlet reported an Egyptian source saying the government has stepped up security in the North Sinai province.

Talk of a "gradual" invasion will be of little comfort to the 1.4 million Palestinians sheltering in Rafah. They know that part of the plan will be to try to push them into the Sinai desert.

Israeli forces have for months bombed Rafah almost every night.

An Israeli air strike there last Sunday killed 22 people—most all of them children.

US president **Joe Biden's** primary motivation in the war is to defend Israel. But he is also under pressure at home, with many voters turning away from the Democrats because of its backing for genocide.That's why the US is expected to announce sanctions against Israel's **Netzah Yehuda Battalion** for human rights violations it has committed in the West Bank.

But the sanctions are a distraction.

If an invasion of Rafah goes ahead, the killing will be on the most terrible scale—and the blood will be on both Biden's and Netanyahu's hands.

US students spread campus occupations for Palestine

by CHARLIE KIMBER

STUDENTS AND workers at Columbia University and Barnard College in the United States defied harsh repression and continued their pro-Palestine protests last weekend.

These are some of the most high-profile campus actions for decades.

Protesters kept up their 50-tent occupation camp of lawns at the prestigious New York institution despite university bosses calling in cops who arrested 108 people.

Police held students in zip ties for up to seven hours. College authorities evicted some of those arrested from student accommodation, cancelled their IDs and barred them from classes.

Student protester Maryam Iqbal said, "I have been suspended and evicted from housing by Barnard. This has only strengthened my commitment to the movement for Palestinian liberation and I promise to continue fighting for divestment."

"To be suspended for Palestine is an honour. To be arrested for Palestine is an honour. When I see that Palestinians in Gaza are telling us to keep protesting, nothing else matters."

The Columbia Spectator, a student newspaper, reported that the cops' action marked the first mass arrests on campus since Vietnam War protests in the 1960s.

Their resistance has become a major focus and has inspired other students to mount their own actions. A "Gaza Solidarity Encampment" began at the New School, just a few miles from Columbia.

On Friday last week hundreds of students at Yale University in Connecticut began a protest and students in Ohio and North Carolina started their own occupation camps.

Further actions were planned this

THE GAZA Solidarity Encampment on Columbia University's campus last week

week at New York University.

The Columbia protest now has three demands. The first is for the university to end all investments in companies that profit from Israeli apartheid.

The second is openness about Columbia's financial investments. And the third is amnesty for all students and workers "disciplined or fired in the movement for Palestinian liberation".

Occupiers chant, "Disclose! Divest! We will not stop we will not rest!" Early on Monday morning the protesters issued a statement about their call for "divestment from genocide". They

said, "We have knowingly put ourselves in danger because we can no longer be complicit in Columbia funneling our tuition dollars and grant funding into companies that profit from death.

"We've been horrified each day, watching children crying over the bodies of their slain parents, families without food to eat, and doctors operating without anaesthesia.

"Our university is complicit in this violence and this is why we protest.

"We will remain until moved by force or Columbia concedes to our demands."

President Joe Biden's officials

condemned what they baselessly called "blatantly antisemitic" statements during the protests. Several of the protesters are Jewish, including Iris Hsiang who said it was the college that had made her feel unsafe.

Pro-Palestinian protesters recently blocked major roads across the US, restricting access to airports including Chicago's O'Hare International and Seattle-Tacoma International. They also blocked the Golden Gate Bridge in San Francisco and Brooklyn Bridge in New York.

Send messages of support for the occupiers via Twitter at twitter.com/ColumbiaSJP

Israel's attack fails to deliver

THE ISRAELI government launched only limited attacks on Iran last week, but that may be because the US has offered support for even more murderous action in Gaza.

The most recent exchanges between Israel and Iran began on 1 April with Israeli blasts at the Iranian consulate in Damascus, Syria. Iran responded on 13 April with drones and missiles against Israel. Fearful of triggering even greater resistance across the Middle East and starting a war it couldn't win, the US urged caution on the Israelis.

Last week's Israeli strikes targeted Iran's Isfahan region in Iran, near a nuclear research base, without causing "any damage" according to the Iranian government.

Israeli leader Binyamin Netanyahu will be pleased



Itamar Ben-Gvir

if the provocations bind the West even closer to Israel and deflect from the genocide in Gaza. But the limited extent of last week's action caused splits in his own side. The far right national security minister Itamar Ben-Gvir tweeted that the response was "dardaleh"—slang for weak, disappointing or poor.

West blocks Palestine at UN

THE US last week vetoed a United Nations security council resolution to grant full member status to a state of Palestine.

The Palestinian Authority has had observer status at the UN since 2012 but cannot vote in proceedings.

The US was the only country voting against. Britain and Switzerland abstained.

The Palestinian envoy to the UN Riyad Mansour said, "The people of Palestine will not disappear, they are a history that cannot be erased no matter the great power, no matter the tyranny." Israel's envoy to the UN Gilad Erdan thanked the US and accused countries who had backed the resolution of deciding to "reward Palestinian terror with a Palestinian state".

The US vote underlines that its two-state plans are a camouflage to deny Palestinian freedom.

Build the workplace action

THE ORGANISERS of the marches for Palestine in Britain have called for workplace and student action on international workers' day—Wednesday 1 May.

The Stop the War Coalition said, "Every collective act, big or small, sends a message to those suffering in Gaza that we are with them and puts pressure on our government to stop arming Israel."

Slogans for the day include "defend the right to protest" and "defend the right to strike".

In the lead-up to 1 May, workers can organise a meeting to discuss what action is possible, take a collection for groups such as Medical Aid for Palestine and give out leaflets.

On the last day of action in Edinburgh

Organising a workplace delegation to this Saturday's national demonstration is also a good basis for action.

On 1 May action can range from gathering outside a workplace for a stoppage to standing during a break with pro-Palestine banners. See more at tinyurl.com/1MaySTW

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We must act now to halt racist Tories' new Rwanda law

by ISABEL RINGROSE

BACK STORY

AT LEAST five people, including a child, died trying to cross the English Channel on Tuesday morning off the French coast of Wimereux.

Coastguards rescued 48 people from the Abeille Flandre ship. Five refugees previously died in Wimereux in January while trying to join a boat to cross to Britain.

Just hours before the latest deaths, the Rwanda deportation bill passed through all its stages in parliament.

This is the murderous reality of the Tories' racist, anti-migrant hatred—deaths and deportations.

Rishi Sunak is promising that the first Rwanda deportation flights will take off in ten to 12 weeks.

In a press conference on Monday he said, "We are ready, plans are in place... no foreign court will stop us from getting flights off."

He says teams are working "flat out" to deliver the plans.

Sunak added that there will be a "regular rhythm" of flights throughout the summer until the boats crossing the Channel stop.

And that the government has an airfield on standby, as well as commercial flights ready to go to Rwanda in central Africa.

The Rwanda deportation plot is a racist offensive to cause division and divert attention from the Tories' other crimes.

But Sunak hasn't had the smooth passage he hoped with this bill.

Last week it ping-ponged between the House of Commons and Lords until Wednesday.

The Lords backed two amendments that the Tories swatted aside on Monday of this week after its fourth round of back-and-forth.

The Tories want to stop refugees coming to Britain by any means.

But providing safe and legal routes to those who want to claim asylum would stop the crossings.

Any refugees put on a plane are expected to challenge their removal.

Anti-racists have to be ready to organise now to take on the bill.

The Rwanda bill was finally set to become law as Socialist Worker went to press this week

● Under the plan, some asylum seekers will be deported to Rwanda while claims are processed

● Rishi Sunak wants workers in Britain to blame migrants for problems the Tories created

Relying on last-minute legal appeals or waiting for a Labour government to undo the scheme and replace it with something that isn't much of an improvement on the original bill isn't enough.

Tactic

One tactic that the anti-racist movement should use is to physically block the flights. Previous campaigns like these have been effective.

This kind of action can at least delay deportation flights.

It won't be easy, particularly if the Tories load refugees onto planes at military bases.

But anti-racists have to do everything they can to stop the flights—maximum disruption is the way to hit back against the Tories' brutal racism.

And across Britain there could be a day of disruption to rebel against the first flights to send a message to the Tories.

Disruption in the form of walkouts and occupations in every town and city could make Britain as ungovernable as possible and show the fury at the bill.

In their state of perpetual crisis, any resistance against the Tories can weaken them even further.

REFUGEES ARRIVING in Dungeness, Kent, last year. The new bill threatens them with deportation

Scottish independence march comes amid crisis for parliament

THOUSANDS OF people marched through Glasgow last Saturday in the first street mobilisation for Scottish independence this year.

It was called by the Believe in Scotland group in partnership with Pensioners for Independence.

The demonstration was one of the liveliest marches for independence for many years.

It had a sizeable Palestine solidarity bloc, and was much younger and more diverse than most Indy events.

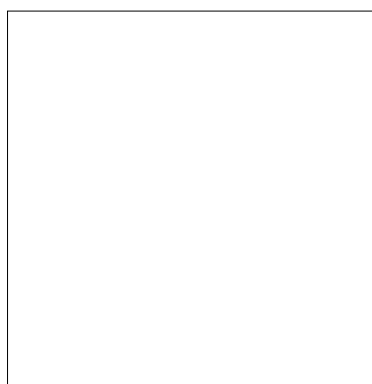
But there are problems. Believe in Scotland claims to be a grassroots campaign for independence, but it is managed by Business for Scotland Ltd.

It puts forward a pro-business case for independence and seeks to link independence with rejoining the European Union.

This was the main theme of the first demonstration organised by Believe in Scotland in Edinburgh last year.

For the demonstration in Glasgow, the organisers have tacked left.

The main theme was ending pensioners' poverty, and several



Scottish first minister Humza Yousaf joined Glasgow march last weekend

campaigners from the socialist left were invited to speak.

The Scottish National Party (SNP) leadership has chosen to promote Believe in Scotland over the All Under One Banner (AUOB) marches.

Business-friendly

These mobilised hundreds of thousands of Indy supporters independently of the SNP.

This is because the SNP agrees with Believe in Scotland's business-friendly message and it

wants a safe outfit to show it is still serious about campaigning for independence.

Scottish first minister Humza Yousaf was among those who spoke and led the demonstration in Glasgow.

He said, "Independence won't be won by politicians, it will be won by the people." But that was a pretext to justify his party's lack of action to defy the Tories and the British state.

The demonstration took place within days of Peter Murrell being arrested for a second time in connection with charges of embezzlement of party funds. The scandal over Murrell, the former SNP treasurer and former first minister Nicola Sturgeon's husband, plunged the party into crisis last year.

It also took place days after the Scottish government sparked anger after ditching its commitment to reducing carbon emissions. Some in the Scottish Greens, the junior partners in government, have rightly exploded with anger, prompting a special conference to discuss the future of the coalition.

Local protests fill streets with anger at Israel's war

THE PALESTINE movement did not retreat from the streets last weekend.

Around 1,000 people were on a march in Bradford last Saturday and then joined others in the city square.

Rob reports, "Most of the Palestine groups in West Yorkshire were represented. People were worried about any further escalation of the killings. They are suspicious that Joe Biden has done a deal with Israel that if it doesn't attack Iran again then it will have a free hand to obliterate Rafah."

In Sheffield, reports Phil, "About 400 marched. There was a very angry mood. Speeches about war and imperialism, involvement of unions and building more resistance went down well." Protesters chanted, "One, We are the people. Two, We won't be silenced. Three Stop arming Israel now, now, now, now."

In south London, Palestine campaigners chanting, "USA, blood on your hands" joined the 24/7 picket outside the US Embassy in Vauxhall.

And Maggie reports, "Over 1,000 people marched in Lewisham, on the other side of south London."

Over 300 people protested in Manchester around the theme of Palestinian prisoners. Around 320 people were on a march in Colchester, Essex.

Around 250 people joined the first locally organised march for several months through Foleshill into Coventry city centre.

