

"We are realists... we dream the impossible" - Che



Fire This Time!

STOP THE SITE C DAM!



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STOP THE SITE C DAM!

By Alison Bodine

Three years ago, on December 11, 2017 the NDP Premier of British Columbia John Horgan gave the greenlight to the Site C hydroelectric dam set to be built in northeast B.C. Since then, construction of the dam has continued full speed ahead despite violations of Indigenous rights, critical safety concerns and billion-dollar cost overruns.

These scandals and cover-ups brought the Site C Dam into the spotlight during the October 2020 BC elections. Rightfully so, because there are important, unanswered questions about the dam itself and the justifications to proceed with the construction.

Is the Site C Dam Needed?

One might think that a hydroelectric dam offers “clean” electricity generation, but there are several critical environmental impacts brought on by a mega-project such as Site C. This includes the devastation caused by the construction of the dam including the cutting down of trees and flooding of a valley, as well as the methane gases and poisonous methyl mercury that is created by the decaying vegetation within the newly created reservoir.

Adding another dam to the Peace River will undoubtedly disrupt the fragile and unique ecosystem of the Peace Athabasca Delta, but the devastation runs much deeper than the direct impact on the river and the land itself. As reported in a 2016 UBC Study, “Site C has more significant

adverse environmental effects than any project ever reviewed under the history of the Canadian Environmental Assessment Act, including impacts on dozens of species, aquatics, vegetation, wildlife, Aboriginal use of lands and resources, and cultural heritage.”

Despite this, the BC government and BC Hydro continue to insist that the destruction is justified, because the electricity that Site C will generate is necessary. This, however, is a fabrication.

Even with a growing population and economy, electricity demand in BC since 2005 has been stagnant. Further to this, in his 2017 submission to the BC Utilities Commission Marc Eliesen, a former BC Hydro CEO and President said, “There never was a business case for the start-up of construction of Site C, and there is not a business case to support its continuation or postponement.”

If and when more electricity is needed, there are many other alternatives to this disastrous project.

What is the Land Being Flooded?

When completed, Site C will flood an area of about 5,500 hectares of the Peace River valley south of Fort St. John, BC. This area includes land that is covered by the Treaty 8 territories of the Prophet River Band and the West Moberly First Nation. Both nations have opposed Site C. The Prophet River Band has now signed an agreement with BC Hydro meaning

that they will no longer pursue the case in court. However, the West Moberly First Nation has an ongoing civil court case against BC Hydro, the BC government, and the Attorney General of Canada for violations of the Treaty.

By pushing ahead with Site C, the government of BC is violating Indigenous rights to their land and self-determination. This exposes the complete hypocrisy and true intentions of the NDP government of BC. In 2019, they passed the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People into law – but they do not intend to honour the parts of the document that call for the “free, prior, and informed consent,” of Indigenous peoples regarding projects that will impact them.

35,000 acres of the land being flooded is also invaluable farmland. As Agrologist Wendy Holm stated in her October 11, 2020 editorial in The Province, “The B.C. Peace Valley farmland to be flooded by the Site C dam ranks as some of the highest capability land in Canada.”

Is Site C Safe?

Although the fertile land of the Peace River Valley is ideal for growing food, it is terrible for supporting a massive structure such as the Site C dam. On July 31, 2020, BC Hydro finally made public the serious geotechnical concerns that continue to plague the project that they had known about for more than a year. The soft shale that it is being built on is not capable of supporting the project.

Site C is located right in the middle of a fracking-induced earthquake zone. Hydraulic fracturing, known as fracking, is a process of extracting natural gas from below the earth's surface using massive amounts of pressurized water, sand, and chemicals. As reported by the CBC, in the areas surrounding Site C there have been nearly 6,000 earthquakes



caused by fracking between 2017-2019. This includes a 4.5 magnitude quake that caused an evacuation of workers at Site C in November 2018.

Just as the BC government and BC Hydro have ignored serious concerns about the safety of the dam itself, contractors working on the Site-C project have also shown disregard for workers safety. In February 2020 WorkSafeBC fined Peace River Hydro Partners Construction Ltd (PRHP) almost \$1 million for safety violations, incidents with "a high risk of serious injury, illness or death," as reported by CBC. As well, construction has not only continued, but escalated during the Covid-19 pandemic, putting workers and the surrounding remote communities at unnecessary risk.

How much will it cost?

This growing catastrophe is now projected to cost \$12.5 billion or more. It is the largest publicly funded infrastructure project in BC history. Today, BC Hydro is not reporting or speculating on the project cost-overruns caused by the geotechnical issues – they don't know how to fix it and they don't know how much it will cost.

As Andrew Nikiforuk wrote in the Tyee in August 2020, "So what began as a \$3.3-billion curved dam under premier Gordon Campbell in 2005 became a \$7.9-billion, L-shaped project under Clark. The new design added an additional \$4-billion cost to the project, a great deal for contractors seeking longer and fatter pay cheques. Under Horgan's administration, the over-budget project has marched into \$10.7-billion territory. And now, based on the latest problems, it is likely to become a \$15-billion fiasco — Horgan's Folly."

The Site C dam is now costing people in BC about \$100 million a month. This money could be spent on other much-needed infrastructure and social support projects including those in healthcare, education, and housing.

The Struggle to Cancel Site-C Continues!

In December 2020 it is expected that the NDP government of BC will make another announcement regarding Site C. Earlier this year, BC NDP Premier John Horgan appointed Peter Milburn to complete yet another review of the project, in response to increasing pressure from

on the government of BC to cancel this disastrous project once and for all.

In defense of Mother Earth



ABOVE: Alison Bodine, Climate Convergence organizer in interview with CBC at October 22, 2020 banner action

BELOW: Site C Dam construction in British Columbia causing environmental degradation



As Ken Boon, the President of the Peace Valley Landowners Association reminded us during the Climate Convergence Metro Vancouver webinar on Site C held on November 25, 2020, "It is not too late on that front to stop Site C. Trees will grow back, nature will heal the valley. That is a very important thing to note."

Decisions are being made by capitalist and imperialist governments that put the interests of corporations ahead of those of the planet and poor and working people. However, if we can work together to build a consistent and united mass movement in defense of Mother Earth – it is not too late to reverse the unbelievable damage that the capitalist system has unleashed on humanity and the planet in the last 150 years.

It is time to unite our fight in BC to cancel the Site C dam, with the struggle against the Muskrat Falls dam in Newfoundland and Labrador in Eastern Canada, and the struggles of our co-fighters around the world. Poor, working people must come together and organize a coordinated and consistent campaign for Mother Earth.

For more information about how to get involved in the struggle for climate justice here in BC, and the campaign against Site

C (including sample letters to use to write your MLA, and educational materials that can be shared with others!) visit the website of Climate Convergence Metro Vancouver at: www.climateconvergence.ca

people in BC to cancel the project.

During this period, it is important that we do not "wait and see," for Premier Horgan to announce the BC government's decision. There is already more than enough evidence that this dangerous, costly, and unnecessary project must be cancelled immediately. Now is the time to increase the pressure

*Follow Alison on Twitter:
@Alisoncolette*

*In defense of
Mother Earth*

CLIMATE JUSTICE ORGANIZING MUST BE COLLECTIVE & CONSISTENT!

By Alison Bodine

Throughout the fall of 2020, poor and working people in British Columbia and Canada continued to face the brunt of the economic and health crisis brought on by government mismanagement of the Covid-19 pandemic. At the same time, big oil and gas continued to expand. Even during the pandemic, at least \$2.5 billion taxpayer dollars (from the federal government's Covid-19 relief package) were funneled into mega-projects that violate Indigenous rights and destroy invaluable ecosystems. In British Columbia, these climate destroying projects include the Coastal GasLink (CGL) fracked gas pipeline in Wet'suwet'en, the Site C Dam in the Peace River Valley, and the Transmountain pipeline expansion (TMX).

Despite the pandemic's health and safety challenges, resistance to CGL, TMX, and Site C has continued to grow. In Metro Vancouver, the grassroots climate coalition Climate Convergence has continued to find unique and effective ways of fighting for climate justice. This has included events online, physically distanced banner actions on the streets, and an ongoing public education campaign of large-scale posterage.

September 23

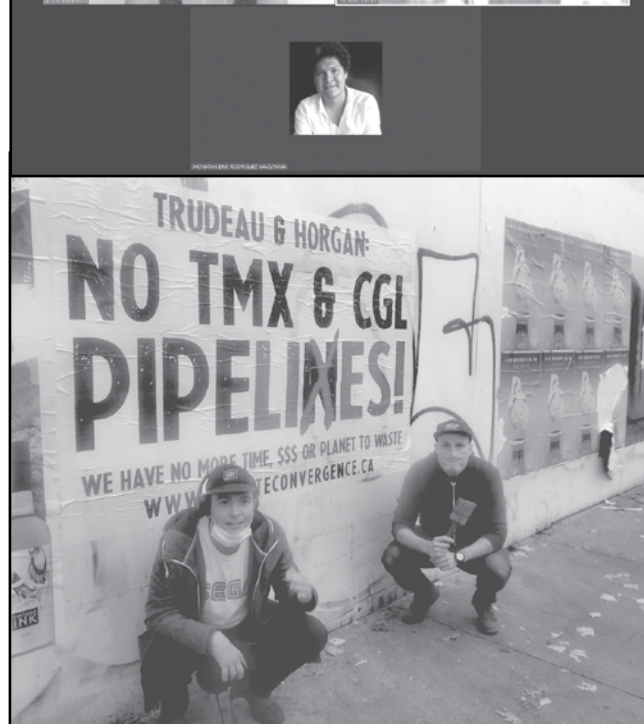
Climate Convergence organized a banner action outside of Liberal MP Terry Beech and NDP Leader MP Jagmeet Singh's offices. This action demanded that the Trudeau government include canceling the TMX Pipeline as part of their Throne Speech and that opposition parties make this a prerequisite for their government's vote of confidence.

October 7

Climate Convergence organized the webinar "The State of Our Planet Today & Building an International Climate Justice Movement." This international event brought together people from four countries on three continents: Francisco Kelvin, from the Movimento dos Atingidos por Barragens - MAB (Movement of People Affected by Dams) in Brazil; Jhonatan Erik Rodriguez Macuyama, an Amazonian poet and activist in Peru; Siri Andersen from 350 Aotearoa (New Zealand) and Climate Convergence central organizer Alison Bodine. This important event emphasized that just as climate change is a worldwide crisis, the struggle for climate justice must also be international.

October 21

In the final days leading up to the BC provincial election, Climate Convergence also organized a banner action at Broadway and Cambie Street's busy corner in Vancouver. At this action, organizers demanded an end to TMX. They stood in solidarity with land defenders who had been arrested by the RCMP on Secwepemc territory in Kamloops, B.C, for their protests against the pipeline.



TOP 2 IMAGES: Climate Convergence banner actions on October 22, 2020 ahead of BC Provincial election **WEBINAR:** "The State of Our Planet Today: Building an international Climate Justice Movement" webinar featuring speakers from Peru, Brazil, New Zealand & Canada on October 7, 2020 **BOTTOM:** Climate Convergence street posterage to raise awareness about the TMX & CGL Pipelines ("pipeLIES") in October 2020

November 25

Climate Convergence held another critical online webinar, "Stop Site C Dam! Why We Need To. How We Can." This event was a great success, with more than 200 people participating, including many different communities across BC. This webinar featured representatives from people and organizations that have been leading in the struggle against the disastrous and dangerous project for more than a decade: Wendy Holm, an Agrologist and editor of "Damming the Peace - The Hidden Costs of the Site C Dam" (Lorimer, 2018); Ken Boon, President of the Peace Valley Landowners Association; Rita Wong from the grassroots group FightC; and Thomas Davies, a founding member of Climate Convergence and author of "System Change Not Climate Change" (Battle of Ideas Press, 2019).

Unity in Action

Throughout the fall, Climate Convergence continued to support other grassroots groups' actions in Metro Vancouver. This includes the youth-led group Sustainabiteens, who held actions on September 25 at MP's offices demanding the federal government take action on the climate. Climate Convergence is also part of the Protect the Planet! Stop TMX! Coalition. This coalition has held many actions at the Holmes Creek Protection camp and two virtual "People's Assemblies," on October 26 and November 26, to coordinate local efforts against the TMX pipeline construction in Burnaby and Coquitlam.

Join the Fight for Climate Justice!

2020 was not only characterized by the coronavirus pandemic, but it is also shaping up to be the hottest year on record, with worsening hurricanes, droughts, and floods disrupting and destroying the lives of people around the globe. Looking towards 2021, the climate crisis will continue to be a critical issue for humanity. Building a consistent, collective, creative, and effective climate justice movement ready to fight for "System Change, Not Climate Change!" is more necessary than ever before. Capitalism is pushing our mother earth to extinction.

For information about upcoming meetings, webinars, and more to protect our Mother Earth, visit www.climateconvergence.ca or www.firethistime.net. Climate Convergence meetings are held twice a month and are open to everyone interested in fighting for a better and sustainable world.

Follow Alison on Twitter: @Alisoncolette

Follow Climate Convergence on Twitter: @Climate604



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TMX PIPELINE IS THE LITMUS TEST YOU CAN'T AFFORD TO FAIL

*Climate Convergence Metro Vancouver Statement on Day
of Throne Speech*

September 23, 2020

We are living in extraordinary times. Not only has a global pandemic caused immeasurable disruption to all of our lives - in recent weeks a string of wildfires have scorched the west coast of North America and choked the skies with dark smoke. We have been quite literally surrounded by the ongoing global climate crisis.

Cancelling the Trans Mountain Pipeline Expansion (TMX) would be a decisive step forward in the right direction. We demand the Trudeau government include this in the Throne Speech, and that opposition parties make this a prerequisite for their vote of confidence in the government. Anything less would be a continuation of the "business as usual" politics which got us into this mess in the first place. TMX is the litmus test we can't afford governments and political parties to keep failing.

As challenging as 2020 has so far been, it has reminded us of the power of collective action to respond to catastrophes and assist those most in need. The climate justice movement has been reinvigorating the fight for the greener, brighter, better world that we recognize as not only achievable, but essential for humanity's survival and collective welfare.

The 19 billion dollars in taxpayer dollars wasted on buying and building the TMX pipeline would be much better spent in helping the poor and working people most impacted by the government of Canada's disastrous response to the Covid-19 pandemic.

Throughout the pandemic and the public health and safety measures, Climate Convergence has focused on safe, socially distanced organizing. The Holmes Creek Protection Camp has successfully blocked the first attempt at TMX construction in the Lower Mainland outside of the Burnaby Tank Farm gates, and the Students Against TMX Cross Canada Initiative has joined groups across Canada representing over 180,000 post-secondary students to also demand an end to the project.

By no means should our respect for public health protocols in avoiding mass gatherings be mistaken for a slackening of our commitment to this struggle and opposition to destructive agendas - especially the TMX pipeline expansion. The empty promises and hollow proclamations which have defined the Liberal Trudeau government will not be tolerated. A throne speech without its cancellation is a signal to us to re-double our efforts to find safe and effective ways to stop the project. We will fight as if our lives depend on it, because they do.

Stop the Trans Mountain Expansion Pipeline Now!

Climate Convergence Metro Vancouver



FREE MING WANZHOU!

Who is Meng Wanzhou, why has Canada unlawfully arrested her, and what you can do about it!

(FTT) has joined the Cross-Canada Campaign to Free Meng Wanzhou, an initiative of the Hamilton Coalition to Stop the War. On November 24, 2020 an online panel was held with prominent speakers, including two Members of Parliament: the New Democratic Party's Niki Ashton of Churchill—Keewatinook Aski in Manitoba and the Green Party's Paul Manly of Nanaimo—Ladysmith in British Columbia. The panel discussed the case, generating much attention and kicking off a Cross-Canada Campaign to Free Meng Wanzhou. On December 1, a Cross-Canada Day of Action was held, which included picket actions in various cities, letter writing to MP's, and signing of a parliamentary petition (see below). FTT and Mobilization Against War & Occupation (MAWO) mobilized supporters here in Vancouver to take part in a social media campaign where selfies with protest signs were shared online and around the world. In the words of Ken

On December 1, 2018 Meng Wanzhou was arrested while transiting through Vancouver International Airport. The CFO of Huawei Technologies was essentially kidnapped at the bequest of U.S. authorities in an unlawful operation that violated Canada's laws, due process, and Meng Wanzhou's rights. Two years later, Meng Wanzhou is still held hostage in a politically tainted extradition case, which U.S. President Trump made clear hinges on his trade war with China. Efforts to free Meng Wanzhou are increasing and Fire This Time

Stone from the Hamilton Coalition to Stop the War, "For the first time, many of our fellow Canadians heard an alternative viewpoint of why the arrest of Meng Wanzhou was an attempt by the Trump Administration to drag Canada, against its own national interest, into a new cold war with China." The new Cross-Canada campaign to Free Meng Wanzhou is growing in strength and support! Below is more information about the case, taken from the Hamilton Coalition to Stop the War website, including how you can get more information and take action!



Janine Solanki & Alison Bodine, two Vancouver organizers with the Canada wide campaign to free Meng Wanzhou

Key Facts in the Case of Meng Wanzhou

- Meng Wanzhou is accused by the U.S. of violating its unilateral and illegal economic sanctions against Iran. However these sanctions and alleged "crime" do not exist in Canada.
- Canada has a requirement of "double criminality". Unless the alleged crime is a crime in both jurisdictions, you cannot extradite.
- The U.S. tried to have Meng Wanzhou arrested in six other European and Latin American countries - all of which rejected U.S. demands.
- President Trump declared he might release Meng if he secured a favourable trade deal with China, and that he told John Bolton that Meng was "a bargaining chip" in his negotiations in his trade war with China. This is enough to throw the case out as politically tainted.
- By holding Meng Wanzhou when the U.S. government has offered her release in exchange for getting their way on a trade deal, she is being held hostage. This then constitutes a violation of the UN Convention on Hostages.