In Portsmouth, reports a protester, "About 70 of us marched on Barclays. Police issued a Section 50 notice. They arrested three people for a sit-down protest in the bank. Three far right Turning Point supporters tried and failed to disrupt our rally."

"After the protest, some of us went to the police station until the arrestees were released. We will continue to target Barclays."

Up to 100 people marched through Hackney in east London. Phoebe, a protester on the march who works for a publishing company, told Socialist Worker, "We can't lose momentum."

Unfolding

Israel's genocide is "not going to stop without taking action". Phoebe argued, "Labour is despicable. It's Tory-lite."

Nick, a skate park builder, said the genocide is "a horror unfolding before our eyes". He said, "As a British person it's vital to protest, as Britain handed Israel the keys to Palestine."

Dorset Palestine Solidarity Campaign tweeted, "We closed down Dorchester Barclays Bank for funding genocide in Gaza!"

In Edinburgh, reports Alan, "Around 20 Stop the War activists went to Tesco and Lidl to alert shoppers that both supermarkets are profiting from Israeli products while Israel is in the process of committing genocide in Gaza."

Protesters gathered in Cardiff for the 27th week in a row.



Around a thousand protesters filled the centre of Bradford

Palestine protest targets MPs and parliament

UP TO 400 people rallied outside Parliament in London last Wednesday evening to rage against the Tories' support for Israel's genocide in Gaza.

Protester Rachel told Socialist Worker, "I'm here because I have humanity. Children are dying because of the racism and hypocrisy of the West. It's wrong."

"People say protesting doesn't work, but it does. The more of us that come together the more impact we can have."

Rachel says she has "no more words" to describe Israel's assault in Gaza, or of the West's support. "It continues to shock

me, but I'm also no longer surprised," she said.

Protester Olivia told Socialist Worker, "I'm angry. There's no democracy when the majority are being ignored. The constant hypocrisy infuriates me. Israel isn't defending itself, but countries that are like Iran are criticised."

"The national demonstrations have been fantastic, the solidarity is incredible. We have to keep going."

After the rally finished, protesters stood off against pro-Israel supporters. They chanted, "The whole damn system, shut it down."

Socialist Worker
WHAT WE THINK

HOW SHOULD SOCIALISTS VOTE IN THE LOCAL ELECTIONS?

THE POLITICAL establishment must pay the price for their crimes in Gaza and the attacks on working class people.

Local elections across England on Thursday next week are a chance to do that. Elections are not the most important arena of struggle, but they can reflect deeper and more important developments in society.

It's very positive that people in some areas are already trying to put Palestine on the ballot paper. A movement of millions on the streets should shake up politics at every level.

But it's not enough just for candidates to say they're for a ceasefire or oppose Israel's assaults. Some are doing it just because they know it's popular in their area.

Others mix it with divisive policies.

We don't back the Workers Party of Britain, for example, because of its rancid policies against migrants, environmental action and trans people.

It has also shown its readiness to do deals with the pro-boss Lib Dems.

We hope there will be good

votes for socialist and independent candidates who stand with Palestine and support all the oppressed and exploited.

In most seats there will be nobody on the ballot paper who puts forward such ideas.

There could have been many more if, instead of shrinking from an open confrontation with Keir Starmer, Jeremy Corbyn had headed up a challenge.

So should we just not vote? After all, it won't make any difference over the devastating council cuts whether Labour or the Tories are elected. Both are implementing attacks, driven by the government, that wreck lives, services, wages and jobs.



The most important struggles are on the streets and in the workplaces

MUSLIMS ARE STATE TARGET

RIGHT WINGERS and Zionists say that they are the ones most targeted by the police.

Gideon Falter, chief executive of the Campaign Against Antisemitism, claimed this when he and his entourage tried to cause a provocation at the last national Palestine demonstration.

His group is known for its anti-Palestine and Islamophobic hate. Surrounded by a camera crew and bodyguards he'd brought, Falter's presence was a setup.

The cops gave Falter the

ammunition he was seeking—he aimed to drum up outrage and portray the Palestine movement as antisemitic.

When the video came out, he seized the opportunity to say that the cops weren't on the side of Zionists but on the side of those who are pro-Palestine.

The opposite is true. Muslims and those who support Palestinian resistance are who the state sees as its real enemies.

While Falter was calmly told to leave a Palestine demonstration, police have arrested, imprisoned

The united Labour-Tory approach is one key reason why lots of people don't connect with official politics.

A poll last week showed nearly half of young people believe their vote will not make a difference and fewer than one in five 18 to 24-year-olds trust politicians.

But the votes will have an effect. If the Tories are able to claim any sort of success it would encourage the rich, racists and reactionaries.

We want the Tories out, and in most places there will be no real choice except to vote Labour.

Another shattering defeat for Rishi Sunak can deepen the Tory crisis and encourage a fightback.

And by throwing out conservative ideas, we can prepare for the struggles to come against Starmer and his pro-corporate government if he reaches Downing Street.

But whether it is accelerating solidarity with the Palestinian resistance or fighting the cuts, the most important struggles are on the streets and in the workplaces.

The key issue remains not so much the votes on 2 May but the struggle every day. That's how we can really change politics.

Breakfast in RED

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For updates and analysis on the stories that matter go to socialistworker.co.uk/breakfast-in-red

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Our website brings together stories of struggles the mainstream won't report. It helps you find socialist meetings, protests and strikes—and the Marxist ideas and activism to change the world.

ANALYSIS

ALEX CALLINICOS



US backs war funds to protect power bloc

WHEN THE United States' House of Representatives finally passed the bill voting over £49 billion in military aid to Ukraine last Saturday, Democratic Congresspeople cheered and waved the Ukrainian flag.

But the passage of this long-stalled piece of legislation was about a lot more than Ukraine. Three other bills were also passed. They gave military aid of £21 billion to Israel and £6.5 billion for US allies in the Indo-Pacific region, especially Taiwan, and, absurdly, banning TikTok unless its Chinese owners divest.

Financial Times columnist Gideon Rachman gave a lucid explanation of how Western liberals see the votes. "Together they offer a clear sense of how America—and its key allies in Europe and Asia—now see the world," he wrote.

"Collectively all of this money is intended to push back against four countries that General Chris Cavoli, the commander of US forces in Europe, describes as an 'axis of adversaries'—Russia, China, Iran and North Korea."

This doesn't just involve Nato, but also Japan, South Korea, and Australia. As Rachman explains, "The 'western alliance' is now, in reality, a global network of allies that sees itself as engaged in a series of linked regional struggles."

"Russia is the key adversary in Europe. Iran is the most disruptive power in the Middle East. North Korea is a constant danger in Asia."

"China's behaviour and rhetoric are becoming more aggressive, and it can marshal resources that are not available to Moscow or Tehran."

So what exactly is it that this "axis of adversaries" is disrupting? The answer is the so-called "rules-based international order" that the US constructed after the Second World War. It integrated the liberal capitalist states into a bloc under its leadership and has sought, since the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1989-91, to make this global.

It's certainly true that both Chinese president Xi Jinping and Russia's Vladimir Putin are opposed to this US-dominated order. They tend to describe their alternative as "multipolarity"—an international system with no centre or hegemonic power.

The jailed Russian Marxist Boris Kagarlitsky has written a critique of "multipolarity", which he describes as a "war of everyone against everyone".

Leaders

In reality, China and Russia are becoming the leaders of a rival imperialist bloc. It's also true that the "rules-based order" is in trouble. This is partly because the US now faces a really powerful challenger in the shape of China.

But it's also because this order's claim to legitimacy is collapsing. The Western imperialist powers' support for Israel as it slaughters the people of Gaza has exposed the hollowness of their claims to moral superiority over their "autocratic" rivals. The real significance of the Congressional votes is that they represent the liberal imperialists' response. Rather than make serious concessions, they are digging in.

One could call this "war liberalism". This doesn't just involve military measures, for example a closer security agreement between the US and Japan.

Nor does it involve the cooperation of the US, Britain and France in defending Israel from Iranian missiles and drones. The US and the European Union are taking an increasing number of protectionist measures against Chinese exports and investments. Rachman correctly points out Joe Biden isn't actively seeking war. "Washington is also grappling with how to strengthen deterrence without getting the US directly involved in a war with any of the axis of adversaries."

"In practice, this has often meant providing America's frontline allies with new military aid, while simultaneously trying to restrain their actions."

One example is the apparently successful efforts by the US to dissuade Israel from responding to the Iranian bombardment in a way that could provoke all-out war.

But ramping up the military response carries enormous risks, especially in Ukraine. The slogging match there could easily turn into a more mobile and even deadlier war as the possibility of a Ukrainian collapse encourages both sides to take risks.

Biden and his allies are gambling with the future of the planet.

REFORM UK campaigning in London for the mayoral election

Racist Reform UK to snatch Tory votes in local elections

by THOMAS FOSTER

AMID A deepening crisis in the Tory Party, the far right Reform UK is looking to grab votes in the English local council elections next Thursday.

Electoral success for Reform UK would provide a dangerous boost for racists across Britain.

Even if it doesn't win many councillors, votes for Reform UK will encourage the Tories to be even more brutal to refugees. And Labour will respond with more championing of the Union Jack.

Reform UK is currently polling at 13 percent in some national polls. Aside from two by-elections in February and two at the end of 2021, it has underperformed its polling average in the other 14 by-elections since November 2020.

And the party has never had more than a handful of councillors—two in 2021, five in 2022 and increasing throughout last year to its current ten councillors.

None of its ten councillors were originally elected on a Reform UK ticket—all defected from the Tory Party.

For the upcoming local elections Reform UK isn't running a national campaign—only fielding 323 candidates out of a total 2,655 seats that are up for grabs. That means running in only 12.2 percent of seats.

Parliamentary candidate Dave Holland and Richard Tice

The Greens are fielding 1,646 candidates and Lib Dems are fielding 1,802.

The places where Reform UK is contesting all or most seats include the councils of Bolton, Greater

Manchester, Hartlepool, County Durham, Plymouth, Devon, Sunderland, Barnsley, Lincoln, Southampton, Sandwell and West Midlands.

In a lot of these councils Ukip previously held seats. In 2015 Ukip elected a high of 202 councillors.

Polling analysis shows most Reform UK support is coming from disillusioned Tory voters.

In a poll of people who voted Tory in the 2019 general election, 24 percent now intend to vote for Reform UK.

And when Reform UK voters were asked who they'd side with if it wasn't on the ballot, 31 percent said Tories, 27 percent said they wouldn't

vote and only 3 percent said Labour.

Reform UK takes many of the Tories' racist policies and ramps them up even further. It is a party that has vile bigots in its ranks, some that even the Tory party suspended for being too racist.

Richard Tice, party leader, said that Britain is facing "cultural pillage" as migration is "making us poorer culturally".

Tice has also spoken on the need for "one single British culture" and defended what he describes as the "British way of life".

Anti-racists should be wary of Reform UK's rise.

Rotten racists defected to far right

REFORM UK currently has ten councillors and one MP. But none of them was originally elected under the banner of Reform UK.

All defected from the Tory party, with some joining Reform UK after being hit by scandal.

When the Tory party kicked Lee Anderson out for his racist Islamophobic remarks, Reform UK welcomed him with open arms.

Philip Rose, a Derbyshire councillor, left the Tories after they suspended him for

sharing antisemitic posts. The posts spread racist conspiracy theories about "Zionist controllers" and "Jewish supremacism".

Alexander Stevenson, another Derbyshire councillor, went to Reform UK after the Tories suspended him. He defended Andrew Bridgen—ex-Tory MP—who described Covid vaccination as the "biggest crime against humanity since the Holocaust".

Robert Bromley, a Runnymede councillor, defected from the Tories

to Reform UK because he thought they weren't tough enough on migrants.

Reform UK claims to stand for ordinary people but is a focus to attract racists and bigots.

Why you shouldn't buy Tory lies about benefit claimants

by CHARLIE KIMBER

FACING EXTINCTION at the general election, Rishi Sunak has launched a bitter attack against people on benefits, disabled people and those too ill to work.