FIND OUT MORE!

**Free Meng Wanzhou
Cross-Canada Campaign
@ Hamilton Coalition to
Stop the War**

**SCAN ►
QR CODE
OR
SEE URL**



[hamiltoncoalitiontostopthewar.ca/
campaign-to-free-meng-wanzhou/](https://hamiltoncoalitiontostopthewar.ca/campaign-to-free-meng-wanzhou/)

TAKE ACTION!

**Sign the Parliamentary
Petition to**

FREE MING WANZHOU!

**SCAN ►
QR CODE
OR
SEE URL**



[petitions.ourcommons.ca/en/
Petition/Details?Petition=e-2857](https://petitions.ourcommons.ca/en/Petition/Details?Petition=e-2857)

Former Canadian Parliamentarians, Diplomats & Notable Personalities Call on Canada to Free Meng Wanzhou!

Louise Arbour - Former President and CEO of International Crisis Group; **Lloyd Axworthy** - Former Minister of Foreign Affairs; **Lawrence Cannon** - Former Minister of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Canadian Ambassador to France; **Ed Broadbent** - Former Leader of the new Democratic Party; **Hugh Segal** - Former Chair of the Senate Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade; **Derek Burney** - Former Ambassador to the U.S.; **Wendy Dobson** - Professor Emerita, University of Toronto and Former Associate Deputy Minister; **Leonard J. Edwards** - Former Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, and Former Canadian Ambassador to Japan and Korea; **Yves Fortier** - Former Permanent Representative of Canada to the UN and UN Security Council; **Robert Fowler** - Former Foreign Policy Adviser to Prime Ministers Pierre Trudeau, John Turner and Brian Mulroney; **Louise Frechette** - Former Deputy Secretary General of the UN; **Fen Osler Hampson** - Chancellor's Professor, Carleton University and Executive Director, World Refugee & Migration Council; **Paul Heinbecker** - Former Canadian Ambassador to Germany, Former Permanent Representative of Canada to the UN and UN Security Council; **Michael Kergin** - Former Canadian Ambassador to the U.S.; **Claude Lavardure** - Former Foreign Policy Adviser to PM Jean Chretien; **Don Newman** - Journalist, Broadcaster and Author; **Maureen O'Neil** - Former President of the International Development Research Centre; **Andre Ouellet** - Former Foreign Affairs and International Development Minister; **Allan Rock** - Former Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada

CLIMATE CONVERGENCE STATEMENT ON BRITISH COLUMBIA PROVINCIAL ELECTION

*In defense of
Mother Earth*

Wednesday, October 21, 2020

On October 24, the provincial election will be held in British Columbia. From the standpoint of tackling the climate crisis, there has not been significant progress in British Columbia over the last three and a half years. All climate indicators clearly tell us that we are at the same place where we were before the last provincial election in 2017. The best that the minority government of Premier John Horgan — a coalition government of NDP and Green Party — could do has been

to zigzag on all major environmental emergencies. This has meant big delays in making decisions on key environmental issues that would improve the urgent climate crisis facing British Columbia.

Mostly important in British Columbia this means the cancellation of the Site C Dam and the Coastal GasLink (CGL) and Trans Mountain Expansion

(TMX) pipelines. Since July 2017, the rights of Indigenous people in defence of their land against corporations and the provincial and federal governments have been repeatedly denied. While at the same time, Indigenous people defending their territories have been harassed and criminalized.

This past week nine people, including a Secwepemc hereditary chief and his daughter, were arrested in Kamloops, BC, protesting TMX pipeline construction. Premier John Horgan publicly criticized them by saying, "...disrupting other people's activity only alienates, quite frankly, and creates discord in the community." With these words, the Premier has shown a complete disregard for Indigenous rights. If the government were paying attention to the issues and demands of Indigenous communities, people would not

have to put their bodies on the line to stop a pipeline. The Premier's statement was morally and politically wrong.

In the 2017 election, the BC NDP had campaigned on "using every tool in the toolbox" to oppose the TMX project. Since forming a coalition government with the Green Party, all they have done is to mount one legal challenge — that is hardly the extent of what they could be doing. In fact, the Alberta government devotes many more resources in supporting the disastrous project than the BC government has ever used to fight it.

Suzuki, "Two weeks before the decision was coming, [then BC Green Party Leader] Andrew Weaver said they wouldn't bring the government down over Site C," Suzuki said. He continued, "He wouldn't even play politics! There's no way the NDP would've wanted another election that soon. He could have taken the government right down and stopped that dam."

Adding insult to injury, the BC government also approved the Coastal GasLink pipeline, and has given huge support to fracked "natural" gas projects. If completed, the CGL pipeline would run through the unceded territory of numerous Indigenous nations, including the

Wet'suwet'en — whose hereditary chiefs have made it clear they oppose the project. The approval of the CGL pipeline ignited massive protests across BC and Canada, beginning in late 2019, as Indigenous and non-Indigenous people alike joined forces to oppose yet another government betrayal.

Without showing any signs of slowing down with these climate-destroying mega-projects, it is no wonder that in 3.5 years, the BC government couldn't

table a plan to meet its "Clean BC" promise to cut greenhouse gas emissions by 40 percent by 2030.

At the same time, the BC Liberals have continued to ridiculously criticize the NDP for not meeting its emissions targets, while at the same time championing the slogan, "Our Natural Resources, like LNG, are part of the solution — not the problem," during this election campaign!

We believe that whoever wins, the next BC government will refuse to fight for the future of humanity and earth. As we have done before, we will continue organizing, mobilizing, and educating — using every tool in our toolbox to build a mass majority movement to defend mother earth and the future of humankind.

We will win.

**SAVE
PEOPLE
NOT PIPELINES!
PROTECT
THE PLANET
NOT PROFITS!
#SAVEPEOPLENOTPIPELINES
#NOCGL #3STOPTMX
WWW.CLIMATECONVERGENCE.CA**



Climate Convergence street poster, "System Change, Not Climate Change!" October 2020

Already, by December 2017, the approval of the Site C Dam was a clear signal that the new government was going to continue the legacy of the Liberals — and put the interests of big business before Indigenous rights and the environment. How do you authorize the BC Utilities Commission to investigate the project, only to approve it even after the Commission reported that, "It is not fiscally prudent to move forward"? And, especially after acknowledging it would flood 5000 hectares of prime farmland, as well as the undeniable opposition of local Indigenous nations?

To be able to move ahead with the approval, the NDP government relied on a coalition with BC Green representatives, and the BC Greens did not stop it. This drew the ire of renowned environmentalist David

Yemen, a Quagmire for Saudi Coalition and Imperialists

By Azza Rojbi

"I was still awake. I was sitting in a chair because I was afraid of the planes flying overhead and making a very loud noise. Then they dropped a bomb near us and afterwards they hit our neighbourhood with three bombs. After that, I lost consciousness."

These are the words of Yemeni child Ahmad Mansour, ten years old, after he survived the Saudi-led airstrike in his neighbourhood in the Midi District, Hajjah Governorate in north-western Yemen. Ahmed was injured, and his mother and siblings died in the airstrike. A total of 15 people were killed that day (nine children and four women).

The airstrike against Ahmed's neighbourhood is one of the horrific incidents documented by the Yemeni organization Mwatana for Human Rights in a report titled "DAY OF JUDGMENT": The US's Role and Europe in Civilian Death, Destruction, and Trauma in Yemen." According to the report, a "US-made BLU-63 cluster bomb Submunition" was used by the Saudi-led coalition in this bombing.

World's Worst Humanitarian Crisis

Ahmed and his family's tragedy is similar to that of many other Yemeni families as the Saudi-led coalition war and destruction on Yemen continues into its sixth year. In its 2020 Global Humanitarian Overview, the United Nations Office for the Coordination

of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) said that the war on Yemen "had already caused an estimated 233,000 deaths, including 131,000 from indirect causes such as lack of food, health services, and infrastructure". To put this devastating number of deaths in perspective, this would be the equivalent of over 2.5 million people killed by war in the United States.

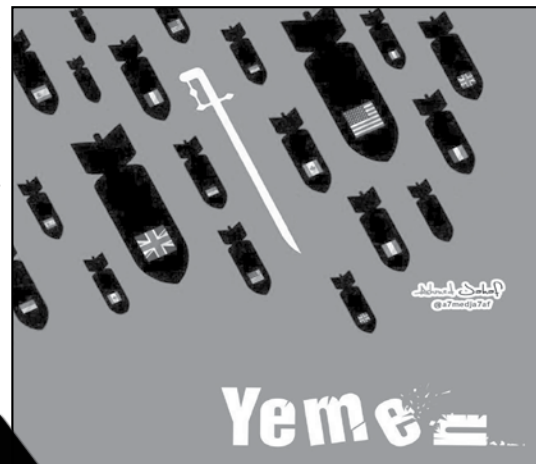
The humanitarian crisis in Yemen is the worst in the world. Those who survive the war live in dire situations struggling to provide for their own basic human needs and those of their families. According to the United Nations, nearly 80 percent of the Yemeni population – over 24 million people – rely on humanitarian assistance to live. Children suffer the most, with 100,000 children under five years old at risk of dying from acute malnutrition.

The U.S.-backed Saudi-led coalition has bombed and destroyed vital civilian infrastructure in Yemen. Over half of Yemen's healthcare facilities have been damaged and closed due to the war. To add to the brutal bombing, the Saudi-led coalition maintains a sea, land, and air blockade on Yemen. The cruel blockade hinders Yemen's access to

food, fuel, medicine, and medical equipment.

Forgotten Yemeni Refugees

The Saudi-led war on Yemen continues to intensify the humanitarian crisis in the country. 3.6 million people in Yemen have been internally displaced and live in makeshift shelters and refugee camps inside Yemen. According to the UN, Yemen is home to 300,000 refugees from countries



in the horn of Africa, mainly from Somalia. Refugees across Yemen live in harsh conditions under the threat of war and hunger, making them very vulnerable to diseases, especially in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Hundreds of thousands of Yemenis chose to make the perilous journey to leave Yemen to seek safety and asylum in other countries such as Egypt, Djibouti, Somalia, Malaysia, Jordan, and Sudan. These families that were forced out of their beloved homeland by the Saudi-led war find themselves stranded in foreign countries with very little support. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) response to Yemeni

Battle of Ideas Press

New Book

U.S. & SAUDI WAR ON
THE PEOPLE OF YEMEN

WWW.BATTLEOFIDEAPRESS.COM
INFO@BATTLEOFIDEAPRESS.COM

By Azza Rojbi

Azza Rojbi is a Tunisian anti-war and social justice organizer based in Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada. She is an executive member of Vancouver's anti-war coalition Mobilization Against War & Occupation (MAWO) and a member of the Editorial Board of the Fire This Time Newspaper.



refugees' suffering has been completely inadequate and insufficient.

The same "international community" has been profiting since the start of the war on Yemen from selling weapons and military equipment to Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, and their allied coalition. The U.S. and its western imperialist allies are directly responsible for the war and destruction in Yemen. Yet, they purposely turn a blind eye to the suffering of millions of displaced Yemenis internally and internationally.

Imperialists Complicity and Hypocrisy in the War

Since the start of the war, the United States has only accepted over 50 refugees from Yemen! In contrast, the U.S. has provided political, logistical, and military support to Saudi Arabia to carry out the war under the guise of restoring legitimacy and stability to the region. Over five years of Saudi-led war on Yemen only achieved death and destruction with no peace or stability in sight.

Saudi Arabia was the largest importer of weapons globally in 2015-2019 and the United States was its biggest supplier with billions of dollars' worth of arms sales. In his last days in office, U.S. President Donald Trump is pushing to complete a \$500 million arms sale to the Saudi Kingdom and a \$23 billion arms sale to the United Arab Emirates.

The U.K. government also continues to profit from weapons sales and to provide military training to Saudi Arabia. An article published on September 23, 2020, in Declassified UK, an investigative journalism website, exposed that Saudi combat aircraft pilots continue to receive training in the U.K. by the British Royal Air Force.

Just like the U.S. and the U.K., Canada also has blood on its hands as it also continues to profit from selling arms to Saudi Arabia and other countries in the military coalition. According to data from the "Canadian International Merchandise Trade Database," Canada has exported over \$600 million worth of "Tanks and other armoured fighting vehicles, motorized, and parts" to Saudi Arabia just in the period between July and October 2020.

In contrast, Canada contributed \$220 million in humanitarian assistance for Yemen since the war in 2015. Canada's amount of money made selling weapons

Continued on page 37

JOINT STATEMENT:

World Says No to War on Yemen

بيان مشترك: رفض الحرب على اليمن

CALL TO PROTEST INTERNATIONALLY MONDAY, 25 JANUARY 2021

Since 2015, the Saudi-led bombing and blockade of Yemen have killed tens of thousands of people and devastated the country. The U.N. calls this the largest humanitarian crisis on Earth. Half the country's people are on the brink of famine, the country has the world's worst cholera outbreak in modern history, and now Yemen has one of the very worst Covid death rates in the world: It kills 1 in 4 people who test positive. The pandemic, along with withdrawal of aid, is pushing more people into acute hunger.

And yet Saudi Arabia is escalating its war and tightening its blockade.

The war is only possible because Western countries -- and the United States and Britain in particular -- continue to arm Saudi Arabia and provide military, political and logistical support for the war. The Western powers are active participants and have the power to stop the world's most acute human crisis.

The disaster in Yemen is man-made. It is caused by the war and blockade. It can be ended.

People and organisations from the Yemen, UK, US, Australia, Bangladesh, Canada, Chile, Cyprus, Denmark, France, Germany, India, Italy, Poland, Spain, Switzerland, and across the world, are coming together to call for an end to the war in Yemen and solidarity with the people of Yemen. We demand that right now our governments:

- Stop foreign aggression on Yemen.
- Stop weapons and war support for Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates.
- Lift the blockade on Yemen and open all land and sea ports.
- Restore and expand humanitarian aid for the people of Yemen.

We call on people around the world to protest the war on January 25, 2021, just days after the U.S. presidential inauguration and the day before Saudi Arabia's 'Davos in the Desert' Future Investment Initiative.

We ask individuals and organisations everywhere to call for protests -- with masks and other safety precautions -- in their towns and cities on that day and make clear that the WORLD SAYS NO TO WAR ON YEMEN.

*For more information on how to join the international campaign on January 25 visit:
<https://bit.ly/EndYemenWarNow>*

دعوة للاحتجاج دوليا يوم الاثنين المصادف ٢٥ يناير (كانون الثاني) ٢٠٢١

منذ عام ٢٠١٥ قتل القصف والحصار الذي قاده السعودية العربية على اليمن عشرات الالاف من اليمنيين ودمر البلد. وقد وصفته الأمم المتحدة على انه أكبر أزمة إنسانية على الأرض. حيث ان نصف سكان اليمن على حافة المجاعة والبلد يشهد اسوء انتشار لوباء الكوليرا في التاريخ الحديث والان اليمن يمر بأسوء معدل وفيات لفيروس الكورونا في العالم حيث انه يقتل ١ من ٤ اشخاص يصابون بالفيروس. بالإضافة الى ذلك ادى تقليص ووقف المساعدات عن البلد الى المزيد من حالة جوع خطيره بين السكان.

ومع ذلك لا زالت السعودية العربية تصعد من حربها على اليمن وتزيد من تشديد الحصار.

الحرب ممكنة فقط بسبب استمرار الدول الغربية (بالتحديد الولايات المتحدة وبريطانيا) بتسليح السعودية العربية وتستمر بالإسناد العسكري والسياسي والتسويقي للحرب. تعتبر القوه الغربية مساهم فعال وتملك السلطة لإيقاف اخطر أزمة إنسانية في العالم.

الكارثة في اليمن هي من صنع الانسان وسببها الحرب والحصار ومن الممكن انهاءها .

الناس والمنظمات في الولايات المتحدة والمملكة المتحدة واليمن وأستراليا وبنغلاديش وكندا وتشيلي وفرنسا وألمانيا والهند وإيطاليا وبولندا وإسبانيا وسويسرا.

وعبر العالم مجتمعون للمطالبة بأنهاء الحرب في اليمن ومتضامنين مع شعب اليمن . نحن نطالب حكوماتنا بالتالي :

- ◀ ان توقف الاعتداء الأجنبي على اليمن
- ◀ ان توقف الاسناد التسليحي والحربي للسعودية العربية والامارات المتحدة
- ◀ ان ترفع الحصار على اليمن وتفتح جميع الموانئ البحرية
- ◀ ان تعيد وتوسع المساعدات الإنسانية لشعب اليمن

نناشد البشر حول العالم ان يحتجوا على الحرب في يوم الاثنين المصادف ٢٥ يناير (كانون الثاني) ٢٠٢١ بعد أيام قليلة فقط من التنصيب الرئاسي للولايات المتحدة ويوم واحد قبل موعد عقد مبادرة الاستثمار المستقبلية المسماة ب (دافوس في الصحراء).

نناشد الأشخاص والمنظمات في كل مكان بان يحتجوا (يجب ارتداء الأقنعة الواقية للسلامة) في مدنهم وبلداتهم في ذلك اليوم وان يوضحوا ان العالم يرفض الحرب على اليمن.

By Raúl Antonio Capote

THE SAN ISIDRO NEIGHBORHOOD IN OLD HAVANA

Since the end of the 19th century, the San Isidro neighborhood in Old Havana was considered a "tolerance zone," until 1959, when life changed with the triumph of the Revolution.

It was a neighborhood of humble people, harassed by the presence of Yankee (U.S.) Marines who came ashore in search of 'fun' and cheap sex. Once the butt of jokes, San Isidro now has 14 family doctors' offices, a traditional medicine clinic, a veterinary clinic, three childcare centers, a kindergarten, and four schools.

I had the opportunity to interact with residents, during a neighborhood discussion organized by the local Committee for the Defense of the Revolution (CDR) about two years ago, a tribute to honor Comandante Fidel Castro Ruz.

We met, without a stage, no prepared speeches, beneath a Kapok tree in a park. I remember two comments made, one in which, on behalf of all present, a resident declared his unconditional support for the

Who's behind the anti-Cuban show in San Isidro?



Revolution, based on his religious faith.

The other was that of an old man, who called on his fellow citizens to remember what that place was like before 1959 and how many of them, as children, knew of cases of women who were abused by Yankee Marines.

Personal stories of social transformation like these do not constitute important news for transnational media and virtual networks that these days have fixed their sights on this densely populated neighborhood.

ANOTHER ANTI-CUBAN SHOW

Daily life in this neighborhood has been altered by a small group of people - 14 in total, four of them members of the so-called San Isidro Movement - who have become the center of a new counter-revolutionary show, sponsored and supported by the U.S. government.

The show is very similar to those staged on other occasions by other mercenary groups and puppets in the service of the U.S. government. Let us not forget the notorious, ridiculous fake "avocado strike," in which its promoter was caught enjoying a delicious menu.

Not all of the actors in the performance play the same role: Some say they are on a food and water deprivation

strike, others say they are on a hunger strike, and several say they are "guaracheando," as can be seen in live transmissions, a kind of reality show members of the "movement" post on social media, for the purpose of self-promotion which also serves to report on their "work" to those who finance them.

The group, for the moment, has two demands. The first is the release of Denis Solís González, presented as a young censored artist, who they allege went missing after being detained by the police.

Denis Solís is currently serving an eight-month prison sentence for criminal contempt of authorities. He has not appealed the verdict.

The Cuban Rap Agency, an internationally recognized cultural institution, exposed the crude argument that the manipulators use regarding their relationship with the art form: "The voice of a beginner without a consolidated body of work cannot be invoked as representative of our hip hop, much less when it is known that the interests he defends are part of an orchestrated subversive plan against the Cuban Revolution."

The nature of the plot became apparent in short order, clarified by Solís himself, who, in a video broadcast on social media, admitted having ties with individuals who have financed violent acts against Cuba, as is the case of José Luis Fernández Figueras, accused by the Cuban justice system of being part of a terrorist group based in Miami, who promised to send Solís \$200 if he complied with his instructions.

WHAT IS THE SO-CALLED SAN ISIDRO MOVEMENT?

The fabricated San Isidro Movement, the center of a media boom orchestrated by an articulated network of media at the service of U.S. interests, in no way represents the humble, hard-working, revolutionary



ABOVE: Cuban youth from the queer organization "TransCuba" join the "Tángana en el Trillo" a rally against U.S. interference in Cuba and in favour of Cuba's revolutionary government, November 29, 2020 BELOW: Cuban President Miguel Díaz-Canel (in the Cuba t-shirt) also joins the "Tángana en el Trillo"



Continued on page 12

Por Raúl Antonio Capote

EL BARRIO DE SAN ISIDRO EN LA HABANA VIEJA

Desde fines del siglo XIX, el barrio de San Isidro, en La Habana Vieja, se convirtió en «zona de tolerancia».

Barrio de gente humilde, vejado por la presencia de marines yanquis que desembarcaban en busca de diversión y sexo barato. Su vida cambió al triunfar la Revolución en 1959.

La otrora escarnecida barriada habanera cuenta hoy con 14 consultorios médicos, una clínica de medicina tradicional, una clínica veterinaria, tres círculos infantiles, un jardín infantil y cuatro escuelas.

Tuve la oportunidad de compartir con los vecinos del lugar, en un barrio-debate organizado por los CDRs hace unos dos años, en homenaje al Comandante en Jefe, Fidel Castro Ruz.

Nos reunimos, sin tribunas ni discursos preebroadados, al pie de la Ceiba del parque. Recuerdo dos intervenciones, una en la que, a nombre de todos los vecinos, un compañero, desde su fe religiosa, declaró su apoyo incondicional a la Revolución.

La otra fue la de un anciano, quien llamó a sus conciudadanos a recordar lo que era aquel lugar antes del 59 y cómo muchos de ellos, siendo niños, conocieron casos de mujeres

¿Quién está detrás del show anticubano en San Isidro?



que fueron ultrajadas por los marines yanquis.

Sin embargo, estas historias conmovedoras de transformación social no son las que trascienden a los medios transnacionales de prensa y las redes virtuales que por estos días han fijado su atención en este populoso barrio.

NUEVO SHOW ANTICUBANO

La cotidianidad en esta barriada se ha visto alterada por un grupo de personas -14 en total, cuatro de ellas pertenecientes al llamado Movimiento San Isidro-, quienes se han convertido en centro de un nuevo show contrarrevolucionario, auspiciado y apoyado por el gobierno estadounidense.

El espectáculo es muy similar al que, en otras oportunidades, han escenificado otros grupos mercenarios o títeres al servicio del gobierno de Estados Unidos. No olvidemos

la connotada, por ridícula y falsa, «huelga del aguacate», en la que su promotora fue sorprendida degustando apetitosos menús.

No todos desempeñan el mismo papel en el performance: unos dicen

estar en huelga de privación de comida y de agua, otros de comida y varios guaracheando, según se puede apreciar en las transmisiones en vivo, especie de reality show que acostumbra a realizar el «movimiento» por las redes sociales, en actos de autopromoción o de reportes a quienes los financian.

El grupo, por el momento, exige dos cuestiones: la primera, la liberación de Denis Solís González, presentado como un joven artista censurado, quien según alegaban estaba desaparecido después de ser detenido por la Policía.

Denis Solís actualmente se encuentra sancionado a ocho meses de privación de libertad por el delito de desacato a las autoridades. Este ciudadano no presentó recurso de apelación contra la pena.

La Agencia Cubana de Rap, institución cultural de reconocimiento internacional, desmontó el burdo argumento que esgrimen los manipuladores sobre su relación con el arte: «La voz de un principiante sin obra consolidada no puede invocarse como representativa de nuestro hip hop, mucho menos cuando se conoce que los intereses que defiende hacen parte del plan subversivo orquestado contra la Revolución Cubana».

La naturaleza de esta trama no demoró mucho en ser esclarecida hasta por el propio Solís González, quien, en un video difundido en las redes sociales, reconoció tener vínculos

con personas que han financiado actos violentos contra Cuba, como es el caso de Jorge Luis Fernández Figueras, acusado por la justicia cubana por pertenecer



ARRIBA: Medios de comunicación intentan retratar al Movimiento San Isidro como un "ejemplo de cultura" y defensa de libertad

ABAJO: Miembros del Movimiento San Isidro sonríen en una foto grupal con Luis Almagro, secretario general de la títere estadounidense Organización de Estados Americanos (OEA)



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neighborhood from which they have taken their name and which repudiates the presence of people who live off scandal, commit degrading acts and even manipulate minors to participate in their crude, provocative performances.

Luis Manuel Otero Alcántara, who is identified as the leader of the group, has an extensive record of provocations, trained and supported by Mara Tekach, when she was in the *chargé de affaires* at the U.S. Embassy in Havana. Congressmen who have promoted the tightening of the genocidal blockade against the Cuban people are among the politicians he admires.

Evident in the reality shows they mount are the existential and cultural degradation of the group, as well as their ties to Miami terrorists who have carried out violent actions against our country.

In one of their live broadcasts, a member of the alleged Movement greeted terrorist William González Cabrera, who is responsible for financing attacks on facilities and establishments in Cuba, like those involving setting fires in a cafeteria, a barbershop and a neighborhood store. Another member of the group asked about actions to be carried out with Molotov cocktails.

While the script unfolded focusing on solidarity with Denis Solís, his "brothers" in the cause could be seen celebrating in a video posted on social media, showing an attitude that contrasted sharply with the talk of "martyrdom" they had promoted just hours earlier.

The second demand that they invented, as a pretext to gain popularity with their provocative efforts, is the elimination of the stores in freely convertible currency (MLC) a measure made necessary by the Trump administration's intensification of economic persecution and the blockade, aggravated by the COVID-19 pandemic.

The same individuals who are making this demand are buying food imported from abroad in these stores through an online platform,

regardless of the hunger and thirst strike they claim to support.

WHO IS PULLING THE STRINGS?

The new show, orchestrated from Washington and Miami, is part of plans for subversion against Cuba, and has precedents in other similar actions organized, executed and financed by that government with the goal of destroying the Revolution.

If we analyze the *modus operandi* of the so-called San Isidro Movement, being implemented are many of standard tactics used in the "soft coup" strategy outlined in the manual by U.S. political scientist Gene Sharp, with striking similarities to plans executed in the Ukrainian Maidán, Venezuela's street barricade "guarimbas" and actions by groups of delinquents during the coup d'état against Evo Morales in Bolivia.

Easily observed is the tendency to recruit thugs and individuals of low moral stand-

ing who lend themselves to serve as agents of a foreign government, promoting chaos and feeding the narrative of violence and repression in Cuba, disseminated by a well financed and articulated network of digital and traditional media.

U.S. government officials have made no secret of their complicity with the events in Havana, a fact that contrasts with our government's position of not interfering in the internal affairs of other countries.

Michael Kozak, acting undersecretary of the U.S. State Department's Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs, a fervent promoter of the blockade and the end of remittances, has made several statements of support for the San Isidro Movement, as has Florida Republican Senator Marco Rubio, whose anti-Cuban record is well known to our people. Luis Almagro, secretary general of the discredited OAS, could not miss the

opportunity to chime in and express his support for the latest anti-Cuban action.

U.S. officials, anti-Cuban Congress members and the OAS Secretary General are not interested in the effect on health that their irresponsible attitude could have on some of those involved. What they seek at all costs is to discredit the exemplary record of the Revolution, recently recognized by the election of Cuba as a member of the UN Human Rights Council, and garner support for the U.S. government's justifications to maintain the genocidal blockade that affects our entire people.

This provocative action, responding to strings pulled in Washington and Miami, is intended to negate the rich history of the Revolution, which includes no precedent for giving into pressure from the empire, or a handful of posers. In January 1959, the Cuban people learned the value of independence, sovereignty and devotion to the full dignity of man. We are not willing to renounce these conquests that have cost so much glorious blood.

From: www.granma.cu



ABOVE: While dozens attend protest organized by "San Isidro Movement" outside Cuba's Ministry of Culture **BELOW:** Thousandss of Cuban youth join the "Tángana en el Trillo" rally against U.S. interference in Cuba and in favour of Cuba's revolutionary government.

a un grupo terrorista radicado en Miami, quien le prometiera el envío de 200 dólares si cumplía con sus instrucciones.

¿QUÉ ES EL SUPUESTO MOVIMIENTO SAN ISIDRO?

El fabricado Movimiento San Isidro, centro de un boom mediático orquestado por la articulada red de medios al servicio de los intereses de los EE. UU., no representa para nada al barrio humilde, laborioso y revolucionario del que han tomado el nombre y que repudia la presencia de personas que viven del escándalo, cometen acciones degradantes e incluso manipulan a menores de edad para sus performances groseros y provocadores.

Luis Manuel Otero Alcántara, a quien identifican como cabecilla del grupúsculo, tiene un abultado expediente de provocaciones, aupadas y arropadas por Mara Tekach, cuando fungía como encargada de negocios de la embajada estadounidense en La Habana. Entre los políticos a los que profesa admiración destacan congresistas que han impulsado el arreciamiento del genocida bloqueo en contra del pueblo de Cuba.

En los reality shows que acostumbran a hacer se puede apreciar la degradación existencial y cultural de su grupo y el vínculo con terroristas de Miami, que han ejecutado acciones violentas contra nuestro país.

En una de las transmisiones en vivo que hicieron, uno de los miembros del pretendido Movimiento saludó al terrorista William González Cabrera, responsable de financiar acciones contra instalaciones y establecimientos en Cuba, como fueron los intentos de incendio de una cafetería, de una barbería y de una bodega, y otro integrante del grupo preguntó por acciones que se realizarían con cocteles Molotov.

Mientras se tejía el guion del montaje de la solidaridad con Denis Solís, a sus «hermanos» de causa se les pudo ver fiutando en un video que circularon por las redes, actitud que contrasta con el martirologio que, con horas de diferencia, montaron.

El segundo pretexto que inventaron, para ganar popularidad con su provocación, es la eliminación de las tiendas en MLC, medida necesaria para enfrentar el recrudecimiento del cerco económico implantado por la administración de Donald Trump, agravado por la crisis generada por la COVID-19.



ARRIBA: Los medios cuentan una dulce historia sobre una bandera que una anciana humilde entrega a un "artista" cubano del Movimiento San Isidro.

ABAJO: El mismo "artista" usa banderas en un "proyecto de arte" mientras usando la bandera en el baño, lo usa como un babero y lo coloca entre sus nalgas.

Llama la atención que a los mismos individuos que hacen esta exigencia les compran alimentos desde el extranjero en estas tiendas a través de una plataforma online, en medio de la huelga de hambre y sed que dicen sostener.

¿QUIÉN MUEVE LOS HILOS?

El nuevo show, instrumentado desde Washington y Miami, forma parte de los planes de subversión contra Cuba, y tiene antecedentes en otras acciones similares organizadas, ejecutadas y financiadas por ese gobierno en el afán de destruir la Revolución.

Si analizamos el modus operandi del llamado Movimiento San Isidro, encontraremos muchas regularidades presentes en la estrategia de Golpe Suave del manual del politólogo norteamericano Gene Sharp,

al advertir varias similitudes entre los planes ejecutados en el Maidán ucraniano, las guarimbas venezolanas y las acciones de grupos de delincuentes durante el golpe de estado contra Evo Morales en Bolivia...

Se observa, como tendencia, que recurren a bandidos y a personas de baja catadura moral que se prestan para servir como agentes de un gobierno extranjero, con el fin de promover el caos y alimentar la narrativa de la violencia y la represión, propalada por una financiada y articulada red de medios digitales y tradicionales.

Funcionarios del gobierno de Estados Unidos no han escondido su complicidad con lo acaecido en La Habana, hecho que contrasta con la actitud de nuestro gobierno de no interferir en los asuntos internos de otros países.

Michael Kozak, subsecretario interino de la Oficina de Asuntos del Hemisferio Occidental del Departamento de Estado de Estados Unidos, ferviente promotor del bloqueo y del cierre de remesas, ha realizado varias declaraciones de apoyo al Movimiento San Isidro, al igual que el senador republicano por la Florida, Marco Rubio, cuyo prontuario anticubano es bien sabido por nuestro pueblo.

Tampoco podía faltar, si de injerencia se trata, Luis Almagro, secretario general de la desprestigiada OEA, quien no tardó en mostrar su apoyo a esta nueva acción anticubana.

A los funcionarios yanquis, congresistas anticubanos y al secretario general de la OEA no les interesa la afectación a la salud que una actitud irresponsable pudiera tener para algunos de los involucrados. Lo que buscan a toda costa es desacreditar la trayectoria limpia y ejemplar de la Revolución, reconocida recientemente con la elección de Cuba como miembro del Consejo de Derechos Humanos de la ONU, y apoyar las justificaciones del gobierno de EE. UU. para el mantenimiento del bloqueo genocida que afecta a todo nuestro pueblo.

Esta acción provocadora, cuyos hilos se mueven desde Washington y Miami, pretende desconocer la rica historia de la Revolución, que no admite ceder a las presiones del imperio, ni de un puñado de marionetas. El pueblo cubano conoció en enero de 1959 el valor de la independencia, de la soberanía y del culto a la dignidad plena del hombre: a esas conquistas que tanta sangre gloriosa han costado no está dispuesto a renunciar.

Desde: www.granma.cu

Venezuela A Key Victory for Anti Elections: Imperialist Movement in Latin America



By Alison Bodine

The people of Venezuela have dealt another decisive blow against U.S. domination in Latin America. On December 6, 2020, more than 6.2 million Venezuelans voted for a new National Assembly in what was Venezuela's 25 election in the 21 years since the Bolivarian revolution began. Despite being under massive pressure from the U.S.-led war on Venezuela and the Covid-19 pandemic, the people of Venezuela went to the polls and delivered the National Assembly back into the service of the Bolivarian revolution.

As reported by the National Electoral Council, the United Socialist Party of Venezuela (PSUV), which is the political party of the revolutionary government of Venezuela, won 69% of the votes – and 253 out of 277 seats in the assembly. The opposition party Acción Democrática, who received 7% of the votes and 11 seats followed in second place far behind. In total, there were 107 political parties represented in the election by more than 14,000 candidates. 98 of these political parties identify themselves as members of Venezuela's opposition, meaning that they do not support government of President Nicolás Maduro. Sectors of Venezuela's pro-U.S., violent opposition, including the so-called "interim President," of Venezuela Juan Guaidó, boycotted the election.

Contrary to what has been reported in mainstream capitalist media, the international and national election observers confirmed that the December 6, 2020 National Assembly election was democratic, free and fair. Over 1500 international election observers witnessed the December 6 election. This included Council of Latin American Electoral Experts and several former heads

of state including Evo Morales of Bolivia, Rafael Correa of Ecuador, and Jose Luis Rodriguez Zapatero of Spain.

SURES, non-governmental human rights organization was appointed by the National Electoral Council (a branch of Venezuela's government that oversees elections), as the National electoral observers. As SURES states in their final report, "it is necessary to conclude that the people who

major Canadian media, or the major Television networks in the U.S. and Canada. The United States government and their allies, bent on maintaining their supremacy in Latin America, declared the Dec 6 elections in Venezuela "illegitimate," before they even began.

Question: "Democracy for Whom?" the U.S., and Venezuela Elections

Voter turnout was 31%, which is a victory considering the exceedingly difficult conditions imposed on Venezuela by the pandemic as well as U.S. led war, sanctions, and sabotage. In their Bulletin No.231, released following the elections, the PSUV correctly noted that for the U.S. government at their allies, "It would not be enough for 100% of the voters registered in the Permanent Electoral Registry to vote... because the legitimacy is not questioned in the legal arena, it is raised eminently in the political one. Their plan is to destroy the revolution, fragment the country and distribute it among the imperialist transnational corporations to recolonize the continent, and they will not cease their perverse plans against Venezuela and its revolutionary and Bolivarian government."