He claimed benefits have become a “lifestyle choice”—as if millions voluntarily accept a bare existence in poverty conditions.

Sunak may never be in a position to implement his “welfare reform” plans because he won't be in office much longer.

But his speeches drive up suspicion and hatred of those who are deemed the “undeserving poor”. And Labour often either echoes or directly follows some of the worst Tory assaults.

Sunak knew exactly what would follow his announcement.

The Daily Express newspaper, for example, headlined its report, “Rishi Sunak unveils new five-point plan to crack down on UK's benefits scroungers.”

The Sun's follow-up story was, “BENEFITS BUSTS New benefits fraud squads will arrest and fine even more welfare cheats, Rishi reveals in crackdown plan.”

Sunak denounced “a generation of young people who sit alone in the dark before a flickering screen watching as their dreams slip further from reach every single day”.

This is a government that hands out billions to its mates in contracts and cuts tax for the rich and big business. And then it tries to blame the poorest for the lack of funds for the NHS and schools.

The Tories, wallowing in sleaze and corruption, want more sanctions and more misery for working class people. The one hope is that Sunak said “to treat benefit fraud like tax fraud”. If the way the wealthy are treated is any guide, that means it won't be investigated at all.



JOB CENTRE Plus—where claimants must report

PICTURE: ANDREW WRITER ON FLICKR

What are the facts about benefits?

THE TOTAL amount of unclaimed benefits in Britain is now £23 billion a year. Overall, 8.4 million people could be missing out on an average of £2,700 per year in rights-based benefits, the research by Policy in Practice found.

The social policy and analytics firm said money was going unclaimed because of a lack of awareness about available support,

the complexity claimants face in navigating the system, and the stigma surrounding benefits.

Universal Credit remains the biggest unclaimed benefit (£8.3 billion) followed by Carer's Allowance (£2.3 billion), Pension Credit (£2.2 billion) and Child Benefit (£1.7 billion).

In terms of locally administered benefits that are going unclaimed,

council tax support (£3.4 billion) remains top of the list followed by Housing Benefit for pensioners (£1.3 billion), free school meals (£231million) and the Healthy Start scheme (£132 million).

Benefit fraud, including errors, is officially estimated at £8 billion a year.

Read article in full online at tinyurl.com/SunakBenefits

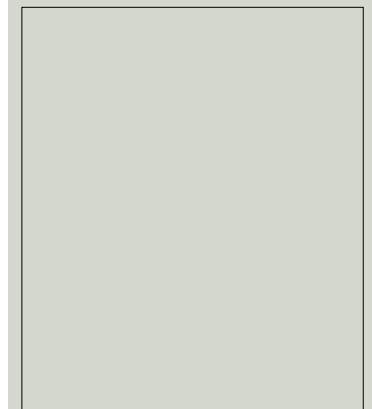
£5,000 for sick Tory

“A MATTER of life and death”. This is what Mark Menzies MP told his former Tory campaign manager at 3.15am last December, demanding £5,000 be sent to him after “some bad people” locked him in a flat.

Menzies met a man who he met through a dating website and went back to that man's flat, and then went to a second address with another man where he continued drinking.

People at that address said Menzies had been sick and demanded £5,000 for cleaning expenses.

Hours later, Menzies' former campaign manager



Mark Menzies

transferred him £6,500, which was then reimbursed to the aide with Tory campaign donations, the Times newspaper revealed last week.

After the story became public, the Tories suspended Menzies for misusing campaign funds.

And £14,000 given by Tory donors for campaign activities has been transferred to Menzies' personal bank accounts for private medical expenses over the years.

It's a sign of the state of crisis and decay the Tories are in—rocked by scandal after scandal.

It was only weeks ago when William Wragg—another MP who the Tories have suspended—sent nude photos of himself to someone who then blackmailed Wragg into giving out colleagues' personal numbers.

The Tories' brutal plans

THE FIVE specifics Rishi Sunak outlined were:

1 TOUGHENING up the work capability assessment (WCA), a government test that lays down what conditions people must meet to receive benefits.

Increasing numbers of sick people are due to be assessed largely to soaring NHS waiting lists, with 7.54 million people waiting for routine treatments.

2 A crackdown on fit notes. The Conservatives have tried to replace the sick note—which says you are too ill to work—with the fit note, which says what work you can still do with support. Sunak is tackling a non-problem. Sickness absence rates, while

currently up on pre-pandemic levels at 2.6 percent, remain well below the rates seen in the 1990s (such as 3.1 percent in 1995).

3 CLAIMANTS forced from their present benefits and pushed quicker on to Universal Credit (UC)—and work requirements increased.

All “migration notices” from benefits such as tax credits will now be sent by the end of December 2025.

This often sees people miss out.

4 PERSONAL Independence Payment (Pip) will no longer always be a cash benefit and fewer people will be eligible. Pip is a benefit for people who are under pension age and need help with daily activities or getting around because of a long-term illness or disability. The Tories want to target claimants with mental health conditions in particular.

5 THE Department for Work and Pensions will be even more like

the police.

Sunak promised “new powers to make seizures and arrests.

“And we'll also enable penalties to be applied to a wider set of fraudsters through a new civil penalty.”

This repressive move will see desperate people taking food and other items for themselves and their children hauled off to the courts.

Recently Tesco said its profits had hit £2.3 billion up from £882 million the year before.



Myanmar's regime at risk of collapse as resistance spreads

by YURI PRASAD

IS THE military regime running Myanmar on the brink of collapse?

Three years after a coup deposed the south east Asian country's elected parliament and replaced it with army generals, the state is now in crisis.

Resistance fighters control more than half of Myanmar's territory, and daily are gaining ground in the countryside and forests. In many towns People's Defence Forces (PDF) are vying with the army for control of the streets.

The military regime has responded in the only way it knows how—more air strikes and increased army conscription. The resistance it fights is made up of an alliance of militia forces that represent different, sometimes competing, ethnicities.

What they have in common is that they want the generals out so they can more easily fight for separate nation status.

Those militia have trained thousands of young people from the cities who had been part of the suppressed pro-democracy movement.

The protesters had fled to the safety of the countryside after the regime launched a vicious crackdown from 2021 onwards.

Now these fighters form the bedrock of the PDF movement.

The combination of youthful freedom fighters with long established resistance groups is now putting the state under massive pressure.

Kayin state, in the south of the country, shows the dilemma facing the military.

Resistance militia took the border town of Myawaddy earlier this month.

It sits on a crucial trading route to Thailand. The rebels' gain delivered

MEMBERS OF the People's Defence Forces. Many of these guerrilla fighters were once protesters

a serious blow to the regime.

Fearful of losing more ground, generals last week sent reinforcements to try and retake the town. But last Sunday the resistance smashed the army column, killing soldiers, destroying vehicles and capturing arms.

There were similar attacks in Sagaing in the centre of the country and Ywangan in the west.

The rebels' strength comes from its popular support across the country and hatred of the dictatorship. But its unity is likely to be temporary.

There are more than 20 militias representing various ethnic minorities. Some have been fighting for

BACKSTORY

A military coup in February 2021 removed the recently elected government of Aung San Suu Kyi.

● Hundreds of thousands of democracy protesters laid siege to towns and cities.

● The military rounded up thousands of presumed activists.

● Huge numbers of people were forced to leave the cities for the countryside. The Save the Children charity estimates that more than 400,000 people, including 150,000 children, fled.

autonomy for decades, and some fight each other for control of mineral-rich territory.

Some minorities have more in common with people in China, India and Thailand than with the Bamar, Myanmar's largest ethnicity.

Those tensions mean that should the military collapse it's likely that the resistance alliance will fracture and there will be a power vacuum.

The biggest imperial power in the region, China, is desperate to avoid this. Its ruling class's main concern is that fighting in Myanmar will spill out of its borders, igniting conflicts across the region.

But it also wants to ensure that

the West does not use any collapse of the regime to further its interests on China's border.

Any imperialist attempt to reorder Myanmar is likely to repeat past failures and reignite civil war.

If the combined force of the resistance was to bring down the military regime it would be a massive victory.

Yet if that was the precursor to new rounds of fighting among groups that were once in alliance it would be a tragedy.

The hope must be that workers and the poor recognise that they have more in common with each other than with the upper classes of each ethnicity.

Italy

Fascists threaten abortion rights

THE RULING fascists in Italy are fighting a war of attrition against abortion rights.

They introduced an amendment last week permitting healthcare authorities "to involve non-profits with experience providing maternity support in family planning clinics".

While claiming to inform women of measures available to mothers the amendment makes it easier for anti-abortionists to intimidate women inside clinics.

Prime minister Giorgia Meloni

promised not to touch the limited right to abortion in Italy.

The substantial number of gynecological departments who cite religious opposition means that access to abortion is already difficult.

Healthcare authorities in regions controlled by the right offer women money not to abort and impose hospital stays for those taking an abortion pill.

The right also wants to introduce a law that would force women to listen to a fetus' heartbeat before aborting.

Protesting for abortion rights in Italy in 2022

United States

VW Workers win union vote

WORKERS AT a Volkswagen plant in Tennessee in the southern United States have voted to form a union in major success for a return to collective organisation.

Workers voted 2,628 to 985 to join the United Auto Workers union.

The union tried twice before to organise the Volkswagen plant, most recently in 2019. It lost that election 833 to 776.

Southern politicians lured corporations to states including Tennessee and Alabama with generous tax breaks and promises that they are hostile to unions.

The Republican governors of Alabama, Georgia, Tennessee and Texas released a joint statement opposing the UAW before the vote.

They said they denounce the "special interests looking to come into our state and threaten our jobs and the values we live by".

The vote follows major national strikes at the big three auto makers and a wave of other action.

But the challenge will be to root a fighting union in the workplace and go beyond the result.

Determined victory for the right to protest

AFTER A two-day trial at Wood Green Crown Court in north London, Palestine activist Blyth Brentnall was found not guilty of intent to cause criminal damage.

The trial was over Blyth throwing eggs filled with ketchup at arms manufacturer Elbit Systems's HQ.

She was arrested at a Palestine Action protest in May 2021 in London. Sometimes we can underestimate the significance of even symbolic acts of resistance against the Zionist terror state.

Though a small individual act, this was a highly significant victory.

That's given the context of a British government intent on criminalising and demonising protesters who stand against the Israeli genocide.

What makes this victory important is precisely that the collective direct action protests, organised by Palestine Action, did eventually succeed in forcing Elbit out of its HQ premises in London.

Protests have forced the closure of a further two Elbit factories in Britain. Eight Elbit sites still need to be shut down.

Other activists, due to face courts, also need our support. At the same time we must defend the right for a jury to decide on the basis of their conscience, irrespective of direction by the judges.

Rajith Perera
North London



ILLUSTRATION: TIM SANDERS

Islamophobic secularism produces racist results

THE MICHAELA School in west London banning prayer is a classic example of secularism as a guise for Islamophobia where secularism only applies to Muslims.

They've taken a leaf out of France's book.

Secularism in this context is a form of exactly the type of indoctrination that secularists always claim to protect children from.

The Tories have boosted and renewed the confidence of those who talk about Britain being "culturally Christian".

It's a trope commonly used by far right extremists.

Apparently it's acceptable to make drawings or have assemblies at school in solidarity with Ukraine.

But expressing any solidarity for Palestine is banned.

Muslim children are suppressed from a young age under the Prevent agenda then on the flipside blamed for their lack of integration.

Banning religious expression segregates children further at such an early age.

The head teacher of Michaela, Katharine Birbalsingh, expects Muslim children to be subservient and surrender to British values—whatever that means.

All while the government loves to exploit the publicity from the court case to divert from their own failures and horrific policies.

Birbalsingh's statement echoes some of the same rhetoric as the government when demanding

Muslims accept rules as they are or leave.

Denying us our right to practice our faith is an attack on our identity as Muslims.

It says we can only truly be British if we compromise that.