Venezuela's National Assembly elections were called by the government based on the 5-year election cycle established by the Constitution. Knowing this, the United States government, and their allies, including the government of Canada did not waste any time in their campaign of sabotage and interference in Venezuela's democratic process. In addition to the economic and financial blockade, threats of war and attempted invasions, military exercises funding the violent pro-U.S. opposition, and other such attacks, the U.S. government and their allies launched a targeted campaign meant to deter people in Venezuela from voting.

In March 2020 right-wing counterrevolutionaries calling themselves the "Venezuelan Patriotic Front" burned down



Voters waiting in line to participate in the voting simulation ahead of the parliamentary elections in Apure, Venezuela, November 15, 2020



A voter cast their ballot to elect their Indigenous representative to the Venezuelan National Assembly, December 9, 2020.

participated in the electoral process exercised their human right to vote universally, freely, informed, secretly, without any coercion and under conditions of equality."

The International Observation Committee has also presented their findings, which included, "an increased citizen confidence in political organizations and candidates," as

reported by Venezuela Analysis.

It is not surprising, however, that none of this information graced the pages of the Washington Post, the New York Times, any

a warehouse containing 50,000 electronic voting machines. This attack was reminiscent to other attacks on voting machines and equipment carried out by the violent U.S.-backed opposition between 2014-2017.

The Lima Group – a collection of right-wing governments in Latin America spear-headed by the government of Canada, released a statement in October announcing that they, “Renew their support of President Juan Guaidó and the National Assembly as legitimate and democratically elected authorities and highlight their evident will and commitment to contribute to the democratic transition, led by Venezuelans themselves, as the only way to achieve institutional, economic and social reconstruction in Venezuela.” Far from original, this statement continues to parrot the Democratic Transition Framework for Venezuela, released in March by the U.S. State Department. Wherein, the United States government openly offers to provide the people of Venezuela relief from the economic war in exchange for the overthrow of President Maduro.

The day before the election, the Virtual Embassy of the United States in Venezuela (the verified account name includes the word “virtual” because the U.S. does not have an Embassy in Venezuela) sent a tweet advising people in Venezuela how to report allegations of fraud and encouraging people in Venezuela not to vote.

On top of this arrogant interference, people in Venezuela also went to the polls under the stress of the U.S. blockade of Venezuela. This illegal and inhumane policy is being wielded against the people of Venezuela as a form of collective punishment for choosing to break free from U.S. domination.

The United States, Canada, the European Union, and Switzerland have all imposed sanctions aiming to coerce the people of Venezuela into overthrowing the democratically elected government of President Maduro and reverse the gains of the Bolivarian revolutionary process.

Beginning with President Obama in 2015, when Venezuela was declared a, “threat to U.S. national security,” the U.S. government has unleashed a brutal regime of sanctions against Venezuela through Congressional laws, Executive Orders, and 300 administrative

measures. These sanctions make it virtually impossible for Venezuela to conduct typical business transactions, cutting Venezuela off from food, medicines, and numerous other basic goods, machinery and technology. They have also enabled the theft of billions of dollars from Venezuela. This includes funds which have been frozen in bank accounts throughout the United States and Europe, and exceptions have not been made for those being transferred for the payment of life-saving medicines.

The Center for Economic Policy Research (CEPR) has estimated that these sanctions on Venezuela killed 40,000 people between 2017-2018 alone. Since that time, the strangle-hold of the United States on the Venezuelan economy has grown tighter.

On December 6, people of Venezuela mobilized for the election and cast their votes knowing that the sanctions and war against Venezuela would continue, and perhaps even worsen. However, they also did so knowing the importance of defending their sovereignty and self-determination by



Venezuelan Foreign Minister Jorge Arreaza at the Venezuelan Embassy in La Paz, Bolivia on November 9, 2020 after recovering it from the right wing takeover following the failure of the coup in Bolivia.

once again defying the orders coming from Washington DC.

Viva Bolivia! Viva Venezuela! Failure of US and imperialist Intervention in Latin America

On October 18, 2020, the people of Bolivia secured a resounding victory against a violent U.S.-backed coup d'état that removed President Evo Morales almost one year earlier. On this day, the heroic people of Bolivia elected Luis Arce and David Choquehuanca of the Movement to Socialism (MAS) as the President and Vice President of the Plurinational State of Bolivia.

This great victory was due to the courageous resistance of the people of Bolivia. By electing a progressive leftist government, the mainly poor Indigenous Bolivians who believed in the revolutionary ideals and leadership of MAS and Evo Morales reversed the



tremendous effort of the United States to destroy the progressive process in Bolivia. Without the heroic resistance of Bolivia's oppressed people and working class to right-wing coup government and their resistance to imperialism, this victory would not have been possible.

However, it should also not be forgotten that the continuation of the Bolivarian revolution, its dynamic and its impact was also driving factor of keeping the anti-imperialist movement strong and resilient in Bolivia. The resistance of the Bolivarian revolutionary people of Venezuela to U.S. domination maintains and nourishes the anti-imperialist spirit in Bolivia and Latin America. In this sense, it is like a resonating core of resistance and defense against U.S. aggression. The successful continuity of two decades of Venezuelan Bolivarian revolutionary process has turned Venezuela into the backbone of the Latin American anti-imperialist and revolutionary movement.

We have seen how, over the last few years, the United States and their right-wing allies have consolidated some of their forces in Latin America, for example with the election of Bolsonaro in Brazil in 2018. However, the victory in Bolivia has reminded poor, working and oppressed people around the world that this reactionary backlash was just a pause. The progressive and revolutionary movement in Latin America has continued, and even with a partial set-back the United States and their imperialist allies cannot win.

Throughout Latin America, poor masses, the working class and young people are rising – in response to the deepening crisis imposed upon them by U.S. imperialist domination and neo-Liberal governments. Over the past two years, the landscape is shifting, and one can observe how people are moving to the left

Continued on page 35

REGIME CHANGE WITH A HUMAN (RIGHTS) FACE: TRUDEAU'S VENEZUELA POLICY

**An Op-Ed by Jorge Arreaza,
Venezuela's Foreign Minister**



Relations between Venezuela and Canada are currently at its worst moment. Although previous Canadian governments did not hide their dislike for our policies aimed at reclaiming sovereignty over our natural resources and prioritizing social policies, none had so actively imitated the U.S. regime change policy as much as the current Trudeau Administration. Canada is making a calculated and ill-intentioned use of human rights discourse in order to effectively undermine Venezuela's democratic institutions and promote illegal sanctions that cause enormous pain on the majority of all Venezuelans.

Although he had been Prime Minister since 2015, it was in 2017, after Donald Trump took office, when Canada escalated its interventionism in Venezuela's affairs. Prior to that, our foreign ministries were in constant communication and met at least 9 times in 2016 to discuss bilateral issues. After notorious disagreements with Trump over climate change and to a lesser extent, on the terms of a new free-trade agreement for North America, Trudeau found in Venezuela an issue he could openly support Trump in and in exchange obtain regional leadership that would help him win a seat in this year's election to the U.N. Security Council. In addition, he would also help the interests of corporate Canada who was longing for occupying Venezuela's place as the heavy crude supplier in U.S. refineries, and why not even take over Citgo, a U.S. subsidiary of Venezuela's State oil company, PDVSA.

Nowhere to be seen in this plan was real concern for Venezuelan democracy, human rights or even stability. Trudeau picked up a playbook designed by the likes of John Bolton and issued four rounds of illegal coercive measures against Venezuela imitating and in some cases even amplifying the list of U.S. targets. Officials sanctioned are responsible

for organizing elections, carrying out diplomatic duties, and even implementing the country's official human rights policy. Even Olympic athletes known to sympathize with the government have been blocked from entering Canada and completing their trials for the next Olympics. However, former general Manuel Christopher, who in April of 2019 plotted a failed coup against President Maduro, was swiftly pardoned and erased from the list.

Since 2017, Canada, under U.S. close supervision, engaged in the creation of the Lima Group, a cartel of neoliberal governments in the American continent who failed to carry the majority of votes at the Organization of American States (OAS) to harass Venezuela and were seeking a platform to portray Venezuela as a regional threat in order to benefit the pro U.S. opposition. Where were Canada's humanitarian concerns when through the Lima Group it sought to revive the Rio Treaty to be used as a framework for a potential military intervention?

Venezuelan democracy has also taken a backseat in this interventionist policy. During the elections of May 20, 2018, Canada was the only country in the world that specifically forbade Venezuelan diplomatic missions – the Embassy in Ottawa and the consulates in Montreal, Toronto and Vancouver – from opening as voting centers for Venezuelan citizens living in Canada. Rather, Ottawa's government has engaged in recognizing self-proclaimed interim President Juan Guaidó in violation of the Venezuelan Constitution. Since, Canada has politically and materially supported Guaidó's lobbying to other governments in the region and appointed a special advisor, Allan Culham, to use his "network of contacts to advocate for expanded support to pressure the illegitimate government", as it refers to the democratically-elected government of President Nicolás Maduro.

In supporting Guaidó's Washington-designed farce, Canada has also been complicit in the plunder of Venezuela's foreign assets. Citgo's Simon Bolivar Foundation, once dedicated to financing social programs such as low-cost heating oil for low-income North American families or specialized bone marrow treatment for Venezuelan patients, now uses

its funds to finance a so-called NGO – the Venezuelan Engagement Foundation, whose board in Canada is filled by Orlando Viera-Blanco and his family, an opportunists who Ottawa recognizes as Guaidó's Ambassador to Canada.

This week, during the Canada continued lobbying the European Union on behalf of the U.S. with the purpose of questioning the upcoming Legislative Elections of December 6. Millions of Venezuelans – both government and opposition supporters – want to vote, to renew the National Assembly and fulfill the Constitutional mandate, yet Canada, always seeing itself above Venezuelan law, considers otherwise.

On August 20, I had the rare pleasure of addressing Canadians at the invitation of the Canadian Foreign Policy Institute on these issues. Today, I reiterate the invitation to minister Champagne and the Canadian government to return to diplomacy, to seek a realistic understanding among our nations and to cease this dead-end policy that the Trump Administration has laid out for Ottawa. Unconstitutional and illegal adventures should no longer be encouraged by Canada. Our invitation is to return to electoral politics as an option, to diplomacy as an option. Only then will Canada be again looked upon as a good neighbor and not as the accomplice to the greatest aggression to the Venezuelan people in its modern history.

From: www.thecanadafilms.com



Justin Trudeau
@JustinTrudeau

Canada stands with the people of Venezuela as they pursue free & fair elections and human rights. In our meeting today, I commended Interim President @jguaido for the leadership he's shown in his efforts to return democracy to Venezuela & offered him our continued support.



4:54 PM · Jan 27, 2020 · Twitter for iPhone

CANADA MUST RESPECT DEMOCRATIC DECISION OF VENEZUELAN PEOPLE!

*Letter to François-Philippe Champagne,
Canada's Foreign Minister*



Elections to choose a new enlarged National Assembly are underway in Venezuela and will be held on Sunday, December 6, 2020. A total of 107 political organizations are running for 277 Parliamentary seats for a five-year term beginning January 5, 2021. 14 400

candidates campaigned, taking the necessary precautions against COVID-19. More than 20 million citizens are eligible to vote.

New electoral authorities have made an effort to secure an ample international mission to oversee the election, including the UN, CARICOM and the African Union. The European Union has turned down the invitation after its demand that the vote be postponed was rejected by Venezuela on the grounds that it is constitutionally bound to hold the elections before the end of 2020. More than 300 invitations have gone out to international personalities and regional multilateral organizations to observe the elections. The electoral process will be subject to 16 audits witnessed by party representatives and international observers.

In spite of a terrorist arson attack which destroyed ninety-nine percent of Venezuela's electronic electoral machines, these have been replaced by 49 539 new, more modern machines designed in Venezuela by Venezuelan technicians.

No sooner were elections in the offing than US authorities stated that they will not recognize the elections, even before they are held. Juan Guaidó, former National Assembly President and self-proclaimed "interim president" of Venezuela, called for a boycott and rejected the elections. Guaidó also called for "street violence", which, as the experience of the Venezuelan people shows, means acts of violence committed against the Venezuelan people and infrastructure. His calls are being rejected by the vast majority of opposition parties. The latter question the extremism of fractions of the opposition who call for abstentions and promote sanctions against the country to advance their political agenda. Most opposition formations are defending the electoral route as the only valid means to resolve political differences. Furthermore, Washington has levied sanctions against certain of these opposition leaders who decided to participate in the electoral process. On September 22, the Treasury Department sanctioned five opposition leaders, accusing them of "complicity" with the government.

The object of this letter is to call upon the Canadian government to dissociate itself from all these condemnable, anti-democratic and illegal activities against Venezuela. What possible reason could there be for Canada not to recognize the Venezuelan December 6 elections? We call upon the Canadian government to side with democracy, the rule of law and respect for the sovereign decisions of the Venezuelan nation, free from foreign interference and aggression.

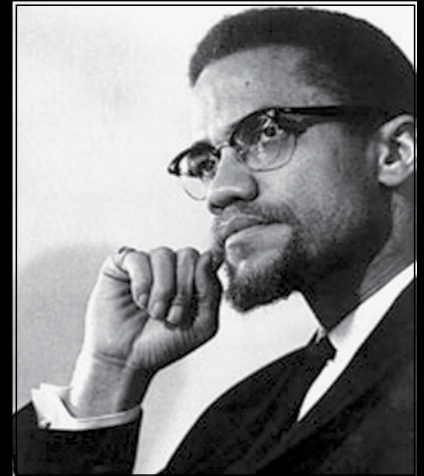
ALBA Social Movements Canada, Ottawa Chapter.

December 5, 2020.



**ALBA Social Movements Canada protesting against Canada's
intervention in Venezuela, Ottawa, 2017**

**"By Any Means
Necessary..."**



MALCOLM X SPEAKS

"So all these little advances were made by oppressed people in other parts of the world during 1964. These were tangible gains, and the reason that they were able to make these gains was they realized that power was the magic word—power against power. Power in defense of freedom is greater than power on behalf of tyranny and oppression because power, real power, comes from conviction which produces action, uncompromising action. It also produces insurrection against oppression. This is the only way you end oppression—with power.

Power never takes a back step—only in the face of more power. Power doesn't back up in the face of a smile, or in the face of a threat, or in the face of some kind of nonviolent loving action. It's not the nature of power to back up in the face of anything but some more power. And this is what the people have realized in Southeast Asia, in the Congo, in Cuba, in other parts of the world. Power recognizes only power, and all of them who realize this have made gains."

- Malcolm X on January 7, 1965



Marking the 30th anniversary of the Uprising at Kanehsatà:ke / Oka Crisis



"Face to Face" is the most iconic photo of the "Oka Crisis." Cpl. Patrick Cloutier of the Canadian Army faces off with Brad Larocque, an Anishinaabe warrior supporting the uprising at Kanehsatà:ke on September 1, 1990.

By Tamara Hansen

In March of 1990, 30 years ago this year, the municipal government of Oka, Quebec, greenlighted the expansion of a 9-hole golf course into an 18-hole golf course. This expansion would have meant cutting down the Sacred Pines, a forest of Pine trees that has also been a burial ground of the Mohawk/Kanien'kehà:ka Indigenous nation for generations.

In defense of their land, Kanien'kehà:ka warriors built a barricade on a dirt road that would be needed for golf course construction. On June 30, 1990, the Town of Oka was granted an injunction to remove the barricades. In the meantime, the Kanien'kehà:ka prepared to defend themselves and their land. Little did they know that this important act of resistance would launch a 78-day standoff with the

governments of Oka, Quebec, and Canada.

In the early hours of July 11, 1990, about 100 armed Sûreté du Québec (SQ) officers entered the Pines with the intention of removing the barricades and around 30 Kanien'kehà:ka warriors. The police used violent tactics, including tear gas, concussion grenades, and guns. During the confusion created by the SQ, one of their corporals, Marcel Lemay, was killed. It has never been conclusively determined who killed Lemay, although many believe it was another SQ officer. The SQ retreated, and the Kanien'kehà:ka warriors were able to reinforce their barricades and roadblock.

During this time, solidarity protests began across Canada, but most decisively, other Kanien'kehà:ka warriors blocked the Mercier Bridge, a crucial commuter crossing for those who work in Montreal. This helped to bring the government siege against Kanehsatà:ke and Kahnawake into national and international headlines.

From July 11 to September 26, 1990, SQ police and later the Canadian Army led a campaign of fear, intimidation, sabotage, and violence against the Kanehsatà:ke and Kahnawake peoples for defending their traditional territory and right to self-determination.

According to CBC digital archives, "In the end, the Oka Crisis cost the Quebec government an estimated \$180 million not including the cost of the army." It seems the Canadian Army costs doubled the price tag. According to a Globe & Mail article, "Did Canada learn anything from the Oka Crisis?" written by University of Manitoba assistant professor Sean Carleton, "The federal government eventually intervened and spent \$200-million to deploy 2,500 troops



Waneek Horn-Miller, holding her little sister Kaniehtiio on Sept. 26, 1990. The soldier later stabbed Waneek with his bayonet, both sisters survived.

MOTHER OF ALL STRUGGLES!

Indigenous struggle against colonialism



Ellen Gabriel (1959-)

Turtle Clan Member and Indigenous Human rights activist, Gabriel is well-known as the spokesperson chosen by the People of the Longhouse and her community of Kanehsatà:ke during the 1990 "Oka Crisis" or Kanehsatà:ke and Kahnawake Siege; a 78 day standoff to protect their traditional territories from the expansion of a golf course.