Where there's rampant Islamophobia and never-ending wars in the Middle East, young Muslims asserting their faith can be a form of resistance.

As I interpret Karl Marx, religion is more than just opium—it's the heart of a heartless world.

We should have the right to decide whether to practice a religion or not

And either way the state has no right to interfere with our faith.

Maryam Hally
Glasgow

Once a Tory apologist, always a Tory apologist

BBC JOURNALIST Nick Robinson rightly took unelected foreign secretary David Cameron to task by highlighting the hypocrisy of the Western powers.

On BBC Radio 4's Today programme, Robinson, interviewing Cameron, drew attention to the lack of action against Israel for the "murders of tens of thousands of innocent Palestinians". But just in case we started getting the idea that Robinson isn't anything other than a

Tory-loving hatchet man, he quickly rode back on his question to Eton boy Cameron. He said that when he used the word "murders" it was not his or the BBC's view. "I should have been clearer," he grovelled.

We can expect nothing more from a past president of the Oxford University Conservative Association and former chair of the National Young Conservatives.

Gary McFarlane
North London

Socialists should shut down far right

THE NATIONAL Conservatism conference held recently in Brussels, Belgium, was a gathering of the radical right from across Europe. Its rhetoric is Islamophobic, racist, anti-migrant, homophobic and designed to stir up hatred and division.

So it seems obvious that it was right for the authorities in Brussels to close it down. But I don't think it was.

On the orders of the local mayor the police broke into the conference to close it. That gave the hard right

participants an excuse to claim that they had been silenced. When the order was rescinded, they claimed it as victory for free speech.

In truth these people care nothing about free speech. And the police who closed it down are no champions of democracy, either.

I do want to see an end to these National Conservatism gatherings but I don't want to rely on the state and the police who are never on our side.

I want it to be our power, the power of

working people joined together that closes them down.

That's the only thing we can rely on.

Alice Greenlees
Swansea

Just a thought...

Spooks won't save the NHS

I JUST watched an old episode of Spooks, first broadcast in 2005, on the television.

Sad I know, but this episode, The Russian, was written by lefty Howard Brenton.

What he serves up is MI5 teaming up with an elderly Communist to prevent the government, New Labour, selling off the NHS to a corrupt Russian multi-billionaire, the son of a former KGB officer.

MI5 stops him. Of course, in the real world we can't rely on MI5.

We have to stop Labour's Wes Streeting and his privatisation plans ourselves.

John Newsinger
Brighton

Let down by the unions

IT WAS very interesting to read Hazel Fuller's letter (10 April) regarding Unite union leader Sharon Graham's attitude towards people campaigning against arm companies. These firms are fuelling Israel's and the West's genocide of the Palestinians.

I resigned my membership of Unite in October.

The unions are complicit as much as Keir Starmer and his cronies for turning a blind eye to all the suffering.

Truly despicable.

Art Murfitt
Surrey

Speed limit revisited?

THE WELSH government should hold its nerve over the 20 miles per hour speed limit.

The newly-appointed transport secretary, Labour's Ken Skates, said there would be changes to the default speed limit in built-up areas of Wales.

He said it should be targeted at roads outside schools, hospitals and nurseries.

But cyclists, children, older people and other vulnerable groups don't just use those stretches of road.

Don't give in to the right wing "pro-motorist" campaign, Skates!

Julia Ryder
Worcestershire

WHY DOES THE WEST FEAR AND LOATHE IRAN?

Thomas Foster answers six vital questions about what kind of society is Iran—and why Israel and the West want to destroy it

What is the nature of the regime?

THE CURRENT Iranian state emerged after the 1979 revolution that overthrew the hated Shah and his Western-backed regime.

It is a capitalist state with a ruling class dominated by a conservative Islamic clergy that follows the Shia version of Islam. Iran is a junior imperialist power but strives to become the major force in the region.

The clergy has its own version of religious law, which the state enforces strictly. The Iranian state embodies reactionary ideas and policies towards women's rights and LGBT+ people.

The state controls a large part of the economy and dominates large-scale industries, media, communications, transport and many other sectors. And it owns the oil industry, which makes up around 40 percent of its total revenue.



Iran's ruling class has the same interests as capitalist ruling classes everywhere

Its ruling class has the same interests as all capitalist classes—growing its own economic and political power, while preserving its existing privileges.

This means it is locked into imperialist competition with other states in the region—including Israel, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and Turkey.

And this competition affects how Iran acts. It backs resistance groups that align with its Shia ideology, including the Houthis in Yemen—in part due to Iran's antagonism with Sunni Saudi Arabia. It backs Hezbollah in Lebanon, in part due to its antagonism with Israel.

And it backs the Assad regime in Syria that is fighting the Saudi-backed Isis group and the remaining forces of the revolution of 2011.

Iran has tried to counter US power in the region by befriending both Russia and China. China is Iran's largest trading partner and buys some 90 percent of Iran's oil.

Is Iran a dictatorship?

IRAN IS an authoritarian regime where a religious clergy rules with few democratic constraints.

But it is far from the monolith that the Western media generally says it is. It has competing political factions that exist within the state.

Sometimes those factions reflect

ruptures in the ruling class and create political crises, and openings for others that want a different type of society.

Movements demanding more freedom and democratic rights emerge often and have sometimes fused with workers' unions, the women's movement and groups demanding national and religious rights.

But the state has so far been able to repress all such upsurges.

The power of the clerics is enshrined in Iran's supreme leader and the Guardian Council, a 12-person group made up of religious experts and lawyers.

The supreme leader of Iran, Ali Khamenei, has religious authority that flows into political power. He sets and implements policies, commands the Iranian army and can declare war.

As supreme leader, he hires and fires all military and police chiefs, the leader of the courts and the head of the state-owned media.

The supreme leader also has control over the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, the part of the military charged with defending Iran.

The Guardian Council approves and can disqualify candidates in local, parliamentary, presidential elections and has veto power over any law passed by parliament.

Half of its members are appointed by the supreme leader and he can dismiss any member of the council.

Throughout its existence, the Guardian Council has helped conservatives by disqualifying reformist candidates and vetoing reformist laws.

Beneath these bodies sits the president, who is elected and serves as head of government and selects ministers, and parliament, which has 290 elected members.

Parliament does debate and vote on laws. And there are competing factions—reformists, moderates and conservatives, and within each there are several groups.

Reformists demand that social restrictions are eased and want political reforms. They propose a more moderate version of Islam and closer relations with Western



Some of the 'reformists' are demanding to ease tension with the West

imperialism.

Conservatives want an even more strict version of Islam and want the state to remain hostile to the West.

But the trend since 1979 shows conservative factions growing in power. The reformists' warmth towards the West, combined with the possibility of war, has seriously weakened them.

What are the recent protest movements in Iran?

IRAN'S GOVERNMENT has faced multiple waves of popular rebellion in recent years, most recently in the Woman, Life, Freedom movement in 2022-23, and protest waves in 2019 and 2017-2018.

Two million women's movement began as a protest at the morality police after it murdered Masha Amini, a young woman it said had worn her hijab incorrectly.

Two million people participated in huge protests from September 2022 to spring 2023. Young people took to the streets and campuses, defying the state crackdown.

The protests developed into a movement demanding fundamental change—and the overthrow of the current Iranian state.

There was another protest wave in 2019 after the government tried to

end fuel subsidies. Prices jumped up and this led to a revolt in dozens of cities, with demonstrations, sit-ins and strikes.

National protests against rising inflation erupted between December 2017 and January 2018.

These upsurges had workers' economic demands as the driving force. Yet they flowed into political opposition to the supreme leader.

But all ended unsuccessfully with the state able to crush them. Part of the problem was that the protests, including those that involved some groups of workers, failed to become the majority.

On top of this, the protests had to contend with the "support" of Western states that tried to manipulate them for their own ends.

Why does Israel hate Iran?

ISRAEL IS desperate to smash Iran because both sides are competing for military, political and economic power across the region.

Israel wants to stop the West from "normalising" relations and doing deals that try to limit Iran's nuclear ambitions. Instead, it wants the West to join it in a war that would reduce its rival to rubble.

By contrast, Iran presents itself as a force that can stand up to the bullies—including Israel.

(top) **Supporters of Iran's Women, Life, Freedom movement outside the White House in 2022. Washington welcomed the movement, but only to weaken the Iranian regime**

READ MORE

● **Iran's rising for dignity and freedom—interview with Peyman Jafari**
In International Socialism journal no.177
tinyurl.com/PeymanInterview

● **Revisiting the dynamics of imperialism in the Middle East**
By Anne Alexander
In International Socialism journal
tinyurl.com/imperialistdynamics

(above, left) **The remains of the Iranian embassy in Damascus, Syria, after Israel bombed it in April**
(below) **Iran's supreme leader Ali Khamenei**

It wears its support for Palestinian liberation as a badge of honour, framing it as a fight for Islam against Zionism.

After the 1979 revolution, Iran cut off all relations with Israel. It said Israel was an illegitimate state in occupied Palestine. Iran stopped allowing Israeli citizens into Iran and banned all Iranians from travelling to Israel.

The Israeli embassy in Iranian capital, Tehran, was transformed into an embassy for Palestinians.

The focus of Israel's fear is that Iran develops a nuclear weapons programme that can rival its own.

Currently Israel is the only regional power with nuclear weapons, providing it with a huge military advantage.

That competition means they are embroiled in a long "shadow war" of attacks on each other's interests.

Israel has carried out sabotage and cyber-attacks against Iran's nuclear power and military facilities, while Iran has carried out drone strikes on Israeli oil tankers and launched its own cyber-attacks.

Should Iran attack Israel?

IRAN HAS every right to retaliate against Israeli attacks—including the bombing of its embassy in Syria, and later bombings of its territory.

Even David Cameron, the British foreign secretary, admitted that if a British embassy was struck by missiles, the British state "would take very strong action".

But the current strike and counter-strike exchanges between Israel and Iran risk becoming a major regional war.

And that would be a catastrophe for hundreds of millions of people. Such a war is no route to Palestinian liberation.

To truly win Palestinian freedom we need to break from the logic of imperialism. The route for this is revolt against Zionism and dictatorship by ordinary people from below, across the whole of the Middle East.

It is workers and the poor who have the collective power to transform society. Mass workers' revolt would make unworkable Israel's role as a watchdog for US imperialism.

And it would be a challenge to ruling classes across the entire region.

How did the current regime emerge?

IN 1979, the Iranian people overthrew a brutal US-backed monarchy, inflicting a huge blow to US imperialism in the region.

The revolution comprised many

forces, including workers' unions, nationalists and the left, but was eventually diverted by Ruhollah Khomeini, who led the Islamic clergy.

He opposed workers' power and more moderate elements of the Islamic movement, jailing and torturing opponents.

Prior to the revolution, Iran was ruled by the Shah, a monarch put in power in 1954 by a US and British-backed coup in 1953—which overthrew Iran's popular government that was nationalising the oil industry.

The Shah pushed through a programme of capitalist development that alienated sections of the traditional religious establishment and millions of the poor. There was huge inequality and oppression of national minorities.

From the summer of 1977 onwards, there were significant protests and strikes against the Shah that grew in size and frequency.

In October 1978, workers went on a national general strike. Strike committees, called shoras, were set up to organise and coordinate activity—a sign that the movement had become revolutionary.

In December, huge protests of over six million people—in a country of then 37 million—demanded the end of the Shah. Workers took over cities and towns with shoras being set up across the country.

On 16 January 1979, the Shah fled into exile.

Throughout this period, Ruhollah Khomeini, who was the most prominent religious leader and outspoken critic of the Shah, had cultivated a huge base of support. On 1 February, he declared himself head of state.

But the religious clergy wasn't in complete control of the revolution as there was an intense struggle to decide the type of society to replace the Shah's dictatorship.

Many among the capitalist class joined forces with the clerical establishment to work together against the left. Khomeini saw the shoras as a threat to the clergy's power and moved to re-establish state control.

The religious clergy used repression to consolidate its power, organising gangs to attack the left and enforce "morality" against women who refused to wear the veil. Khomeini was established supreme leader of Iran and the result was the capitalist theocracy we see today.

WHAT WE STAND FOR

These are the core politics of the Socialist Workers Party.

INDEPENDENT WORKING CLASS ACTION

Under capitalism workers' labour creates all profit. A socialist society can only be constructed when the working class seizes control of the means of production and democratically plans how they are used.

REVOLUTION NOT REFORM

The present system cannot be patched up or reformed as the established Labour and trade union leaders say.

It has to be overthrown. Capitalism systematically degrades the natural world. Ending environmental crisis means creating a new society.

THERE IS NO PARLIAMENTARY ROAD

The structures of the present parliament, army, police and judiciary cannot be taken over and used by the working class. They grew up under capitalism and are designed to protect the ruling class against the workers.

The working class needs an entirely different kind of state—a workers' state based upon councils of workers' delegates and a workers' militia.

At most parliamentary activity can be used to make propaganda against the present system.

Only the mass action of the workers themselves can destroy the system.

INTERNATIONALISM

The struggle for socialism is part of a worldwide struggle. We campaign for solidarity with workers in other countries.

We oppose everything which turns workers from one country against those from other countries.

We oppose racism and imperialism. We oppose all immigration controls.

We support the right of black people and other oppressed groups to organise their own defence. We support all genuine national liberation movements.

The experience of Russia demonstrates that a socialist revolution cannot survive in isolation in one country.

In Russia the result was state capitalism, not socialism. In Eastern Europe and China a similar system was later established by Stalinist parties. We support the struggle of workers in these countries against both private and state capitalism.

We are for real social, economic and political equality of women.

We are for an end to all forms of discrimination against lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people.

We oppose discrimination against disabled people including those who experience mental distress.

We defend the right of believers to practise their religion without state interference.

THE REVOLUTIONARY PARTY

To achieve socialism the most militant sections of the working class have to be organised into a revolutionary socialist party.

Such a party can only be built by activity in the mass organisations of the working class.

We have to prove in practice to other workers that reformist leaders and reformist ideas are opposed to their own interests.

We have to build a rank and file movement within the unions.

To join us, turn to page 16 or go to www.swp.org.uk or phone 020 7840 5602

After the Cass review—how can we defeat the war on trans+ people?

BIRMINGHAM
Wed 1 May, 7pm
281-634-5938
Warehouse Cafe
54 Allison Street,
B5 5TH

CAMBRIDGE
Thu 2 May, 7pm
681-800-4408
Box Cafe,
47 Norfolk St,
CB1 2LD

Huddersfield
Wed 1 May,
6.30pm
428-926-9492
The Mission,
Lord St HD1 1QA

LONDON: HACKNEY
Thu 2 May,
7.30pm
Halkevi Centre
31 Dalston Lane,
E8 3DF

LONDON: SOUTH
Wed 1 May, 7pm
859-6433-5114
Pass: 820061
Vida Walsh Centre
2b Saltoun Rd, SW2 1EP

LONDON: SOUTH EAST
Thu 2 May, 7pm
529-913-6390
Moonshot Centre
Angus St, SE14 6LU

NORWICH
Wed 1 May, 7.30pm
906-652-5299
Wensum Sports Centre
169a King St, NR1 1QH

PORTSMOUTH
Wed 1 May, 7pm,
488-934-2809
Somersetown
Community Centre,
River St, Southsea,
P05 4EY

SHEFFIELD
Thu 2 May, 7pm
St Mary's Church,
Bramall Lane, S2 4QZ

SWANSEA & WEST WALES
Thu 2 May, 7.30pm
902-964-963
The Environment
Centre
Pier St, Swansea
SA1 1RY

WIGAN
Thu 2 May,
6.30pm
Book Cycle Beech Hill
Buckley St,
WN6 7PQ

ABERDEEN

A rebel's guide to Engels
Thu 2 May, 6pm
Quaker Meeting House,
98 Crown Street, AB11 6HJ

BLACK COUNTRY, SHROPSHIRE STAFFS

Revolutionaries and elections
Wed 8 May, 8pm
914-9548-131
St Peters Cafe, Exchange St,
Wolverhampton, WV1 1TS

BOURNEMOUTH

'Everything was possible'—the Portuguese revolution 50 years on
Thu 2 May, 7.30pm
Brewhouse and Kitchen
152-154 Commercial Rd
BH2 5LU

BRADFORD

Revolution, counter-revolution and Iran today
Thu 2 May, 7pm
885-9257-7552
Parkside Sports Centre
Parkside Rd BD5 8EH

BRIGHTON & HOVE

The Middle East on fire—Iran, Israel and the new imperialism
Wed 1 May, 7pm
589-4246-7501
Friends Meeting House
Ship St, BN1 1AF

BRISTOL

Why the Stalinist Russia Union collapsed—the theory of state capitalism
Thu 2 May, 7pm
Palestine Museum
27 Broad St, BS1 2HG

CAMBRIDGE

Why does the Labour Party pander to racism?
Thu 9 May, 7pm
681-800-4408
Box Cafe, 47 Norfolk St,
CB1 2LD

CARDIFF

Political Islam—a Marxist analysis
Wed 1 May, 7.30pm
512-655-3689,
YMCA Plas,
2 Shakespeare St, CF24 3ES

CHESTERFIELD

Defiance—how we beat the far right in Britain
Thu 2 May, 7pm
828-532-8731
Room 2,
Chesterfield Library,
New Beetwell St,
S40 1QN
(Cafe Browser entrance)

COLCHESTER

Revolutionaries and elections
Thu 16 May, 7.30pm
466-478-2013
Victoria Inn,
North Station Road,
CO1 1RB

COVENTRY

The Middle East on fire—Iran, Israel and the new imperialism
Wed 1 May, 7.30pm
823-945-1917
Friends Meeting House
Hill Street,
CV1 4AN

DERBY

Smashing sexism and the system
Wed 1 May, 7pm
535-864-6840
West End Community Centre,
Mackworth Road, DE22 1BL

DORSET

The Middle East on fire—Iran, Israel and the new imperialism
Thu 2 May, 7.30pm
839-6672-6883
United Church,
Charles St Dorchester DT1 1EE

DUNDEE

'Everything was possible'—the Portuguese revolution 50 years on
Wed 1 May, 7pm
894-2628-7708
Dundee Voluntary Action
10 Constitution Rd DD1 1LL

EDINBURGH

Revolutionaries and the united front
Wed 1 May, 7pm
Friends Meeting House,
7 Victoria Terrace, Victoria St,
EH1 2JL

EXETER & DEVON

The Middle East on fire—Iran, Israel and the new imperialism
Thu 2 May, 7pm
865-2972-2883

GLASGOW

The radical Jewish tradition—revolutionaries, resistance fighters and firebrand
Thu 2 May, 7pm
Townhead Village Hall,
60 St Mungo Ave, G4 0PL

HARLOW

Political Islam—a Marxist analysis
Thu 2 May, 7.30pm
832-8746-7480
Mountsteven room,
Moot House CM20 3HB

HASTINGS

Politics of the mind—Marxism and mental distress
Wed 8 May, 7pm
The White Rock Hotel
1-10 White Rock, TN34 1JU

KENT

Do we need to break the law to stop climate change?
Thu 2 May, 7.30pm
434-623-8064
Sunlight Centre, Richmond Rd,
Gillingham, ME7 1LX

LANCASTER & MORECAMBE

Police, Palestine and protests—is Britain becoming more authoritarian?
Thu 2 May, 7.30pm
992-204-9372
Friends Meeting House
Meeting House Lane
Lancaster LA1 1TX

LEEDS

The bloody history of settler colonialism
Thu 2 May, 7pm
Swarthmore Education Centre
2-7 Woodhouse Sq, LS3 1AD

LEICESTER

Suffragettes—rebellious daughters of history
Sat 4 May, 3pm
50 Rutland St, LE1 1RD

LIVERPOOL

'Everything was possible'—the Portuguese revolution 50 years on
Thu 2 May, 7pm
493-925-5919
Quaker Meeting House
22 School Ln,
L1 3BT

LONDON: HARINGEY

Why did Marx look to the working class?
Wed 1 May, 7.30pm
459-388-1576
St John Vianney Church Hall,
386 West Green Rd,
N15 3QL

LONDON: ISLINGTON

Are we all finished? Disaster capitalism and climate change
Thu 2 May, 7pm
874-012-7970
Old Fire Station,
84 Mayton Street, N7 6QT

LONDON: NEWHAM

The Middle East on fire—Iran, Israel and the new imperialism
Wed 1 May, 7pm
288-098-8827
Theodora room, 1st floor,
Durning Hall,
Earlham Grove E7 9BB

LONDON: TOWER HAMLETS

Proud to be 'extremists'—resisting the Tory crackdown
Wed 1 May, 7.15pm
St Pauls Church,
St Stephen's Rd
E3 5JL

Socialist Workers Party meetings

You are welcome to join our meetings to take part in political discussion and to find out about our local campaigning activities.

Meetings are open to SWP members and also to non-members.

Some meetings are hybrid—accessible on Zoom and in person.

If your local meeting is a hybrid one, the meeting ID will be on this page. The password for all meetings (unless indicated otherwise) is 967537.

LONDON: WALTHAM FOREST

Fighting antisemitism today
Wed 1 May, 7.30pm,
543-23-057
William Morris Centre
Greenleaf Rd,
E24 6QQ

LONDON: WEST AND NW

Genocide in Gaza—the end of the two-state solution
Thu 2 May, 7.30pm
835-5254-5560
Bay 20 Centre
71 St Marks Rd,
W10 6JG

MANCHESTER

Socialism and revolution in the 21st century
Wed 1 May, 7pm
Friends Meeting House
6 Mount St, M2 5NS

NEWCASTLE

The Miners' Strike 40 years on
Wed 1 May, 7pm
DiverCity Hub,
120 Buckingham St, NE4 5QJ

NOTTINGHAM

The Middle East on fire—Iran, Israel and the new imperialism
Wed 1 May, 7pm
354-874-4790
The Playwright
38 Shakespeare St, NG1 4FQ

OXFORD & THAMES VALLEY

The Middle East on fire—Iran, Israel and the new imperialism
Wed 1 May, 7.15pm
861-2001-6477
Michael Young Building,
Manzil Way, OX4 1YH

PLYMOUTH

What is unique about Israeli settler colonialism?
Thu 2 May, 7pm,
897-1685-8334
Quaker Meeting House
Hyde Park House
74 Mutley Plain, PL4 6LF

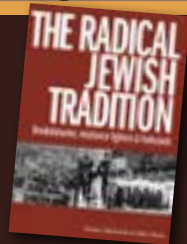
WEST WALES

Hollow words and hypocrisy—why won't the West stop Israel's genocide?
Wed 22 May, 7.30pm
Haver Hub, Old post office,
12 Quay St,
Haverfordwest SA61 1BG

YORK & SCARBOROUGH

Is Marxism eurocentric?
Wed 1 May, 7pm
8274-897-492
Clements Hall,
Nunthorpe Rd, YO23 1BW

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by Donny Gluckstein and Janey Stone, £12



The revival of resistance
by Mark L Thomas, Jessica Walsh and Charlie Kimber, £6



The Great Revolutions
by Duncan Hallas
£5



1984, the miners and the strike that could have won
by Ian Taylor, £3

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KIRSTEN DUNST in *Civil War*

Civil War fails to capture the divides in US society

by RICHARD DONNELLY

DIRECTOR ALEX Garland's *Civil War* is a cinematic representation of a phantom haunting the United States.

It explores the possibility of the far right triggering a civil war in the coming decades.

The rise of Donald Trump, and his armed supporters in the militia movement, has driven a wave of speculation and fear about the future in US culture.

This is reflected in popular books such as *The Next Civil War* and *How Civil Wars Start*.