The community of Kanehsatà:ke existed long before the arrival of Europeans in North America and is the oldest Mohawk community in existence. We have waited for centuries for justice which has been denied to us due to the illegal doctrines of superiority designed to dispossess us of our lands. Instead the Kanien'kehà:ka – Mohawk people are confronted by coercive methods by Government and its authorities, justified under blatant institutionalized racism through the Indian Act. We must put an end to "land claims" negotiations which requires all Indigenous nations to "extinguish" title to their lands and resources; allows third party interests to continue during negotiations and is founded solely on Canadian law, policy and standards.

On July 11th of this year [2013], we marked the 23rd anniversary of the "Oka Crisis, 1990" through a peaceful protest at Parc Nationale d'Oka, a place where our ancestors lived and occupied for many millenniums. It is sad that after 23 years, the Mohawk people of Kanehsatà:ke are no closer to achieving justice to our long standing historical land rights grievances: a struggle has been going on for several centuries now and desperately requires some sort of peaceful resolution.

Letter to Canada and All Crown Actors re: development on Traditional Kanehsatà:ke Territory Posted on Ellen Gabriel's blog: <https://sovereignvoices1.wordpress.com/> - August 13, 2013

Continued on page 37



FIGHTING FOR WOMEN'S RIGHTS DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC!

WHAT IS ELLA? "ELLA (which means "she" in Spanish) began in 2014 as a meeting of women from 8 countries in Bello Horizonte, Brazil. By 2018, ELLA had connected more than 23 countries in Ibero-America in a great feminist movement, through projects and permanent campaigns developed in a collaborative and collective way" - @planetaella

IN SEPTEMBER 2020 FIRE THIS TIME MOVEMENT FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE WAS INVITED TO JOIN IN ELLA TO BROADEN THIS IMPORTANT TRANS INCLUSIVE FEMINIST MOVEMENT TO THE UNITED STATES, CANADA & PUERTO RICO.



PRE-ELLA NORTH AMERICA



On September 26, 2020 the Fire This Time Movement for Social Justice co-organized the Pre-ELLA North America virtual meeting. This meeting brought together women from many different walks of life to discuss the realities facing women today and building a more

united and stronger feminist movement across borders! The meeting was co-chaired by Alison Bodine, from the Fire This Time Editorial Board and Edda Lopez of the Puerto Rican Independence Party.

"The coronavirus pandemic has just intensified the pre-existing crisis in the patriarchal/capitalist system, and women face the brunt of impact of the crisis. The capitalist mismanagement of covid-19 has deepened the conditions of exploitation and injustice which have developed in society, exposing great inequalities...A look at this situation which is present in the USA, Canada and Puerto Rico serves to undo many myths about capitalist countries, about the realities of the most oppressed people, women, migrants, Black, Indigenous, and LGBTQ+ people, and youth amongst others." - Excerpt by Alison Bodine, Fire This Time Movement for Social Justice, at the opening of the Pre-ELLA North America



Image reads "No more violence against us" @angie.vanessita

A GLOBAL FEMINIST EMERGENCY

Starting on November 7, 2020 women from across the Americas organized a range of actions fighting for the eradication of gender violence. Fire This Time Movement for Social Justice joined in the ELLA Feminist Emergency webinar. Together with other women, Tamara Hansen from the Fire This Time Editorial Board spoke about violence against women and the impact of sexism, racism, transphobia and homophobia against women in Canada. Tamara presented statistics exposing the government of Canada's failure to protect and advance women's rights - with a special focus on the racism and violence facing Indigenous women including how:

- With Covid-19 the situation has become more dangerous. Canada is not collecting data about race and gender in many health authorities. While reports from the U.S. show that Black and Indigenous folks are contracting Covid-19 at higher rates and dying at higher rates. This data is not even being collected in many parts of Canada.
- During Covid-19 women and trans folks across Canada are suffering more violence in the home.
- Within Indigenous communities women are calling for a stronger plan to confront violence against women, especially in light of the findings of the National Inquiry into Murdered and Missing Indigenous Women.



Wrapping up the Feminist Emergency Webinar. Each of the participants is displaying a green handkerchief in solidarity with women fighting for the right to choose in Argentina.



Celebrating Comandante Fidel Castro
August 13, 1926-November 25, 2016
FIRETHISTIME.NET

It is worthwhile indicating that the main responsibility for the brutal destruction of the environment lies with the consumer societies. They are the offspring of the old colonial metropolises and of imperialist policies that also begot the poverty and backwardness which are today the scourge of the overwhelming majority of humanity.

They have poisoned oceans and rivers and contaminated the air; they have weakened and opened holes in the ozone layer and saturated the atmosphere with gases that impair climate conditions with catastrophic effects that we are starting to feel.

Forests are disappearing and deserts growing while billions of tons of fertile soil end up in the oceans every year. Numerous species face extinction.

The truth is that everything that today contributes to underdevelopment and poverty is tantamount to a flagrant attack on the ecology. The unequal terms of trade, protectionism and the foreign debt are also an assault on the ecology and facilitate the destruction of the environment.

Let science work toward a sustainable development without contamination. Let the ecologic debt be paid and not the foreign debt. Now that the alleged threat of communism no longer exists, neither the pretexts for cold wars, the arms race nor military expenditures, what prevents the immediate use of those resources to foster development in the Third World and to thwart the planet's ecologic destruction?

Tomorrow it will be too late to do what should have been done a long time ago.

SPEECH BY COMANDANTE FIDEL CASTRO
AT THE U.N. CONFERENCE ON ENVIRONMENT & DEVELOPMENT
JUNE 12, 1992

BUILDING CUBA SOLIDARITY



AGAINST U.S. AGGRESSION & BLOCKADE ON CUBA During the Covid-19 Global Pandemic

By Tamara Hansen

"Let's build unstoppable international momentum to defeat the U.S. blockade of Cuba in 2021!" was the title of the third session of the International U.S.-Cuba Normalization Concert and Conference held virtually from November 13-15, 2020. Tamara Hansen, the coordinator of Vancouver Communities in Solidarity with Cuba; an executive member of the Canadian Network on Cuba; author of the book, "5 Decades of the Cuban Revolution the Challenges of an Unwavering Leadership"; as well as an organizer in the U.S.-Cuba Normalization Conference Committee was invited to speak on the issue of, "Building solidarity online during Covid-19."

Fire This Time is reprinting an excerpt of Tamara's talk from that day. Videos of the full weekend of virtual events are available online on the conference website: www.us-cubanormalization.org

I want to say it has been a real pleasure working with the U.S.-Cuba Normalization Conference Committee for over a year now to bring together a great series of webinars. At the same time, Covid-19 has made our Cuba solidarity work very different and more challenging. We have also been able to use new technologies to maximize our cooperation across time zones, borders, and any other challenges Covid-19 has tried to put in our way.

Vancouver Communities in Solidarity with Cuba was founded in Spring 2004 when U.S. President George W Bush tightened the U.S. blockade on Cuba and imposed restrictions on travel and money transfers on the Cuban-American community. We began with protest actions and a petition campaign against the blockade. Since then, we have been devoted to broadening our Cuba solidarity organizing with what we call **the 3 C's – Consistency, Cooperation, and Creativity!**

We believe that all political work must be consistent and organized into campaigns to be effective. We know that U.S. imperialism is very organized and consistent in its attacks on Cuba. We have a responsibility to work as seriously, consistently, and in unity to expand and grow our local and national activities to build an effective international movement.

Why are we pushing the idea of Ending the U.S. Blockade on Cuba in 2021?

As many know, during this global pandemic, the U.S. has been tightening its cruel, over 60-year-old, blockade on Cuba. While tourism and many other industries have had to shut down to stop the spread of Covid-19 in Cuba, the Trump administration has been working to strangle Cuba by imposing

further restrictions. Ending the blockade on Cuba is a political priority for the solidarity movement, for all friends of Cuba around the world, alongside the great heroic Cuban people.

Why does the U.S. government have a blockade on Cuba? As many have said, there are different reasons for this blockade. But I believe the most important for the U.S. ruling class, and what they are most afraid of, is Cuba's example. U.S. imperialism has become increasingly vicious and criminal towards Cuba because Cuba has established so much in human progress. Cuba is a respected government and a respected country by the world community. Throughout its history, Cuba, especially after the 1959 socialist revolution and its revolutionary internationalism, has become the standard for humanity.

The acceleration of U.S. attacks on Cuba reinforces the responsibility of strengthening our efforts to defend Cuba and build a broad and robust campaign in the U.S., Quebec, Canada, and internationally.

As groups based in Canada – Vancouver Communities in Solidarity with Cuba and the Canadian Network on Cuba – know that Canada and Cuba have had unbroken diplomatic relations for over 75 years, which we are proud of. However, the



Speakers and guests of the 3rd session of the U.S.-Cuba Normalization Conference & Concert raise their fists in solidarity with Cuba! November 15, 2020 #UnblockCuba2021



current Liberal government under Prime Minister of Canada, Justin Trudeau, has made some unprovoked attacks on Cuba, including the “sonic attacks” allegations. This means we must keep an eye on the government here, not just in the U.S.

Canada is also a leader in the Lima Group, which is working to destabilize Latin America, including Venezuela, Bolivia, and Nicaragua. In Canada and around the world, we need to work with parliamentarians, municipal politicians, mainstream media, unions, progressive organizations, religious organizations, and local ethnic media to ensure the perspective of the Cuba solidarity movement is being heard.

How do we continue our work during a global pandemic?

Let me tell you, while President Trump is busy planning to undermine Cuba's right to self-determination and human rights, we too, in Canada, are working hard and are busy with building broader solidarity and friendship with Cuba and the Cuban people.

The Canadian Network on Cuba has now had six virtual picket actions on the 17th of the month during this time of the pandemic. These expanded on the regular monthly pickets in Vancouver, Montreal, Ottawa, and Kiev that have been organized since 2015. Participation in these virtual pickets has expanded from four cities to twenty countries across the world, including – Australia, Jamaica, Russia, UK, Chile, Zambia, Peru, Venezuela, South Africa, Columbia, Ireland, Philippines, Argentina, Tunisia, Italy, Ukraine, the U.S., South Korea, Puerto Rico & Cuba.

We are looking forward to reaching out to many more countries in the coming months.

While some groups are already back picketing in front of U.S. consulates and embassies, these virtual pickets have taken on a new role of connecting a broader network of Cuba solidarity organizers around the world. In fact, the work that has been done by Vancouver Communities in Solidarity with Cuba and the Canadian Network on Cuba has inspired the Colombian Movement in Solidarity with Cuba (MCSC), who we are working with to organize a global 24-

hour virtual picket, which is aimed to be a couple of hours in each time zone where people would log in to speak and then log off as another time zone takes over. We are currently planning this event for December 17, the 6th anniversary of our 5 Cuban heroes' freedom from the U.S. jails.

You may have heard today Fernando Gonzalez, the President of the Cuban Institute of Friendship with the Peoples (ICAP) and one of our 5 Cuban heroes, encouraging you in his video greetings to join the virtual pickets on the 17th and specifically the 24-hour action on December 17. If you register for November 17, we will send you info about December 17 soon!

How do we keep this work consistent, cooperative & creative?

Virtual pickets are only part of the work. I want to conclude by saying we can also discuss increasing online petition campaigns. To do more creative campaigns to build awareness by online contests, or support ICAP led twitter storms, social media contests, sharing articles and videos. These activities can be extended to online days of action, letter writing to mainstream media, campaigns to call politicians offices, etc.

While traditional protest actions may be limited at this time of the global pandemic, we are responsible for continuing to pressure the U.S. government. The UN vote on the blockade, which was mentioned in the plan of action, will be in May 2021. This will be an important international day of action against the blockade; we all need to join together.

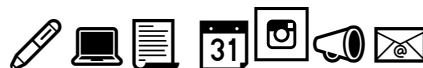
Also, fundraising is something we have been able to do during the pandemic. Of course, it is a challenging time financially for a lot of folks, but the Canadian Network on Cuba successfully raised over \$53,000 in support of Cuban doctors with the Henry Reeve International Medical Brigades.

It is true that Covid-19 can make us feel isolated and some of our regular methods of work are not possible at the moment. However, this is an excellent time for us to connect across cities, provinces, states, countries, and across all borders to reach out in friendship and solidarity towards each other and Cuba's valiant people.

We believe connecting to the U.S.-Cuba Normalization campaign and working together has been an important step forward for us in North America. Together with la Table de concertation et de solidarité Québec – Cuba, National Network on Cuba (NNOC), the Canadian Network on Cuba, the Cuban Institute of Friendship with the Peoples (ICAP), and the U.S.-Cuba Normalization Conference Committee we have built a powerful Cuba solidarity campaign against the blockade on Cuba. This is an advancement in terms of building an effective and strong movement to defeat the blockade decisively. Our international work has grown in leaps and bounds, so let's continue working together to defend Cuba against the U.S. empire and its cruel, unjust, and criminal blockade! Viva Cuba!

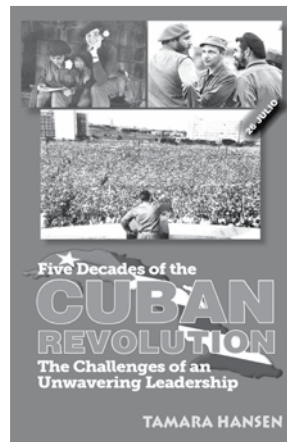
Together, we can do it! We will win!
¡Venceremos!

Follow Tamara on Twitter: @THans01



Battle of Ideas Press

5 Decades of the Cuban Revolution The Challenges of an Unwavering Leadership



By Tamara Hansen

Coordinator of Vancouver Communities in Solidarity with Cuba (VCSC). She is also an editorial board member of The Fire This Time newspaper. She has travelled to Cuba over a dozen times and has written extensively on Cuban politics since 2003.

April 2010, paperback, \$10.00
314 pages, illustrated,
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#UNBLOCKCUBA:

CUBA SOLIDARITY MOVEMENT PLANS FOR MAJOR ACTIVITIES TO BREAK THE U.S. BLOCKADE ON CUBA IN 2021!

By Janine Solanki

Over the first few months of 2020, the U.S.-Cuba Normalization Committee brought activists from the US, Canada, and beyond to plan the International Conference for the Normalization of U.S.-Cuba Relations. Although the Covid-19 pandemic brought plans for an in-person conference to a halt, it quickly became apparent that now more than ever, Cuba needs support, solidarity, and activism against the U.S. blockade on Cuba. The coalition organizes regular webinars, which bring to light Cuba's significant contribution to the fight against Covid-19 and demand an end to the U.S. blockade on Cuba. The blockade has been tightened to unprecedented levels under U.S. President Donald Trump, targeting especially much-needed medical supplies and fuel.

Comandante Fidel

On August 13, the U.S.-Cuba Normalization Committee held a webinar marking what would have been the 94th birthday of Comandante Fidel Castro, former Cuban president and leader of the Cuban Revolution. From Vancouver, Canada, the event was co-chaired by Tamara Hansen, coordinator of Vancouver Communities in Solidarity with Cuba (VCSC) and executive member of the Canadian Network on Cuba. The event featured notable speakers: José Ramón Cabañas, Cuban Ambassador to the United States; Josefina Vidal, Cuban Ambassador to Canada; Ana Silvia Rodríguez, Permanent



Representative of Cuba to the United Nations; and former Brazilian President Dilma Rousseff, among many other captivating speakers as well as cultural performances. The event was a beautiful testament to the life and legacy of Comandante Fidel!

November 13-15

The weekend of solidarity with Cuba kicked off with a Friday night International Concert Against the Blockade of Cuba. The MC of the evening was Alison Bodine, Fire This Time editorial board member, and the star-studded program included some of Cuba's finest musicians as well as artists from the U.S. and Canada. Cuba's rich culture and the spirit of solidarity made for an exciting and enjoyable evening for the more than 800 people who tuned in!

November 14

The first conference session was "After the U.S. Elections: For

Normalization! Why We Must End the Blockade on Cuba!" The session featured Ambassador José Ramón Cabañas and Ambassador Josefina Vidal, NDP Canadian Member of Parliament Niki Ashton and Sen. Sandra Pappas, Democrat State Senator from Minnesota, U.S., among other speakers.

The second session of the day focused on the "Saving Lives Campaign - Bringing Cuba's Example to the U.S. and Canada during the Global Pandemic." See more about this important campaign below this report. This session featured inspiring speakers, including physicians, authors, and Cuba solidarity organizers, and was co-chaired by Alison Bodine from FTT in Vancouver, Canada.

November 15

The third session was titled "Let's build an unstoppable international momentum to defeat the U.S. blockade of Cuba in 2021!" The session featured special guests Pedro Luis Pedrosó Cuesta, Permanent Ambassador of Cuba to the United Nations, and Fernando González Llort, President of the Cuban Institute of Friendship with the Peoples (ICAP), Cuban internationalist fighter in Angola 1987-1989 and one of the Cuban Five heroes. The fourth session was titled "Broadening Cuba Solidarity - How to end the blockade in 2021." The speakers included Tamara Hansen, coordinator of Vancouver Communities in Solidarity with Cuba (VCSC), and Canadian Network on Cuba executive committee member. Her talk is printed in this issue of Fire This Time on page 22. This session also included a section on "Cuban voices from U.S. and Canada" and a "Solidarity Beyond North America" panel

Continued on page 35

**INTERNATIONAL
CONFERENCE
FOR U.S.-CUBA
NORMALIZATION**
**NOV 14-15,
2020**

SESSION 1:
**AFTER THE U.S. ELECTIONS:
FOR NORMALIZATION!**
**WHY WE MUST END THE
BLOCKADE ON CUBA!**

JOSEFINA VIDAL
CUBA'S
AMBASSADOR
TO CANADA

JOSÉ RAMÓN CABAÑAS
CUBA'S
AMBASSADOR TO
THE UNITED
STATES

NIKI ASHTON
NEW DEMOCRATIC
PARTY MEMBER
OF PARLIAMENT
OF CANADA

SANDRA PAPPAS
DEMOCRAT STATE
SENATOR FROM
MINNESOTA, U.S.