The film is a sort of grim road trip movie, following a team of war reporters as they encounter bombed out cities, mass graves and battles.

It's a spectacular action movie with an ensemble cast, including Kirsten Dunst, Wagner Moura and Cailee Spaeny.

But the film has an Achilles' heel—it refuses to give any explanation of why the second US Civil War broke out and

the politics of the warring sides. Garland deliberately obscures the politics of the combatants, for example, by describing the "secessionist" states in the war as led by famously liberal California and famously right wing Texas.

Similarly, one scene has the war reporters suddenly pinned down by fire from a farm building.

They find themselves taking refuge behind an opposing group of snipers, but they have no idea which side of the civil war either set of marksmen belong to.

Building

When one journalist asks a sniper who the men in the farm building are, instead of hearing about their political affiliations, he's simply told, "They're stuck. And we're stuck too."

The implication is that war is something like a natural disaster.

It's an unfortunate and absurd set of events that finds people on different sides, rather than the result of political conflicts and ideological struggles.

The Prussian military strategist Carl von Clausewitz famous called war "the continuation of politics by other means".

And this counts doubly for civil war, so the lack of any politics leaves a glaring hole in the film.

Given you are rooting for neither side and don't understand what they are fighting over, you are left asking, "So what?"

The film's vagueness reflects the logic of artistic production driven by profit.

The US is deeply ideologically divided, with increasingly insular and mutually hostile liberal and far right camps squaring up against each other at every level of politics and culture.

Producing a movie that could be seen as coming down on one side or the other would have alienated half its potential audience, thus limiting its grossing potential at the box office.

The result is a film that is shy of controversy.

It is devoid of basic plot exposition and provides only a distorted and detached

view of the real tensions and fears in US society. So, is *Civil War* a civil bore?

Well, even a film with an unsatisfying plot can have spectacle, beautiful sequences and valuable little philosophical moments.

Civil War has a generous supply of all three.

But the most interesting part of the film is perhaps the context in which it has been released.

Levelled

The film was largely produced before the Gaza war.

But some of the scenes showing levelled cities, mass graves and field executions have now been turned into grim reality by Israel.

All this begs the question of how much US fears of a future "American nightmare" are really the return of repressed awareness of the country's crimes around the world.

That includes its instigation of a very real series of civil wars in Iraq that killed hundreds of thousands and its long support for the criminal policies of Israel.

Civil War is now in cinemas



WHAT SOCIALISTS SAY

Are elections a vehicle for change?

REVOLUTIONARY SOCIALISTS don't believe it is possible to transform capitalism through parliamentary reforms or elections.

Nor do we accept the idea that a combination of pressure from left wing MPs and a movement in the streets and workplaces can bring fundamental change. We understand that real power doesn't lie in parliament. It doesn't even lie in Downing Street, as former Tory prime minister Liz Truss quickly found out.

That's one reason why the Socialist Workers Party always prioritises the fight away from parliament. We believe that workers acting for themselves, rather than relying on the parliamentary system, is a step towards revolutionary change.

Vladimir Lenin, one of the leaders of the 1917 Russian Revolution, put it this way. "The action of the masses—a big strike for example—is more important than parliamentary activity at all times, and not only during a revolution or revolutionary situation." But he went on to point out that this understanding doesn't mean that revolutionary socialists can afford to ignore parliament all together. Just because the institution cannot be central to any strategy for change doesn't mean it has no relevance at all.

For a start, parliament puts forward laws that materially affect working class people. Those laws might have the effect of improving people's wages and conditions, or they might do the opposite. Parliamentary votes can also become the focus of anger over wider issues, such as declarations of war, for example. Workers often fight over such "parliamentary" questions. And which party wins a general election can also have a big effect on the conditions in which struggle takes place. That's true even when, in policy terms, there is little to divide the main parties.

Confirm

Tory victories, for example, often confirm workers' fears that fighting back is difficult or impossible because "most people are too right wing". Labour victories, by contrast, are proof that at an elemental level, most people see class as the most important distinction in society.

So, in ways however distorted, elections represent a battle for working class consciousness.

Millions of people—and for most of the time, most of the working class—have illusions in parliament. Revolutionaries cannot shatter that false impression by simply ignoring it.

General elections heighten people's political awareness. They act as a licence to talk politics in neighbourhoods, schools and workplaces. Revolutionaries should intervene in these debates to make propaganda about the system, the limitations of elections—and the socialist alternative to capitalism. Intervening in elections is an opportunity to tap into masses that could be drawn towards struggle.

For those same reasons, it can sometimes be useful for revolutionaries to make use of an election and themselves stand candidates. Socialists elected as councillors or MPs can, as Lenin described, act as "tribunes of the people". That is, they can raise issues that pose the questions of class in the sharpest possible way and expose other parties as fake.

But there is a vital distinction between a left wing, reformist MP and a revolutionary socialist one.

The main priority of the left wing MP is to use parliament to win changes. But in doing so they help reinforce the idea that elections, not struggle, are the way forwards.

That's because they see change as fundamentally coming from the halls of power. In contrast, every day that a revolutionary sits in parliament, they expose its weakness and work towards its downfall. Revolutionaries in parliament should see their position as an opportunity to raise the level of struggle at every point. And any movement such as the mass mobilisation for Palestine on the streets in Britain, risks being tamed if its aims are pushed towards electoral glory.

The way to win isn't to stand as many councillors as possible—it's to build the struggle on the streets and in the workplaces. And, to unlock its potential, any left wing movement must be taken to its most radical conclusions.

This is the ninth part of a series of columns that discuss What We Stand For, the Socialist Workers Party statement of principles, printed every week in *Socialist Worker* (see page 12). For the full series go to tinyurl.com/WWSF2024

Universities launch a war on jobs and education

by SOPHIE SQUIRE

UNIVERSITY BOSSES are slashing thousands of jobs as part of a wider assault on education.

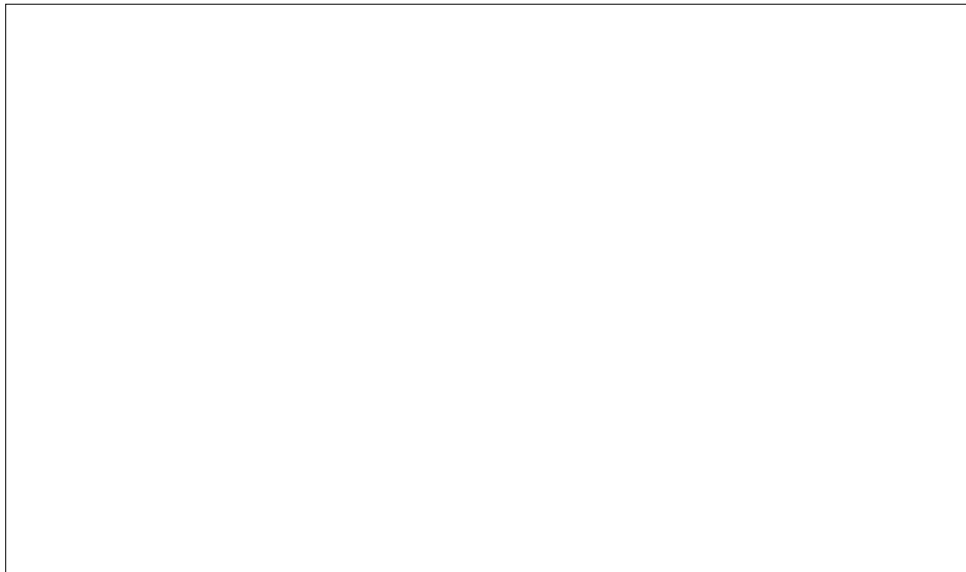
As well as the sackings and compulsory redundancies, in almost every institution there's a drive to force out people on a "voluntary" basis. And bosses are particularly attacking subjects such as English, history and sociology.

One example is Goldsmiths university in south London which began a marking and assessment boycott last week.

Management's Transformation Programme seeks 132 compulsorily redundancies with some departments losing half their staff.

Supporting the Goldsmiths action, the writer—and Goldsmith literary prize winner—Isabel Waidner, said, "The 'restructuring' of Goldsmiths is an attack on the production of knowledge disguised as an economic recovery.

"The effects will be devastating on staff, students and the cultural sector more



GOLDSMITHS UNIVERSITY—nice buildings, shame about the jobs slaughter

widely." At the University of Lincoln workers are discussing strikes after bosses called for 220 jobs to go including one in ten academic staff. Cuts include the phasing out of the fashion degree.

Workers need to fight every cut and every redundancy at a local level. But their best hope of winning is to fight together and to

press for a national response. These debates took place at a recent online meeting on more than 110 people called by the grassroots UCU Solidarity Movement. Over 20 UCU branches backed the meeting.

Henrike from Goldsmiths said management is trying to "constantly blackmail" workers to convince them they

have no choice but to accept cuts.

"Management always tells us that the university isn't able to satisfy the banks and can't pay back its loans, so it has to make job cuts," she said.

Workers at other universities facing redundancies spelled out how bosses say jobs must go but are

simultaneously rolling out shiny new building projects.

UCU members at Sheffield Hallam University are currently voting on whether to strike.

The university has said 225 academic jobs will be axed, with up to 80 staff facing compulsory redundancy.

Around 140 senior academics have already left following the opening of a voluntary severance scheme in December and the university is now ploughing ahead with further compulsory job losses.

But while the university says it is making these cuts because it has a £9 million deficit, it is also replacing its Science Park with a £200 million project. It is also planning to open a campus in Brent Cross, London.

It's possible to resist. Henrike explained that at Goldsmiths, an active union branch meant workers could "begin the fight back early on".

Three years ago workers at the University of Liverpool beat the bosses' redundancy plans through strikes and a marking and assessment boycott. Peta from Liverpool

University union branch told the UCU Solidarity meeting that workers "must declare a dispute straight away when redundancies are announced. Don't dilly-dally."

"Every time we struck, the number of redundancies went down."

She added that UCU branches must give "support and solidarity" to others taking action.

"If we let any branch go down, we're all in the shit. Solidarity needs to be our starting point," she said.

UNIVERSITY WORKERS in Britain are mobilising in support of Palestinian academic Nadera Shalhoub-Kevorkian.

She has already been suspended from her university position over anti-Zionist comments and last week was arrested on "suspicion of incitement".

Shalhoub-Kevorkian is a professor at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, which suspended her last month after she called for "abolishing Zionism" and doubting official accounts of what happened on 7 October.

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Egyptian people are 'desperate and furious' at repressive regime

Will the slaughter in Gaza, and economic crisis at home, see Egypt rise against the al-Sisi regime? Phil Marfleet writes from the capital, Cairo

EGYPTIAN RULER Abdel-Fattah al-Sisi has never been more unpopular. His survival depends upon savage repression of the masses by the army, police and intelligence services.

For years al-Sisi has begged allies to save his state from bankruptcy. Now they have showered him with aid and investment. These are high-risk investments and loans.

It's a sign of anxiety that the Gaza crisis could affect his dictatorship and prompt an uprising like the revolution that brought down his predecessor in 2011.

Egyptians ended Hosni Mubarak's rule after weeks of massive demonstrations and strikes. Mubarak depended upon the same regime of arrest, torture and imprisonment as al-Sisi does today.

The uprising became a revolution that extended across the country, with an impact throughout the Arab world and beyond.

Only an army coup led by al-Sisi in 2013 and followed by intense repression suppressed the mass movement. Could the movement return?

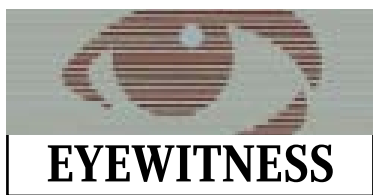
Al-Sisi's allies fear that it might, and that Egypt's economic crisis and Israel's war on Gaza will prompt further protests and strikes.

The regime's policies have been a disaster for most Egyptians. Inflation is at almost 40 percent annually but food prices are rising much more steeply.

Price rises hit especially hard at Eid, the festival that ends the month of Ramadan. Most people couldn't afford special foods or presents.

In 2015 the poorest Egyptians spent a quarter of their income on food. Now they spend a half of all income on basic foods.

Al-Sisi has infuriated Egyptians by telling them that in order to achieve his policies people must accept poverty and the prospect



of famine. Last year he said that Egyptians must be patient—criticism and protests, he said, could “destroy the country”.

His policies include absurd vanity projects, including construction of a new capital city in the desert south-east of Cairo at a cost of over £40 billion. It already includes a huge presidential palace and dozens of new ministry buildings.

Al-Sisi has also ordered a new leg of the Suez Canal, the waterway connecting the Red Sea to Mediterranean Sea. Government income goes overwhelmingly to his friends among Egypt's predatory businessmen and senior officials of the military.

Al-Sisi came to power with the aim of destroying the revolutionary movement that deposed Mubarak, and which organised for “Bread, Freedom and Social Justice”.

Mubarak had been a “poster boy” for the neoliberal IMF bank. He willingly accepted its demands to cut food subsidies, sell off nationalised industries and revoke reforms that in the 1950s and 1960s gave peasants rights to cultivate land.

Forced

Millions of peasant families were forced from their fields when they returned to private owners. Many now live in impoverished areas of Cairo and Alexandria—or make dangerous journeys across the Sea to Europe as migrants.

European Union leaders are keen that al-Sisi stays in power and holds back migrants from Egypt and other Middle Eastern countries.

However, due to a mass of pressure from below, the government has been forced to make superficial concessions on pay. This month it agreed to increase the minimum wage by 71 percent to 6,000 Egyptian pounds a month—around £100.

But most workers will never get it. Exemptions are granted to businesses employing less than ten workers—97 percent of all enterprises, accounting for two-thirds of Egypt's workforce.

In February a wave of strikes showed that Egyptian workers are



Inflation is at almost 40 percent. Egyptians spend half of their income on food

PROTESTING FOR Palestine on International Women's Day in Cairo, Egypt

running out of patience. A partial victory at the country's largest workplace, the Mahalla al-Kubra textile mill, resulted from walk-outs led by women workers.

Egypt's Revolutionary Socialists reported, “Around 7,000 Workers occupied the factory square on 24 February and declared they would fight until bosses met their demands for a pay rise.”

Within a week, workers forced the company to pay the new minimum wage. That was in addition to an annual 7 percent pay raise as of March and an 8 percent increase in monthly salary also paid out in March. The Mahalla dispute gives hope to other workplaces that concerted action can bring change.

Aid and investment supplied to Egypt by the UAE, the IMF and the EU mark serious worries among states and capitalists that al-Sisi might not survive renewed mass struggle.

Like Israel, the Egyptian regime maintains an armed border at Gaza, preventing movement of goods and people. For most Egyptians, Gaza is “Egypt's shame”.

An activist in Cairo described widespread feelings of anger and

humiliation at the government's stance.

“People are not only desperate about wages and prices but also furious that al-Sisi acts as if Binyamin Netanyahu was his best friend,” they said.

“We are watching tens of thousands of Palestinians die and our regime behaves as if this was taking place on another planet.

“Millions of people want to show their solidarity with the Palestinians through public protests but right now those who do so face instant arrest.”

Despite the regime's clamp-down, solidarity events have been held at union headquarters in Cairo. Recently a protest by women on International Women's Day accused Arab states of betrayal, chanting, “O cowardly Arab governments, Gaza's children are hungry.”

Survival

The regime's strategy for survival, based upon relentless repression, is fraught with danger for al-Sisi. In 2013 he attacked and destroyed Egypt's main opposition, the Muslim Brotherhood.

The regime does not have a

political party of its own, preferring to win elections by outright fraud and vote-rigging.

Without a “buffer” between the state and the people—a role performed for many decades by the Muslim Brotherhood—the regime is particularly vulnerable to movements from below.

Al-Sisi's international friends lost a pharaoh in 2011 and wish to avoid another calamity. Israel will also be looking carefully at events on Egypt's side of the Gaza border.

The last thing Netanyahu and his genocidal government want to see is an insurgent Egyptian working class seeking, “Bread, Freedom and Social Justice”.

IN BRIEF

College workers will not give up on pay

WORKERS AT several colleges that are part of the Education Training Collective (ETC) won't give up winning a pay rise.

Workers in Cleveland, Redcar and Stockton-on-Tees voted to strike again in a long-running battle to get a better 2022-23 pay deal.

ETC bosses continue to say that workers should accept the 3 percent pay increase for that year, with an additional 1 percent from May 2023.

This group of workers have already struck six times this year.

Statistics say civil servants won ballot

AROUND 600 PCS union members at the Office for National Statistics (ONS) have voted by 73 percent to strike.

The dispute is over bosses' plans to force a 40 percent return to the office after working from home.

The PCS will announce strike days in the next few weeks.

Lancashire factory workers in pay fight

WORKERS AT ELE Advanced Technologies in Lancashire voted for strikes that are planned to begin on Wednesday next week.

The company offered workers a £1,000 pay increase, worth 4 percent from May 2023 and 5 percent from May 2024.

The 80 workers were set to strike from Wednesday of next week, as well as Thursday and Friday of next week.

The company claims it cannot afford the pay rise due to financial losses in 2023, yet its chief executive received a 12 percent wage increase last year.

Health workers operate good picket

RECOVERY theatre Practitioners at the Arrow Park hospital on the Wirral, Merseyside, struck for two days last week—and are striking again this week.

The Unite union says the workers, who care for patients recovering from serious operations, are paid a grade below their level of responsibility.

The workers walked for a third day on Tuesday of this week and are set to be out again the following Thursday.

Dounreay workers reject a toxic offer

AROUND 460 Unite union members at Dounreay power station are set to strike on Wednesday and Thursday next week, and 15 and 29 May.

The Nuclear Restoration Services Limited offered workers 4.5 percent from April 2023, which workers rejected.

The Unite members backed strikes by 86 percent on a turnout of 82 percent.

COMMUNICATION WORKERS UNION

CWU UNION members on a march for Palestine

CWU members back Palestine

THE CWU union conference opened last weekend with two days devoted largely to setting out the leadership's plans to restructure the union.

The union tops largely got their own way in pushing the union further into the hands of the full time apparatus and away from branch officers and rank and file activists.

But there were sparks of resistance.

A speech by South Central Postal Branch delegate Paul Garraway helped defeat the leadership over its plans to replace the annual conference with a two-yearly event.

But the union may now use wriggle room in the amended motion to hold the conference digitally in alternate years.

Fellow South Central delegate Chad Croom gently

questioned plans to replace the union's national officers with a new "central services" provision.

But this was too much for general secretary Dave Ward, who defended the plans.

After being attacked by Ward, Chad responded, saying the move could be seen as lining up "jobs for the boys".

The leadership motion later passed.

Away from the conference floor, the CWU held its first official fringe meeting on Palestine since the war on Gaza.

Around 100 delegates and observers heard Ben Jamal from the Palestine Solidarity Campaign and tech worker Eran Cohen, a member of the group CWU Members for Palestine (CWUMFP).

CWUMFP has played a role

in raising the Palestine issue in the union and winning branches to send delegations to Palestine protests.

It helped create pressure on the union leaders to do more on the issue.

Addressing the fringe meeting, Ward said he was keen to speak at the next national Palestine demo.

■ **DELEGATES TO** the CWU Ireland conference last week voted to support members that won't touch Israeli post.

Brian Ryan from the Dublin Postal Amalgamated branch moved a motion that said the union should "fully support any members who've conscientiously objected to the handing of such mail".

And it should ensure that members "don't face any disciplinary action" for doing so.

SCHOOLS

Strike over pension blow plus fire and rehire plans

TEACHERS AT Bedford Greenacre Independent School in Bedford planned to strike on Tuesday and Wednesday of this week.

The NEU education union members say it's to protect their pensions and dispute their employer's use of fire and rehire tactics.

The governors of the school wrote to NEU members saying they will be sacked on Tuesday if they don't accept worse terms.

Employers are placing NEU members in an unacceptable position where fire and rehire have become a reality. The teachers are right to fight back.

And workers at nurseries in Balham and Eastwood, south London, were set to strike on Tuesday, Wednesday and

Thursday of this week. They are striking over proposed cuts that would leave many redundant.

They were on strike on Tuesday and Wednesday of last week.

Employers are threatening members of the NEU union with compulsory redundancy amid plans to reduce the number of nursery places for children.

These nurseries take a high proportion of children with special educational needs (Send) and are well-known for providing a range of provision to children with Send. But the cuts would drastically reduce learning opportunities and the provision offered.

● Messages of solidarity to frank.marshall@neu.org.uk

LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Link Birmingham cuts and equal pay resistance

HUNDREDS OF Birmingham city council workers have voted for strikes over delays in settling equal pay claims for low paid women.

Workers in the GMB union at 35 schools have voted to back the action, with some 96 percent overall supporting strikes.

Alice Reynolds, GMB Organiser, said, "Almost a year since council bosses admitted an equal pay bill as high as £760 million, not one single woman worker has received the money they're owed."

Strike dates are set to be announced soon, with action involving teaching assistants, catering and ground workers.

Meanwhile Birmingham People's Assembly, supported by all the major unions and Strike Map, plans a meeting on Saturday to

bring together campaigners fighting massive cuts from the Labour-led council.

It will feature a range of campaigners to create a united group called Brum Rise Up—Communities Against Cuts.

The People's Assembly said, "We want to show a united front and tell the council and the government that we do not accept these cuts and demand more funding."

● Organising meeting, Sat 27 April, 10.30am-12 noon, Birmingham and Midlands Institute, 9 Margaret Street, Birmingham, B3 3BS GB. Details at tinyurl.com/Brum2704

● Birmingham Unison union branch has called a save Birmingham public services, rally at 12 noon Monday 6 May outside Central Library Centenary Square

EMPLOYMENT LAW

Use new court ruling to boost resistance

WORKERS SHOULD use a supreme court judgement made last week to batter bosses who have penalised or discriminated against strikers.

Judges last Wednesday said that British trade union law breaches workers' rights as it fails to protect them against sanctions short of dismissal when they strike.

The supreme court said that the law as it stands "encourages and legitimises unfair and unreasonable conduct" by employers and was incompatible with the European convention on human rights.

The law is supposed to

stop employers sacking strikers. But it doesn't even pretend to offer protection to anyone who faces attacks that are less than dismissal.

The Unison union pushed the issue on behalf of care worker Fiona Mercer. Fiona had originally taken a case against her then employer, Alternative Futures Group (AFG), a charity based in the north west of England, to an employment tribunal in 2020.

She had been involved in a 2019 battle by 600 workers over AFG's plans to cut payments to care staff who did sleep-in shifts.

Christina McAnea, Unison's general secretary,

said last week that the court had delivered the "most important industrial action case for decades".

Paul Nowak, general secretary of the TUC union federation, described the ruling as a "crushing defeat" for strike laws.

That's very optimistic. Strike laws continue to frustrate resistance and bear down on union rights. And they are used as an excuse by union leaders not to head-up a fightback. However, the judgement is still very positive and should be a spur to wider campaigns.

● Read the full story online at tinyurl.com/unionlaws

CIVIL SERVICE

PCS national strike ballot can lead to pay fightback

THE PCS union strike ballot spanning the civil service in Britain—launched on 18 March—continues.

A national survey had seen workers vote overwhelmingly in favour of continuing the fight for better pay and conditions.

The dispute involves nearly 150,000 PCS members across 171 employers in the civil service and related areas.

The union's pay claims are for an above inflation rise, pay equality across departments and a minimum

wage of £15 per hour.

Union members are working hard to surpass the 50 percent threshold and held a day of phone banking earlier this month.

This involved 10,000 union members encouraging fellow members to take part and vote in the ballot.

According to a union reps' own analysis, this initiative has helped the PCS branch for DWP Edinburgh, Lothian and Borders to reach a 78 percent turnout.