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 14TH
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Speakers and organizers of the 1st session of the U.S.-Cuba Normalization Conference & Concert organize as the event prepares to go live! November 14, 2020 #UnblockCuba2021



Volunteering, Culture, Politics & Fun! Join the Che Guevara Volunteer Work Brigade to Cuba

By Janine Solanki

While we may be in the midst of Canada's winter during a pandemic, the warmth of Cuba is not so far away with the Che Guevara Volunteer Work Brigade!

What is the Che Guevara Volunteer Work Brigade?

The Che Guevara Volunteer Work Brigade has travelled to Cuba 26 times annually, bringing brigadistas from Canada to Cuba. This unique trip is a project of the Canadian Network on Cuba (CNC) in Canada and the Cuban Institute of Friendship with the Peoples (ICAP) in Cuba. The two-week program is an opportunity to experience the Cuban Revolution and its accomplishments. There is no better way to get to know the Cuban people than working alongside them, sharing meals, and leisure time - including going to the beach! The Che Brigade's vibrant program also includes visiting cultural sites, health and educational institutions, historical sites, workshops, concerts, dance classes, and more! This year we are all living in the unprecedented situation of the Covid-19 pandemic. As international travel has come to a halt around the world, this has included travel to Cuba, where the focus has been on keeping people safe and effectively containing the outbreak in Cuba. However, the 2021 Che Guevara Brigade

to Cuba is on the not too distant horizon, and we are looking forward to a much anticipated return to Cuba, April 28 – May 11, 2021!

Bringing Cuba's Warmth to Your Homes!

While it was not possible to travel to Cuba in 2020, that has not stopped the Che Guevara Brigade from hosting online events! On September 27, the Che Brigade hosted a Cuban Cultural Night and brought Cuba's warmth and culture to distant homes. The event, facilitated by Janine Solanki, national coordinator of the Che Guevara Brigade, included speakers such as Tania López Larroque, Consul General of the Republic of Cuba in Toronto; Yamil Martínez Marrero from the Canada Desk of the Cuban Institute of Friendship with the Peoples (ICAP); and Marcia Krawll, an educator, Clinical Social Worker and human rights activist who developed adult literacy programs in New Zealand and Canada in collaboration with Cuban institutions. The cultural elements of the program included poetry readings of Nicolás Guillén, Cuba's national poet and José Martí, Cuban poet and hero of Cuba's War of Independence. Music from Trio Bembe, an incredible Latin music trio, and Obsesión, pioneers of Cuban Hip-Hop, kept everyone's toes tapping in front of their computer screens. Some may have gotten out of their seats to dance in their living

rooms, with a Cuban salsa dance lesson and demonstration from Harold Rancano, an internationally recognized Cuban dance instructor and performer!

How Can I Join the Next Che Guevara Brigade to Cuba?

The next Che Guevara Volunteer Work Brigade is scheduled for April 28 – May 11, 2021. The Che Brigade is open to people of all ages and abilities, and although we are based in Canada, we welcome those wanting to join from other countries too! For more information, check out www.canadiannetworkoncuba.ca/brigade, and for any questions to receive updates on the price and program, you can call or email the National Coordinator Janine Solanki at 778-881-6156 or chevolbrigade@gmail.com. Stay tuned to your social media accounts for news and updates on the Che Brigade too! You can follow on Facebook at www.facebook.com/CheVolBrigade on Twitter @CheVolBrigade, or Instagram @cdntwrkconcuba



By Janine Solanki

For 60 years, the U.S. blockade against Cuba has been a difficult fact of Cuban's daily lives. However, this year has been especially brutal. While globally 2020 has been synonymous with the pandemic, in Cuba 2020 has been characterized by both the pandemic and the tightening of the U.S. blockade to heightened new levels. Showing the utmost cruelty during the pandemic, the Trump administration introduced measures to prevent Cuba from accessing medical supplies, ventilators and fuel.

While Cuba is showing their medical solidarity to people around the world, people around the world are showing their solidarity with Cuba against the U.S. blockade. Before the pandemic, protests against the U.S. blockade on Cuba took place monthly in Vancouver, Canada, organized by Friends of Cuba Against the U.S. Blockade, alongside coordinated protests in Ottawa and Montreal, Canada and Kiev, Ukraine. While activism has shifted

CANADIAN NETWORK ON CUBA INTENSIFIES CUBA SOLIDARITY CAMPAIGN

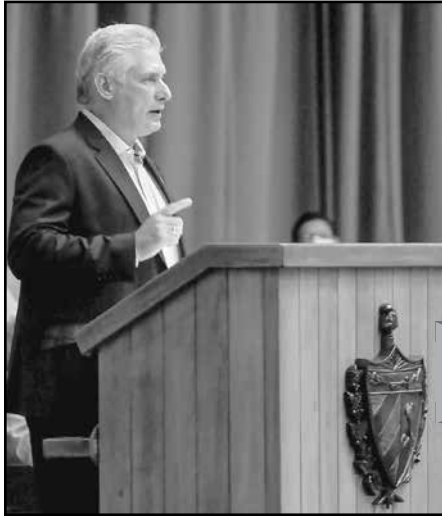
online during the Covid-19 pandemic, these actions have been organized in the virtual realm by the Canadian Network on Cuba (CNC) who has been hosting the virtual picket actions on the 17th of each month. On the 17th of August, September, October and November, these actions have represented Cuba solidarity activists around the world! Activists and organizers have joined in speaking against the blockade from Canada and the U.S., Cuba, Venezuela, Chile, Peru, St. Vincent, Jamaica, Colombia, Ukraine, Italy, Tunisia, Russia, Australia, Zambia, and the Philippines. These actions also include greetings from individual CNC member groups across Canada and la Table de concertation et de solidarité Québec - Cuba and end with a customary "virtual picket" photo when all

participants share their videos.

Alongside the monthly virtual pickets, the CNC has also been hosting webinars. On October 29, the CNC hosted a webinar titled "Canada-Cuba Relations in the Time of Trump and COVID-19". This event was facilitated by two members of the CNC executive committee: Tamara Hansen, coordinator of Vancouver Communities in Solidarity with Cuba (VCSC), and Elizabeth Hill, President of the Canadian Cuban Friendship Association - Toronto. Among a panel of insightful speakers was: Her Excellency Josefina Vidal, the Cuban Ambassador to Canada; MP Niki Ashton, Member of Parliament for Churchill - Keewatinook Aski, Manitoba; and MP Matthew Green - Member of Parliament for Hamilton Centre, Ontario.

For more information about CNC events and actions, check www.CanadianNetworkOnCuba.ca, www.vancubasolidarity.org, or follow on Facebook @CanadianNetworkOnCuba and Twitter and Instagram at @cdntwrkconcuba

CUBAN PRESIDENT MIGUEL DIAZ-CANEL:



"It will always be an honor to serve you, beloved homeland"

Speech by Miguel Mario Díaz-Canel Bermúdez, President of the Republic of Cuba, at the closing of the Fifth Ordinary Period of Sessions of the National Assembly of People's Power's Ninth Legislature, at the Convention Center, October 28, 2020, Year 62 of the Revolution

Dear Army General Raúl Castro Ruz, first secretary of the Communist Party of Cuba Central Committee

Compañero Esteban Lazo Hernández, President of the National Assembly of People's Power and the Council of State

Dear Deputies:

On a day like today, it is especially inspiring to remember Commander Camilo Cienfuegos, the man with the broad smile, the man of the people, plain and simple, who defined loyalty to the country and to Fidel, like few others, when he wrote to the leader of the Revolution that it would be easier for him to stop breathing than to stop being faithful to his confidence. Our recollection of and tributes to the Hero of Yaguajay are sentiments that continue to permeate deeply into the soul of our people and will be eternal.

For the first time in the history of the National Assembly, we have met with some members of our legislature participating from a distance. The pandemic could not paralyze us to the degree of further compromising the long legislative agenda that has been addressed with the approval of four important laws during this session.

More legislation will be proposed during the upcoming session of this Assembly next December.

Our people have been able to appreciate, by different means, the level of the discussion of these laws evident in the valuable comments made by deputies. It should be added that the legislative work involved the extensive participation of specialists from various institutions, including university professors, and the population, which had access to the proposals through various channels. This is an experience that we must continue and perfect.

The approval of laws on the President and Vice President of the Republic, as well as the Organization and Functioning of the Council of Ministers, together with those approved in previous periods, ensure the normative development of Constitutional premises regarding the superior organs of the state and the government. This should allow for greater functional delimitation of these and strengthen the institutional order of the country.

The Foreign Service Law perfects and consolidates its organization and the role of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in implementing the state's foreign policy, based on principles enshrined in the Constitution of the Republic.

The Law of Revocation of those Elected to People's Power Bodies develops one of the imperatives of socialist democracy in compliance with provisions of the new Electoral Law. In line with the Constitution, it establishes the new authorities subject to recall and procedures for revocation.

These sessions have also allowed us to complete pending tasks, including settlement of the 2019 Budget, which has been sufficiently debated previously, although I am interested in highlighting the timely adjustments that allowed us to implement a partial salary increase in the budgeted sector and Social Security pensions, which required more than 4

billion pesos.

A year like 2019, marked by severe financial tensions due to the tightening of the blockade, imposed the need to further boost tax revenues, based on increasing the results of our enterprises and discipline in paying contributions in all sectors of the economy.

This will require a rigorous confrontation with non-compliance and tax evasion; measures that, along with more rational use of budgetary resources and an increase in the efficiency of their use, should guarantee the gradual reduction of the fiscal deficit and, consequently, allow for the sustainable management of public debt to achieve the macroeconomic balances that are indispensable to consolidation of our economic and social model.

Compañeras and compañeros:

In July, the Council of Ministers approved the Economic and Social Strategy to address the complex situation imposed by COVID-19 and the continual escalations of the blockade, which has been criminally tightened under conditions of pandemic.

Let us not forget that we have borne the effects of this prolonged economic war over decades and that between 2019 and 2020 alone more than 130 measures against our nation were adopted, with the deliberate purpose of stifling the economy, creating discontent and despair in the population and blaming all our difficulties on the alleged «inefficiency of the Cuban economic model.»

The panorama could not be more challenging. The profound effect on our income from tourism, as a consequence of worldwide paralysis of the leisure and travel industry, was joined, from the beginning of the year, by an increase in health expenses to control the pandemic, decreased employment in productive activities, as

well as closures and reductions in non-state activity, among other factors.

Conscious that everything will depend on our efforts, exemplary work has been done to confront the pandemic and the difficult economic situation, by the Party and government leadership at all levels and also by mass organizations, without renouncing the country's fundamental programs, as established in the National Economic and Social Development Plan through 2030.

The government is determined to move forward, during the remaining two months of the year, to reach the highest level of implementation possible within 2020 itself.

As we have stated on other occasions, we must accelerate the pace and the profound transformations that we owe ourselves through innovation. This is why we insist so much on the role of our universities and scientific centers, which accompany us in the analysis and development of proposals.

Without neglecting health measures to confront the pandemic, for even a moment, it is essential for the enterprise system to implement recently agreed-upon measures, which create a different environment, with greater autonomy and responsibility.

Along with this, the ability to export and import, and transformations that will be introduced for non-state forms of management, as well as the implementation of territorial development policy and monetary re-ordering, will have at our disposal a more productively interconnected, more integrated, innovative and capable enterprise system.

Implementing the economic-social strategy and achieving results is the highest priority task in the economy at this time.

Taking this path, we will demand that all levels of government and enterprise leadership carefully supervise the implementation of measures related to this strategy, within their areas of competence, giving top priority to food production

and distribution, increasing savings, especially in foreign currency and energy, and focusing on national production; designing solutions and expediting processes, making administrative procedures simpler and more transparent; promoting productive links between state and non-state sectors, and updating regional development strategies in accordance with approved policy.

Compañeras and compañeros:

During the current year, under the extraordinary, harsh conditions imposed by the pandemic, imperialism has chosen to tighten the blockade in an extreme and unprecedented manner.

Although our work confronting this affliction has been successful, we faced serious difficulties during the period in obtaining the high-tech equipment that would allow for greater precision in diagnosis and treatment to ensure the recovery of patients. The damage not only impacted commercial operations associated with the battle against the pandemic, but also the arrival of solidarity and humanitarian aid from various countries.

This is a reality that Cubans cannot forget.

The United States increased, precisely in this period, the persecution of our financial transactions and continued its intense efforts to prevent delivery of fuel supplies, with unconventional methods inappropriate in peacetime.

The U.S. government directly attacked the travel industry, even before we were forced to close our borders as a protective measure. To do so, it imposed unilateral and unjustified restrictions on air travel between the two countries and went so far as to instruct its citizens where, and where not, they could stay in Cuba.

As part of its goal of eliminating the arrival of any foreign exchange to our country, in recent months the U.S. has managed to severely limit the sending of remittances. Just a few days



Cuban students at the Ninth Congress of the Federation of University Students (FEU) in Havana, July 2018

ago, new measures were announced that in practice deny those living in the United States the ability to send remittances to their relatives in Cuba through legitimate, safe, institutional channels.

The pretexts and lies used by the U.S. government to justify this action are ever more cynical and shameless. No one can be deceived; this is an action that affects a considerable number of compatriots and their relations with relatives and close friends living in the neighboring country.

We have insisted and it is worth emphasizing: the economic blockade lacks political, legal and moral justification and continues to be the main obstacle to advancing Cuba's bilateral relations with the United States.

The damage caused to the well-being of the population, to the country's capacity to meet many needs and guarantee basic services is undeniable. It affects the lives of all Cubans in one way or another.

The U.S. government must face the indisputable reality that the blockade harms the Cuban people as a whole, but it is incapable of breaking our capacity to resist.

It punishes families, Cubans living abroad, violates human rights, makes communication, travel, visas and family reunification difficult; but it does not and will never succeed in subjecting the Cuban nation to imperialist domination.

The hostility of this government toward the island, in such a difficult period for the international community, has included unbridled attacks on the international medical cooperation provided by Cuba. The threats and pressure on numerous countries to forego requesting or accepting Cuban help reached shameless unprecedented



levels.

Given the general crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and its longer term effects, countries of the South are facing a very unfavorable international economic situation.

Fully perceiving its impact on economic and productive stability at a global level is difficult, on patterns of trade and supply, technological advances, the structure of communications and transportation.

The effect on prospects for international tourism and travel, the energy use patterns of many countries, prices and availability of commodities, food, raw materials and advanced technologies has yet to be estimated.

These are all realities that have an impact on Cuba and other nations. It is difficult for any country to face them alone.

We have strongly defended our commitment to preserving and promoting multilateralism, especially by strengthening the central role of the United Nations and fostering international cooperation, which is essential to addressing global challenges and threats.

Our record of promoting and supporting multilateralism is well known and respected. The brutal pressure exerted by the United States to prevent Cuba from being elected to the Human Rights Council once again failed to overshadow the recognition our country enjoys in the international community.

With the support of 88 percent of UN member states, Cuba was elected, testimony to its constructive contributions to the body, of which we are founders, and to the prestige we have achieved in the defense and promotion of human rights.

Just a few days ago, the requirements that ensure the entry into force of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, which will become effective on January 22, 2021, were met. This is an event of great importance to world peace and stability.

This accomplishment confirms the success of the efforts of many countries of the South which tirelessly advocate nuclear disarmament, efforts in which we played an active part. It also represents the realization of a dream of Comandante en jefe Fidel Castro Ruz, who with the strength of his ideas was an invincible fighter for disarmament and world peace.

In our immediate environment, the resurgence of the Monroe Doctrine is an affront to all of the hemisphere's sovereign states, whose right to self-determination is

clearly challenged by imperialist ambition.

The Venezuelan people are facing this threat, waging a heroic battle against aggression, interference in their internal affairs and a relentless economic war. I reaffirm that Cuba's solidarity and support for the Bolivarian Chavista Revolution, for the civil-military union of its people and for President Nicolás Maduro Moros, who heads the constitutional government of that sister Republic, remain unwavering.

A few days before the 20th anniversary of the signing of the Comprehensive Cuba-Venezuela Cooperation Agreement by Comandante en jefe Fidel Castro Ruz and Comandante Hugo Chávez Frías, I reiterate that, despite pressure and threats from the United States, Cuba will not forego its cooperative relations with our Venezuelan brothers.

The Bolivian people's resounding victory electing compañero Luis Arce and David Choquehuanca in the country's elections demonstrates that there was no vote fraud in 2019, but rather a coup against compañero Evo Morales, orchestrated by the United States in collusion with the OAS and the local oligarchy.

Heartfelt congratulations to MAS for this triumph. We share the joy that hope is returning to recover the social conquests taken from the Bolivian people.

The people of Chile achieved a great popular victory that contributes a great deal to the struggle for the social demands of millions of Chileans and of the region.

May a message of solidarity reach the land of Sandino and our rejection of the external pressures exerted with the intention of affecting the stability and the social-economic advances of the Republic of Nicaragua, achieved by the government of Reconciliation and National Unity presided by Comandante Daniel Ortega Saavedra.

The defense of the dignity and the integration of Latin America and the Caribbean have in the governments of Mexico and Argentina faithful exponents.

I reiterate our invariable commitment to the postulates of the Proclamation of Latin America and the Caribbean as a Zone of Peace.

Deputies:

A difficult, challenging year is coming to an end. Some have not hesitated to call it a terrible year.

Over a few months, millions contracted COVID-19, causing the deaths of more than a million worldwide. Many more lost their jobs, their studies or saw other



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Young Cubans in the municipality of El Cerro in Havana, help conduct door to door temperature and Covid-19 tests of both symptomatic and asymptomatic residents in the local fight against the global pandemic, September 2020

important personal life projects go up in smoke. There is talk of record numbers of unemployment, poverty and extreme poverty and a coming pandemic of hunger.

But the virus that came to cripple the world economy and transform our lives has also shaken inertia, in many cases, and is leaving us lessons, learning and growth that we should not underestimate.

To begin, COVID-19 has come to remind us how interconnected we are in this world, a reality that favors the spread of the virus, but at the same time forced us to confront it in a coordinated fashion, opting for cooperation and solidarity, two practices that the crude pragmatism of neoliberalism almost extinguished.

In Cuba, it must be repeated many times, the epidemic arrived along with a reinforced blockade. Regardless of its illegality and immorality, there has been no truce in this asymmetric, multidimensional war to erase our example of independence and sovereignty from the face of the earth.

But those of us who are members of the band of non-conformists and optimists, like Fidel and Raúl, learned with them and their comrades in struggle that all challenges can be overcome. Cubans are proving, once again, that it can be done. (Applause)

Over these seven months of tireless struggle against the epidemic, we have confirmed the capacity of the planned economy and health system of Cuban socialism to control outbreaks and to provide secure assistance to the entire population, with no differences. And we have cooperated in solidarity with the most affected nations.

While the profound inequality created and exacerbated by the capitalist philosophy is taking a deplorable toll of human lives in many countries, including highly developed ones, Cuba has managed to keep the virus at bay and lower lethality to negligible levels.

Every day our media offer inspiring examples of the daily work in Medicine and Science. A group of experts from various disciplines have laid the foundations for the solid strategy the government developed, not without great effort, to contain and defeat COVID-19.

There is no mystery in this skilled, talented workforce, laboring for the same goal: socialism. A socialism that is still imperfect and weighed down by burdens that we must let go along the way, but one that is essentially humane and just, as no other system in history has been.

The fact that a small country, blockaded and defamed by the greatest power in history, could courageously resist the attacks of

its adversary and, moreover, grow, creating, innovating and contributing to collective salvation, within and beyond its borders, can only be explained by the humane orientation of our project, the political will of the Party and the government, and the extraordinary strength of a people who are experts in endurance and winning.

This is not a chance event; it has a cause. There is a component in Cuban DNA, in the magnificent mix of ethnicities and history of continuous resilience, from which emerges from "that sweet word: Cuban." But there is another factor that is no less important, which is the conscious construction, over more than 60 years, of a work that is larger and stronger than we are, with an authentic leadership, respected and admired in the world, more respected and admired the more it has resisted the blows of the adversary without giving up. I speak, of course, of Fidel, of Raúl, of the Centennial Generation, whom we are honored to follow, with proud dedication to the cause to which they devoted their lives. (Applause)

The pandemic has provoked a confrontation of political paradigms, in which the social and humanist perspective of the Cuban Revolution is undoubtedly winning: look at the exemplary actions of our young people. Today we can see that, despite the damage, the strong impact on our limited resources, COVID-19 obliged us to grow, to rise to the occasion on all levels. It was either surrender, or take a leap beyond our strength. And we leaped.

The chapter the Cuban people are writing right now is heroic, as we simultaneously face the epidemic, the ravages of a tightened blockade, and an unprecedented campaign of hate, manipulation and disinformation on social media, financed from abroad.

How can we define what is being done against a small nation, an island, an archipelago, of barely 11 million inhabitants, by a powerful empire with 30 times that



Cuban President Miguel Díaz-Canel and his wife, Lis Cuesta Peraza, in a photo to celebrate Cuba's Moncada Day, July 26, 2020

population and almost 90 times its size?

Every day a threat, every day a sanction, every day an act of arrogance and contempt for what humanity has managed to construct to allow nations to understand each other. This is not politics. This is an outrage. This is abuse. This is brutal. This is shameful and infamous! You cannot call economic strangulation, financial persecution, pressure on third parties, the refusal to accept a different way of doing things, politics.

Today we can tell our people and the world that the country is growing, with commitment and determination to move forward despite the circumstances in which a virus has immersed the planet. Those who have insisted on writing the epitaph of this triumphant Revolution will once again be left with only the desire.

Esteemed compañeras and compañeros:

I ask our Assembly, those present here and those participating virtually, to pay a special tribute to our people. May the applause they offer every night, to that noble and devoted part of themselves, be heard loudly in this room and in all of Cuba, for all of Cuba, because without the people's understanding of every measure, without the massive participation in their implementation, the political ideal would be just that: an ideal.

Thank you, Cuba! It will always be an honor to serve you, beloved homeland!

Socialism or Death!
Homeland or Death!
We will triumph!

Venezuela's Legislative Elections: A Defiant Stand Against Neo-colonialism

By Carlos Ron

Carlos Ron is Venezuela's Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs for North America and President of the Simon Bolivar Institute for Peace and Solidarity Among Peoples.

Venezuela wins just by carrying out this election. The legislative process, stalled for years, will return to normal under a plural assembly that truly resembles the country's current political landscape and positions itself in favour of self-determination and national sovereignty, writes Carlos Ron, Venezuela's Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs for North America and President of the Simon Bolivar Institute for Peace and Solidarity Among Peoples.

Latin America has caught the world's attention as it has become the electoral battleground between progressive movements and the neo-colonial aspirations of the Washington Consensus. In Bolivia, Luis Arce, the candidate from Evo Morales's Movement Towards Socialism, won the presidential election, reverting the bloody coup that, to the convenience of transnational lithium interests, had forced the indigenous leader out of office only a year before. A week later, neoliberalism's birthplace became its next burial ground, as Chileans approved a historic referendum to change the Constitution left in place by Augusto Pinochet's military regime. On December 6, it will be Venezuela's turn to challenge US hegemony by simply holding elections that the White House has been attempting to block for months. The Government and even the moderate opposition are set on defying the US policy which in recent years has mainly promoted failed unconstitutional attempts at regime change.



Protest against the U.S. blockade on Venezuela ahead of the Venezuelan parliamentary election in the State of Apure, Venezuela, November 2020. The sign reads "anti-imperialist take - Venezuela unites against the blockade"

According to the Constitution, on January 5, 2021, a new National Assembly must take office, ending the mandate of the prior members who did not successfully bid for re-election. Juan Guaidó, who the US has supported as "Interim President", will no longer be an elected official and can no longer claim Venezuela's government or, more importantly, its assets. That is why the US refuses to recognize the legitimacy of this election, pressures allies into doing the same, and effectively prevents part of Venezuela's opposition from participating.

Nonetheless, Venezuelans will carry out the parliamentary elections as an exercise of national sovereignty in the hopes that a new National Assembly can engage in concrete actions to circumvent the blockade and end the dismantling of Venezuela's productivity.

A Return to Politics

This will be Venezuela's 25th electoral process in 21 years. The new National Assembly will have an increased number of seats to reflect population growth, from 165 to 277 members. Over 14,000 candidates of all political tendencies will be competing. Out of the 107 political organizations contending the elections,

98 define themselves as opposition, yet they have split with the more extremist sector led by Guaidó by participating in the election, refusing to support unconstitutional attempts to change the government, and by rejecting the illegal US "sanctions" aimed at coercing the Venezuelan President into resigning or propelling the military to overthrow him.

Since winning control of the National Assembly in 2015, the Venezuelan opposition embarked on an extremist plan to oust President Nicolás Maduro. The first item on the Assembly's agenda was an attempt to initiate legal procedures to remove him from office — a version of lawfare like the one applied to overthrow independent leaders such as Paraguay's Lugo in 2012 or Brazil's Rousseff in 2017.

The failure of this strategy led to more extreme tactics that also failed: violent street demonstrations in 2017, an assassination attempt using drones in 2018, a failed military uprising in 2019 led by the self-proclaimed Guaidó, and even an incursion of mercenaries in 2020. As a result, an ample sector of the opposition distance itself from Guaidó. Some parties even rebelled against their leadership and sued them in order to

guarantee their electoral participation.

Maximum Pressure Against Democracy

Despite the pandemic, the Trump Administration has applied its “maximum pressure” campaign against Venezuela. State Department officials spoke of a “Monroe Doctrine 2.0” in reference to the 1823 position against the presence of foreign powers in the American continent. As the US embarks on a new Cold War with China, continues to accuse Russia of interference, and escalates its aggression towards Iran, Venezuela seems like a logical target for a regime change operation. President Maduro’s Venezuela is perceived as an open door for US rivals in the region.

For years now, Venezuela sought to break its dependency on the US and engage with other strategic partners. These alliances helped Venezuela avoid a severe Covid-19 crisis. US “sanctions” and overcompliance in the financial sector prevented companies from selling supplies to Venezuela in fear of retaliation. China, Russia, and Iran, however, are among the countries that provided Venezuela with medicine and protective equipment while also helping to design Venezuela’s response: For example, a March delegation of Chinese experts helped design Venezuela’s Covid-19 response and Russia has included Venezuela in the Sputnik V tests.

In contrast, the US increased its interference in Venezuela’s politics by indicting President Maduro under dubious charges and launching a threatening military operation in the Caribbean. In September, the US Treasury sanctioned Indira Alfonzo, head of the National Electoral Council as well as an opposition leaning rector. Later that month it also issued sanctions to five opposition leaders who agreed to participate in the elections. Many others considering participating were also threatened with visa restrictions. The US actively worked to undermine the election process and prevent other

Right: Voting station in Nueva Esparta, Venezuela, December 6, 2020

Bottom: Indigenous people in Venezuela waiting in line to vote in the parliamentary elections, December 9, 2020



countries from recognizing it. Rather, it demands pre-conditions that include President Maduro stepping down before any elections can take place.

The US questions the same electoral process that in the past elected their allies to the current National Assembly, as well as to other municipal, state and national offices. Furthermore, the long-time opposition leader, Timoteo Zambrano, claims that the current electoral process has even more guarantees for the opposition than ever before. This will be verified by international observers who will accompany the process include experts from organizations such as the Council of Electoral Experts of Latin America (CEELA), now led by a former minister in Colombia’s Alvaro Uribe’s cabinet as well as jurists, religious leaders, and political activists from around the world.

Looking Ahead

Venezuela wins just by carrying out this election. The legislative process, stalled for years, will return to normal under a plural assembly that truly resembles the country’s current political landscape and positions itself in favour of self-determination and national sovereignty. The case against blocking Venezuelan assets in US and European banks - \$6 billion — will also fall apart with Guaidó out. The new US Administration will have to decide if it will continue to recognize a non-existent government with no clear or constitutional path to legitimacy or if it will return to real politics and engage the Venezuelan Government.

The new National Assembly will no

longer be a platform for politicians to plead for US intervention, rather it can push legislation to overcome the blockade and it can turn into a new space for political dialogue between government and opposition. Challenges will continue, but the US will need to reassess its Monroe Doctrine once again. For Venezuela, and the Latin American progressive movement, however, these elections will be another victory of resistance and resilience.

From www.valdaiclub.com

Follow Carlos Ron on Twitter: @CarlosJRonVE

Battle of Ideas Press

Revolution & Counter Revolution in Venezuela



By Alison Bodine

Writer and researcher on Venezuela. She is a member of the Fire This Time Newspaper Editorial Board and is the coordinator of the Fire This Time Venezuela Solidarity Campaign. Alison Bodine is an electrical designer based in Vancouver, Canada.

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ACTIVISTS DEMAND: CANADA/U.S. END SANCTIONS AND AGGRESSION TOWARDS VENEZUELA!

☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆

By Janine Solanki

While one would hope global cooperation, assistance and solidarity would be the order of the day during a pandemic, the United States government has proven to the world what we already know - they do not have a humanitarian bone in their crooked body. Instead, sanctions have been ramped up against Venezuela, along with other countries, including Cuba and Iran, in a "maximum pressure" campaign.

It is not only the U.S. government but also the government of Canada meddling in the affairs of other countries. At the end of 2018, the Trudeau government supported the U.S.-backed puppet Juan Guaidó, recognizing him as so-called "interim president" and supporting an attempted and failed coup against the democratically elected government of Nicolas Maduro. Canada has also spearheaded the Lima Group, a coalition of right-wing governments with the nefarious goal of forcing "regime change" in Venezuela. If the U.S. and Canadian governments really cared

about Venezuelans, they would end their brutal sanctions that have killed an estimated 40,000 Venezuelans between 2017 and 2018, as documented by the Centre for Economic and Policy Research (CEPR).

August 20

An online event took on Canada's interference in Venezuela, featuring Venezuela's Foreign Minister Jorge Arreaza and Pink Floyd co-founder Roger Waters. Canadian Foreign Policy Institute organized the event, and endorsers included the Fire This Time Movement for Social Justice - Venezuela Solidarity Campaign. Roger Waters gave a poignant introduction, reflecting on the critical question of "what really is Canada's interest in Venezuela?" Foreign Minister Jorge Arreaza gave a highly informative and engaging speech, which explained how "Canada was in the vanguard of this aggression against Venezuela" and asserted that Venezuela has "our right to establish our own political system, and it's enshrined here in the Charter of the United Nations which Canada is violating since at least 2016 when it comes to Venezuela."

November 9

In another great collaboration with Venezuelan social justice activists, Fire This Time representatives Azza Rojbi and Mike Larson were interviewed on an Instagram live seminar on November 9. The interview was held by SOMOS MEVEN, the youth-run Ecology Movement of Venezuela. Azza and Mike spoke and answered questions from MEVEN activists and those tuned in to the live stream.

November 12-13

Fire This Time also participated in the

International Conference of the Anti-Imperialist Working Class Platform (PCOA), which was held on November 12 and 13 and hosted by PSUV (United Socialist Party of Venezuela) and chaired by Venezuelan President Maduro. Azza Rojbi, an editorial board member of Fire This Time newspaper, spoke at the online conference to the over 200 participants who joined from 61 countries. The result of this important conference was a final declaration and plan of action, defending Venezuela's sovereignty and the self-determination and struggle of other oppressed nations. In part, the resolution demands that "the new US government eliminate the illegal unilateral coercive measures, as they are criminal policies that harm our peoples. In addition, we request the return of all assets stolen by the Trump administration. We also condemn the genocidal policy of economic blockade that is applied against the nations of the world as punishment for exercising their sovereignty."

Solidarity knows no borders, and with online tools, this social media event allowed for greater dialogue and collaboration between various organizations in defence of Venezuela's sovereignty.

U.S. and Canada Hands Off Venezuela!

While Trudeau pursues interference in Venezuela, activists and Venezuela supporters are pursuing solidarity and defence of Venezuela and the Bolivarian Revolution. For upcoming Venezuela events and initiatives stay tuned to www.firethistime.net or on Twitter @FTT_np, Facebook @FireThisTimeMovement or Instagram @FTT.Venezuela



December 1st "Vamos Venezuela" social media campaign in support of the December 6 Venezuelan elections and in defense of Venezuela's sovereignty



"We will continue to uphold our sovereign rights and our independence, to raise our voice against injustice, inequality and for the right to a more just and equitable international order."

- Pedro L. Pedroso Cuesta, Cuban Ambassador to the United Nations



Remarks by Cuban Ambassador to the United Nations, Pedro L. Pedroso Cuesta, at U.S.-Cuba Normalization conference, November 15, 2020.

Dear friends of Cuba in the United States, Canada and the rest of the world, who are participating in this important event. Your call could not have been timelier.

I extend a warm greeting to the fellow country men and women who, from Cuba, are attending and have joined the forum.

Thank you for inviting me to address you on Cuba's role and priorities within the framework of the United Nations, in this International Conference against the blockade and for the Normalization of the Relations between Cuba and the United States.

It is an honor that this is practically the first activity I attend outside the United Nations, in this new normal which has made screens an indispensable form of communication.

It was not until the triumph of the Revolution that Cuba became a truly sovereign State and that, consequently, it was able to develop an independent foreign policy in defense of its national interest, guided by the principles of anti-imperialism; internationalism, solidarity and cooperation; as well as the unrestricted respect for the principles of International Law.

From this emanates the universal dimension of an inclusive, comprehensive policy, based on the respect for sovereign equality, independence, and the right to self-determination of the peoples and inspired, at the same time, by the never-ending pursuit of peace, justice, and progress for all.

Since then, among the priorities of Cuba's foreign policy we can underline the consolidation of the Cuban Revolution and the defense of the country in all forums; the confrontation with the permanent policy of aggression of the United States in all

fields of the foreign activity; the expansion and diversification of our international relations; the development of ties of all kinds, including integration, with Latin America and the Caribbean; the development and strengthening of friendly and cooperative relations with Third World countries; and the promotion of multilateralism and the defense of the observance of the principles of international law, independence and the right to self-determination of the peoples.

All of these postulates were outlined by Fidel, in an exemplary way, in his first and masterful

who are the ones who have the most to lose in this world."

The recognition and support that Cuba arouses in the United Nations is due to the ethics of the Revolution and to a foreign policy based on principles and on the permanent advocacy for the most just causes.

The chairmanship of the Non-Aligned Movement on two occasions, the holding of the First South Summit in Havana in 2000 and, more recently, the election of Cuba as a member of the Human Rights Council

with 170 votes, despite the smear campaign mounted by the United States, show Cuba's leadership and activism in the multilateral sphere and the fairness of our struggle in favor of the interests of developing countries.

Our country's vast experience in terms of international cooperation, which has allowed more than four hundred thousand Cuban health professionals to work in the health programs of 164 countries of the South, the significant contribution of the Henry Reeve Contingent in

the fight against Ebola in Africa, and today in the fight against the most serious pandemic that has impacted humanity in a hundred years, just to mention a few examples, make Cuba a prestigious speaker in the promotion of the South-South cooperation within the United Nations system.

These 60 years of multilateral revolutionary diplomacy also record Cuba's coherent support for the cause of decolonization and the right of peoples to self-determination.

In that context, the struggle to achieve a just, comprehensive and lasting solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, which would allow the Palestinian people to exercise their right to self-determination and to establish an independent and sovereign State on the pre-1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital, and which would guarantee the right of return for the refugees, has found in Cuba one of its most unwavering supporters.



This Cuban poster reads: "In 2020, 90.3% of Covid-19 patients in Cuba have recovered."

speech before the United Nations General Assembly on September 26, 1960, whose 60th anniversary we recently celebrated.