Other branches are replicating these tactics.

HEALTH WORKERS

Leicester HCAs fight to win NHS pay battle

by YURI PRASAD

THE BATTLE for proper pay for health care assistants (HCA) intensified this week as hundreds of workers at Leicester's three main hospitals walked out.

Unison union members are furious that for years they have been wrongly placed on the band 2 pay scale, making them some of the poorest workers in the NHS.

That's despite many of them performing clinical duties, including taking electrocardiogram (ECG) readings and inserting cannulas, as well as assisting patients with personal care.

Every HCA knows their ward or clinic could not function without them. Yet the bosses have for years treated them as "unskilled".

The NHS trust has already agreed to move most HCAs from NHS band 2 to band 3.

That will see many long standing workers adding around £2,000 a year to their salary.

But, as in most other HCA disputes across England, the real question is how many years of backpay will the



LEICESTER HCAS are determined to secure justice

PICTURE: UNISON EAST MIDLANDS

bosses cough up? HCA Debby Taylor told the Leicester Mercury newspaper, "I've done all my clinical training and every manager I've had has asked for a review because I wasn't getting the correct pay. Every time, I was told no."

"So, I really want the backpay because it's money that I've earned."

"They've offered us two years and seven months, that's not enough. We should have

six years' backpay." Unison has already won HCA pay deals that go back to 2018.

This ought now to be the benchmark and no one should settle for less. Sangeeta Doy works at University Hospitals of Leicester and is Unison's lead representative.

She's particularly angry at the way being underpaid affects women.

"This impacts so much on female workers. And I want all the women in Leicester to

come and support us on the picket line because every time women have to go out there and fight for what's owed to them. This is their money.

"If you get overpaid you have to pay it back, so why is it when you're owed money, you are given the excuse 'we haven't got the money?'"

Sangeeta is right, and the HCAs must now be prepared to follow through with their plans for further action this month and next.

RAIL

Train drivers schedule new national strikes

TRAIN DRIVERS in the Aslef union have scheduled more strikes as part of their pay battle at 16 train operating companies.

They are set to hold staggered one-day strikes, coupled with a six-day overtime ban.

Many train drivers have not had any pay rise for five years. They have held 14 national one-day strikes since the first walkout in July 2022.

Strike timetable

● Tue 7 May: Greater Anglia, c2c, GTR Great Northern Thameslink, Southeastern, Southern/Gatwick Express, South Western Railway main line and depot drivers and SWR Island Line

● Wed 8 May: Avanti West Coast, Chiltern Railways, CrossCountry, East Midlands Railway, Great Western Railway and West Midlands Trains

● Thu 9 May: LNER, Northern Trains and TransPennine Trains.

There will also be an overtime ban from 6 to 11 May.

■ PEOPLE WHO work for the TSSA union are set to strike on Tuesday of next week and 6 June over bullying, harassment and financial mismanagement.

GMB union members voted 93 percent yes to action in a ballot.

They have also voted for a motion of no confidence in TSSA's leadership.

■ A STRIKE by train drivers in the Aslef union halted three-quarters of services on LNER last Saturday. The action was part of a dispute over terms and conditions, which is separate to the wider pay action at 16 train companies.

■ THE RMT union has rejected a pay offer from Network Rail. The state-owned company, which runs the track and infrastructure, has offered a 3.5 percent rise.

The RMT said the offer was not enough because it fell below the retail price index measure of inflation relevant to this settlement, which was 5.3 percent.

HOUSING

LONDON Sanctuary Housing repair and maintenance workers were set to continue strikes Monday, Wednesday and Friday this week.

The workers, who are members of the Unite union, began strikes over pay and union recognition in February.

Bosses triggered strikes by imposing a 4 percent rise in

April 2023, when the real rate of inflation was 11.4 percent.

The dispute has been drawn out because Sanctuary Housing, which has assets of over £5.6 billion, a surplus of £101 million and a CEO on £400,000 a year, refuses to recognise unions.

New workers are regularly joining the strikes.

COUNCILS

Nottingham organises to defeat council cuts

AROUND 100 people squeezed into A Save Our Services meeting in Nottingham's Meadows area last week to oppose the results of council cuts.

People from a host of local groups spoke. They included Leroy, the chair of Stand up to Racism, and Shuguftah Qudoods Sherriff of Nottingham, who was suspended by the Labour Party for voting against the cuts.

There were brilliant contributions from local people up for a fight.

It was a community protest meeting not bettered since poll tax days, very political with no belief in Keir Starmer's Labour reversing anything.

It can be the start of a real fight back involving occupations of community facilities and giving

confidence to union members to also take industrial action.

We need to link with other council areas facing similar cuts.

In November 2023 Nottingham council was effectively declared bankrupt.

Nottingham Trades Council launched Nottingham Save Our Services.

It has organised protests supported by the Unison, Unite and GMB unions, but also those representing culture sector workers in Equity, Musicians Union and Bectu.

They will be severely affected by the total cut of all council grants to community and cultural organisations.

Richard Buckwell
Nottingham Unite Community branch

BUSES

Take brake off the bus strikes

UNITE UNION officials have called off another scheduled week-long strike of Arriva Northumbria bus drivers—for the second time.

The drivers had been set to walk out on Sunday last week, but Unite called the action off for workers to consider a new offer.

Unite is advising the bus drivers to accept, but is staying quiet on what the deal is.

Calling off the strike "as a goodwill gesture" is only useful to the bus bosses.

The 300 drivers voted to walk out over a 4 percent pay offer.

Unite also called off a week of strikes due to start on 7 April to allow drivers to vote on an offer—which they rejected.

Unite needs to stop putting the brakes on the strike and let the bus drivers strike for the pay they deserve.

RETAIL

Pension raid at Morrisons

SOME 1,000 Morrisons workers—warehouse stock controllers, cooks, canteen staff and administrators—are voting to protect their pensions.

The workers based at warehouses in Cheshire and Wakefield fill the shelves of 500 supermarkets and stores run by the chain.

Bosses are forcing workers to increase their own pension contributions while the supermarket reduces its own contributions by the same amount.

Workers will be significantly worse off, while Morrisons pockets the extra money.

Bosses also want to adopt a new "pick rate".

This speed-up scheme monitors the rate that items are packed from the warehouse shelves.

The ballot opened on Tuesday last week, and is set to close on 9 May.

CIVIL SERVICE

Border strike at Heathrow?

AROUND 600 Border Force officers are set to strike at London's Heathrow airport. Action, which was postponed before, is now planned for next Monday to Thursday.

The strikes could be covered by the latest set of anti-union laws, but the government had not moved to use them at the start of this week.

■ REFUELLERS employed by AFS are set to strike on Saturday of next week after bosses imposed drastic cuts to the terms and conditions of new staff recruited from January 2024.

The strike would affect planes at Heathrow airport.

AFS is a joint venture between oil and gas companies including Air BP, Total, Q8 Air and Valero.

The company wants to reduce pension and sickness benefits. Around 35 airlines rely on AFS for refuelling.

AMAZON

Vote for union at Amazon

>>>Continued from page 20 recognised union.

"I know Amazon has got a lot of people inside trying to dissuade us from doing what we're doing."

"They're trying to scare people, but we don't scare easily."

"We've stood out here time and time again together in the rain, snow and freezing cold. We've stood side by side, and we've shared stories with other people."

"Now there is a bigger story to be told—we could be the first official union at Amazon in Britain."

The ballot dates will be announced soon.

Union recognition has to be the start of building a fighting union that achieves concrete gains.

Coventry workers should push to win the ballot and continue to push for workers at other fulfilment centres to fight.



LABOUR COUNCIL PLANS SCABBING

by ISABEL RINGROSE

BARNET COUNCIL'S mental health social workers are standing firm against the stubborn north London authority that is trying to undermine the strike.

After striking for 27 days between September and February, the Unison union members are on strike for two weeks until Friday this week.

They plan three more weeks of action in May and four across June and July.

Senior management announced on 10 April it would temporarily commission an agency to "provide the mental health duty and triage function for a period of 3-4 months". This was to "mitigate" against the strike.

Four days later the agency pulled out after pressure from Unison.

"Since then, mental health social care was informed by senior management, while staff were taking industrial action, that Barnet council is continuing to seek other providers to outsource this work," Barnet Unison wrote.

The council has denied using scab workers.

It said it was concerned about the impact of the strike "on vulnerable residents and so have been looking at options to provide 'life and limb' capacity in ways that are fully in compliance with relevant legislation and guidance".

Barnet Unison replied that there is "no legal justification for commissioning an agency" to cover "life and limb" as it's already being covered by those not striking.

Striker Amber undertakes duty and triage work. Duty workers



MENTAL HEALTH social workers at Barnet council are out on strike

PICTURE: GUY SMALLMAN

screen referrals. They also allocate cases to case workers, who make up the majority of the strikers.

Amber told Socialist Worker the decision to outsource her role has left her "absolutely fuming".

"Every duty worker is on strike so," she said. "I think the council is

doubling down on its stance rather than coming to a solution.

"Agency workers get paid around double, as they're paid per assessment. Does the council think that little of us? It's infuriating and feels like a kick in the teeth."

Mary is an Approved Mental

Health Practitioner (AMHP) and has worked for the council for 21 years.

She says services have been dangerously depleted, with jobs, wards, safe houses, rehabs and respite care slashed.

"Someone in crisis used to have

three people helping them, including social workers and care nurse practitioners," she said. "Now you have just one social worker."

"We're service led, not care led. It's all about saving money. The Tory government has underfunded social care and merged services together."

"When Labour came to run the council, we were excited, we thought things would change. But Labour isn't interested and things got worse."

Out of 23 social workers and lead practitioner posts, in the past 18 months 19 have left with more handing their notices in.

This means waiting lists are up to 18 months, yet management claims there is no retention problem.

Unison nationally needs to ensure that the council doesn't get away with privatising jobs and underpaying its workers.

● Donate to the strike fund. Account name Barnet Unison Industrial Action Fund. Account Number: 20039336 Sort Code: 608301

● Messages of support to contactus@barnetunison.org.uk

● Visit picket lines between 8-10am at 2 Bristol Avenue, Colindale, London NW9 4EW

● MENTAL HEALTH social workers employed by Cumberland council were set to strike for two weeks from Wednesday this week.

It follows a 48-hour strike and 72-hour strike by workers, who are in the GMB union, in March.

The council regraded the role in 2019 and refused to regrade again in 2022.

The Labour-led authority is providing "emergency cover" to undermine the strike.

Amazon workers close to winning fight for union recognition

by SOPHIE SQUIRE

SHEER determination and solid action has meant that Amazon workers in Coventry are close to winning union recognition at their warehouse.

The Central Arbitration Committee (CAC), the government body responsible for regulating collective bargaining

between workers and employers, announced last Friday that workers should be able to vote in an official ballot to decide whether they want to be part of a union.

If workers vote yes to union recognition Amazon bosses would be required to meet with union representatives to negotiate pay and terms and conditions.

This latest step forward has only been possible because Amazon workers in Coventry have fought so hard.

Workers at BHX4 fulfilment centre have taken 30 days of strikes and have stood together on big and militant picket lines.

And the crucial beginning for the Amazon campaign was unofficial

walkouts at several sites including Coventry in 2022. Coventry workers have also fought against the dirty tricks Amazon bosses' use to stop union recognition. Anti-union laws mean that bosses can only be forced to officially recognise a union if more than 50 percent of workers are in that union.

The number of workers in the GMB union at BHX4

has crossed that threshold several times in the last year. But Amazon has flooded the warehouse with new starters to try to prevent recognition.

Amazon worker Garfield told Socialist Worker in January that workers pushed hard to recruit these new starters to the union every time this happened. "The managers employ people

they don't think will want to fight back. But we're having conversations with them and recruiting them just the same."

After hearing the recognition news, Amazon worker Darren Westwood said, "All that hard work we've put in has finally paid off."

We are now allowed to vote and become a >>>continued on page 19