The priority Cuba grants to the struggle for peace, to issues relating to disarmament, including nuclear disarmament, and the pressing disparities affecting the world would also be reflected in Fidel's address to the 34th Session of the General Assembly in 1979, when in his capacity as Chairman of the Non-Aligned Movement, he stated, and I quote:

"(...)Enough of the illusion that the problems of the world can be solved by nuclear weapons! Bombs may kill the hungry, the sick and the ignorant; but they cannot kill hunger, disease and ignorance. Nor can they kill the righteous rebellion of the peoples. And, in the holocaust, the rich will also die,

Cuba has also reiterated its permanent support for a just and final solution to the question of Western Sahara, in accordance with the relevant resolutions of the United Nations General Assembly and Security Council.

The recognition of Cuba's steadfast position is evident, year after year, when representatives from many countries of the world explain their vote in favor of the General Assembly Resolution which calls for the unconditional lifting of the US blockade against Cuba. This becomes especially more significant because no other country has endured for so many years such a comprehensive set of economic sanctions by any power ever, as has happened to Cuba.

That means that almost 80% of the Cuban population was born and has lived all its life under the effects of the blockade. Three generations of Cubans have suffered just for having chosen to live in the country and under the political, economic, social and cultural system that we freely decided to give ourselves in the exercise of our right to self-determination.

As it was clearly explained yesterday, the plentiful regulations and provisions issued by the United States Government against Cuba reached unprecedented levels of hostility under the current administration. The possibility of filing lawsuits under Title III of the Helms-Burton Act; the increased persecution of Cuba's financial and commercial transactions; the banning of flights from the United States to all Cuban provinces except Havana; the persecution and intimidation of companies sending fuel supplies to Cuba; and the slanderous campaign against Cuba's medical cooperation programs are some of the most distinctive examples.

No citizen or sector of the Cuban economy escapes the effects stemming from the blockade.

The blockade against Cuba constitutes the main obstacle to the development of all the potentialities of the Cuban economy, and also constitutes a massive, flagrant and systematic violation of the human rights of all Cubans.

Due to its declared purpose and the political, legal and administrative framework on which it is based, it is considered as an act of genocide in accordance with the 1948 Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide.

The genocidal nature of this policy has been intensified in the midst of the fight against the new coronavirus. The United States government has used this policy, and in particular its extraterritorial component, to deliberately deprive the Cuban people of

mechanical ventilators, masks, diagnostic kits, protective glasses, reagents and other supplies necessary for the treatment of this disease. The availability of these resources can make the difference between life and death for patients carrying the virus, as well as for the health personnel who treats them.

At the current juncture, in which humanity is facing an economic and social crisis deepened by the COVID-19 pandemic, whose dimensions no one is capable of predicting with accuracy, it is more necessary than ever that the international community calls for the lifting of the blockade imposed by the government of the United States against Cuba.

Defeating the blockade will continue to be for many years to come the main battle of Cuban foreign policy.

Hence, in May, next year Cuba will call again before the United Nations General Assembly for the lifting of the economic, commercial and financial blockade of the United States against Cuba.

We are convinced that the international community, just as it has done on 28 previous occasions, will again and overwhelmingly support this just demand by Cuba.

You are part of this battle.

We will be here to continue resisting and overcoming. We do so also with the humility of knowing that we can count on the resolute support and solidarity from all of you.

Nothing and no one can change what Cuba is and

represents: we will continue to uphold our sovereign right and our independence, to raise our voice against injustice, inequality and for the right to a more just and equitable international order.

That is our legacy. That is the path we have decided to follow.

Follow Pedro L. Pedroso Cuesta on Twitter: @PedroPedrosoC



TOP: Cuban doctors working in South Africa to combat Covid-19
MIDDLE: Cuban students at Havana's University of Information Science (UCI) protest against U.S.-sponsored attacks on the Cuban revolution December 4, 2020 **BOTTOM:** Cuban Ambassador to the United Nations, Pedro L. Pedroso Cuesta, speaking from his office at the conference on November 15, 2020

Cuba - Continued from page 24

that touched on Puerto Rico, Venezuela, and Mexico's social movements.

These three days of Cuba solidarity brought together over 1500 people from the U.S., Canada, and countries around the world. The conference culminated in a United Action Plan and Timeline to Defeat the Blockade in 2021. The action plan spans from working with elected officials at all levels to virtual and street actions and educational events in the U.S., Canada, and around the world. To read the document, visit www.us-cubanormalization.org/viva-cuba/united-action-plan-and-timeline-to-defeat-the-blockade-in-2021/

To watch any of the U.S.-Cuba Normalization events, including the concert and conference reported here, visit www.us-cubanormalization.org/viva-cuba/videos-past-webinars

For upcoming events, stay tuned to www.us-cubanormalization.org – www.vancubasolidarity.org – www.canadiannetworkoncuba.ca – www.nnoc.info.

Follow Janine on Twitter: @janinesolanki




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* Scan the QR code to watch the documentary
* Or visit: https://youtu.be/IGYHwldJ_gY

Venezuela - Continued from page 15

in South America - Argentina, Chile, Peru, Ecuador, and Colombia.

It is also significant that since the beginning of the Bolivarian revolutionary process until today, the United States has failed to isolate Venezuela from the rest of the world. Despite the inhuman and criminal unilateral sanctions imposed on them, Venezuela continues to have economic and cooperative relationships with other developing countries, especially those that have also been targeted by the U.S. government. This too, demonstrates to the rest of poor, working and oppressed people in Latin America that there is a possibility for continued development without relying on the United States, the World Bank, and International Monetary Fund (IMF).

Although the severe impact of the U.S. economic war on Venezuela cannot be completely mitigated, there are several examples of the ways that the government of Venezuela has lessened the impact on the people of Venezuela.

For example, the Russian Vaccine Sputnik V is undergoing phase 3 trials in Venezuela today. Venezuela has received more than 274 tons of medicines, medical supplies and medical equipment from China to assist in their struggle against the pandemic. Venezuela and Cuba have also continued to expand their cooperation, especially through the presence of Cuban doctors in Venezuela that have contributed to the development of Venezuela's free and universal healthcare system.

Since May 2020, Iran has also been sending tankers of gasoline to relieve the severe shortages in Venezuela brought on by U.S. sanctions aimed at destroying Venezuela's oil industry. Ten tankers are currently on their way to Venezuela, following three that arrived in October.

In this way, the people of Venezuela and the Bolivarian revolutionary government are breaking the economic sanctions by expanding friendship with other nations, especially those that are also facing severe U.S. sanctions themselves. They learned many good lessons from the example of revolutionary Cuba. With the belief and practice of revolutionary internationalism and cooperation with oppressed nations and countries, revolutionary socialist Cuba set an example for a successful anti-imperialist struggle. For whomever is interested in fighting Yankee imperialism, the example of the people of Cuba, Venezuela and the Bolivarian revolutionary process shows that this is possible, that there is an alternative to staying under the domination and pressure of the United States.

Build the Movement in Solidarity with Venezuela Today and Tomorrow

The blow that the people of Venezuela have

dealt to the domination of the United States and their imperialist allies in Latin America also gives a boost those fighting against the war at home. Poor, working and oppressed people within the "belly of the beast," are in a better position to fight for their rights when the beast is wounded.

On February 19, 2019 the Foreign Minister of Venezuela Jorge Arreaza tweeted, "The time and resources that these imperialist gentlemen spend on Bolivarian Venezuela can only mean one thing: like 200 years ago, today we are also at the geopolitical epicenter of the multipolar world in the making #HandsOffVenezuela"

Anti-imperialists and fighters for liberation must have a sense for the accuracy of Arreaza's analysis. However, it is also good that we take this further, that we understand Venezuela not just as epicentre, but also the critical point for the anti-imperialist movement in Latin America. The success and progress of the whole anti-imperialist, anti-Yankee domination movement in Latin America is dependent on the resistance of the people of Venezuela. The continuation of Bolivarian revolutionary process is the necessity for the road to freedom in Latin America.

Thus, defending Venezuela is a central task for anti-imperialists and anyone who believes that a better and just world is not only necessary, but possible. We must see with clarity that standing for Venezuela's sovereignty and self-determination is not a question of defending progressive causes, the left or socialists. Let's not get distracted. The continuity of the Bolivarian revolutionary process is the critical point for revolution and counter-revolution in Latin America and it is directly related to defending a new movement of working and oppressed people in Latin America. Anyone who believes that defeating imperialism in Latin America is an essential task will support Venezuela.

There is no doubt that the new U.S. Biden Administration understands this just as well as President Trump's. When the new Venezuelan National Assembly takes office on January 5, 2020 – they will cement the victory of the December 6 elections and begin to further the Bolivarian revolutionary process.

As people living in the United States and Canada, and around the world, we must also take on a new responsibility – and redouble our efforts to end the U.S. blockade and war on Venezuela!

In the words of Comandante Hugo Chavez "Let the dogs of the empire bark, that's their job; ours is to battle to achieve the true liberation of our people."

Follow Alison Bodine on Twitter:
@Alisoncolette

Cuba wins a significant victory at the UN Human Rights Council

In October 2020, Cuba was newly elected to the United Nations Human Rights Council. This is an important victory for Cuba as the U.S. government and its imperialist allies often criticize what they call "Cuba's Human Rights record." They often accuse Cuba of jailing political opponents and censorship (see "Who's behind the anti-Cuban show in San Isidro?" on page 10 in this issue of FTT). The most recent campaign of lies and political doublespeak by the U.S. government has attempted to label the work of the Cuban Henry Reeve International Medical Brigades, which have sent Cuban medical professionals to 39 different countries to help fight against Covid-19, as "victims of human trafficking." Despite the Trump administration's best efforts, the world community has seen through this slander campaign against Cuba.

Cuba often re-frames the question of human rights – should they just be political rights? Or should this also include rights to clean water, health care for all, education for all, proper food, a home, and a job for all be considered human rights? Indeed, these are the human rights demanded by poor and working people throughout the world – including the so-called "first world," and are completely neglected. Throughout countries like the U.S., Canada, England, France, etc., the wealthy minority are making billions of dollars during a global pandemic, while the mass majority are either dying in thousands of this virus every day or they are struggling to make rent, provide food, pay the bills, and find a job or keep jobs that are being lost in the thousands every day.

Fire This Time Newspaper is reprinting a statement by Cuba's Mission to the United Nations about Cuba's triumphant election to the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC).

New York, 13 October 2020. Despite the United States aggressive campaign against

Cuba's candidature to the Human Rights Council, the United Nations General Assembly elected Cuba as a member of the United Nations Human Rights Council, for 2021-2023 term, with 170 of the 193 possible votes.

The Human Rights Council was established on 15 March 2006. It consists of 47 Member States of the United Nations, which are elected directly and by secret ballot by the Member States.

Cuba, a founding member of the Council, served for two consecutive terms in the body until 2012 and then for two more terms, between 2014 and 2019.

In said scenario, it has submitted resolutions on the right to food; cultural rights and cultural diversity; and the effects of

external debt on the enjoyment of human rights, particularly economic, social and cultural rights, among other rights. The active participation of Cuba in the body has also resulted, *inter alia*, in the renewal of the mandate of the independent

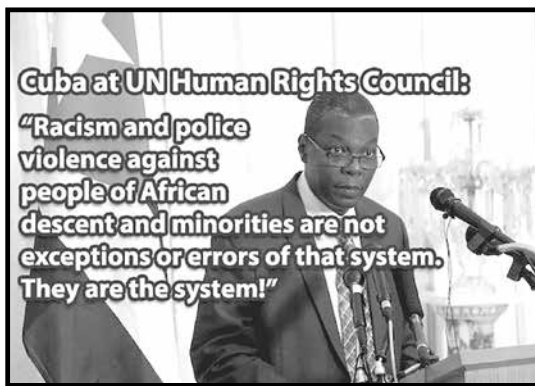
expert on promotion of a democratic and equitable international order.

With this new election, the Caribbean island reaffirms its commitment to an international order based on inclusion, social justice, human dignity, mutual understanding and promotion and respect for cultural diversity.

At the same time, it scuttles the current maneuvers of the United States administration that does not miss the opportunity to slander the exemplary performance of Cuba in terms of human rights.

The Caribbean island will continue to defend dialogue and cooperation with its own voice, in favor of the rights of all people.

From: <http://misiones.minrex.gob.cu>



Pedro L. Pedroso Cuesta, Cuban Ambassador to the UN
Design from Stansfield Smith

OUR HERITAGE



Clara Zetkin
(1857-1933)

German Marxist theorist, leader, activist,
and organizer of the first International
Women's Day in 1911

"In the Russian Revolution, we see more than merely the objective and subjective factors that grew up, living and weaving, on Russian soil. We see in the Russian Revolution the impact of economic, social, and revolutionary tendencies and forces of international capitalism, of bourgeois society around the world. That is already evident in the fact that the revolution was unleashed by a world war that was no accident but the unavoidable result of the combination and interpenetration of world economic and political conditions under the rule of finance-capital, of imperialist capitalism. In the Russian Revolution, we see the expression of all the economic, political, and social conditions created by world capitalism both inside and outside Russia. We also see, crystallized within the Russian Revolution, the concentrated historical understanding and revolutionary will of the proletariat of all countries. International revolutionary socialism, together with the intellectual and moral forces that it aroused and schooled, became living and effective in the Russian Revolution.

The Russian Revolution is thus a great demonstration on a world-historical scale of the vigour, power, and irresistible nature of the social factor in historical development, that is, the understanding, will, action, and struggle of the proletarian masses, who aim to bring down capitalism and realise communism."

From: *Toward the United Front, Proceedings of the Fourth Congress of the Communist International, 1922. Session 8-Monday, 13 November 1922*
"Five Years of the Russian Revolution and Perspective for the World-Revolution." Page 307

Edited and translated by John Riddell
www.johnriddell.com
Published by www.haymarketbooks.org

to Saudi Arabia in the last four months is three times higher than the total amount donated by the government in aid for Yemen in over five years! Such hypocrisy!

In addition to profiting from the war, Canada also joins other Western countries in disregarding the Yemeni refugee situation. While hundreds of thousands of Yemenis are still stranded in transit countries, Canada has only accepted 124 refugees from Yemen between January to June 2020. What a shame!

No to the War on Yemen

The hypocrisy of countries like the U.K., the U.S., and Canada is so revolting. As long as they continue their political and military support for the Saudi-led war on Yemen, there will be no solution to the country's humanitarian or political situation. We must hold our respective governments accountable and demand an immediate end to the war and that they open the borders to Yemeni refugees and grant them asylum. The solution to Yemeni political problems has to come locally from diverse Yemeni voices, without any military and foreign interference. The Yemeni people deserve a future in peace and prosperity.

Let's add our voices on January 25, 2020 for the global day of action against the war on Yemen organized by the Yemeni Alliance Committee and other anti-war and humanitarian organizations from across the world. Fire This Time Movement for Social Justice endorses and supports this critical international initiative led by the Yemeni community, and we will actively build it. For more information on the campaign, you can read the international joint statement against Yemen's war on page 9 of this issue. Let's unite our voices to demand an end to Yemen's brutal and cruel war and blockade. Saudi Arabia and U.A.E Stop Bombing Yemen! U.S., U.K., and all imperialists Hands Off Yemen!

Follow Azza on Twitter: @Azza_R14



as a show of force. The standoff eventually ended in a stalemate. The troops and tanks left, and development in Kanesatake stopped temporarily, but the land was not returned to the Mohawks." After 30 years, this history needs to be taught and recognized, especially in non-Indigenous Canada.

Understanding this event 30 years ago gives important context to ongoing protests such as: the Wet'suwet'en standing against the CGL pipeline, Mi'kmaq defending their fishing rights, and the 1492 Land Back Lane occupation of the McKenzie Meadows development. It shows us that capitalist state violence against Indigenous people is not an accident or based on misunderstanding. This capitalist-colonialist state's enforced brutality is how settler-colonial imperialist Canada was built and how it is has developed into a so-called 'first-world' country. This history also reminds us of the limitations of ideas like 'reconciliation' when giving land back and self-determination are not part of the conversation.

In 2018 Carol Off, the host of CBC's "As It Happens," interviewed Ellen Gabriel, who was the spokesperson of the People of the Longhouse and the Mohawk/Kanien'kehá:ka warriors during the Oka Crisis.

Off asked Gabriel, "It seems unlikely that any city council would approve a plan to build an 18-hole golf course on disputed Indian land, where there is a graveyard, where there are sacred pines. But we've talked to a lot of Indigenous people across the country, who

have vowed to block any pipelines to their land. What do you expect that we're going to see over the next months and years?"

Gabriel responded powerfully, "Well, hopefully — this is my ideal situation — there will be citizens of Canada who will put pressure on their government to uphold the honour of the Crown, to enact the principles of free, prior and informed consent." Gabriel continued, "You know, these problems are not problems that we've created — these are problems that have gone under the status quo of imperialism that if we stand in the way of Canada's prosperity, we're dispensable. When government only listens to the corporations, not only are Indigenous people in trouble, but the society as a whole is in trouble because we are all experiencing climate change. So, let's work together."

Let us take Gabriel's powerful words to heart. As we learn about Canada's past injustices, we must reflect on how they will shape our struggle and demands in the future, how both Indigenous and non-Indigenous people can better support Indigenous nations across Canada in their current and ongoing struggles for fundamental rights, dignity, and self-determination.

Until liberation is achieved our struggle will continue. As Che Guevara said, "¡Venceremos!" We Will Win!

Follow Tamara on Twitter: @THans01

To learn more about the uprising at Kanehsatà:ke / Oka Crisis, please consider viewing the following documentaries:

- "Kahnesatake: 270 Years of Resistance" the groundbreaking documentary from Alanis Obomsawin, an Abenaki filmmaker who spent 78-days filming the standoff: https://youtu.be/Mhvx51s_ZV8
- "Rocks at Whiskey Trench" also from Alanis Obomsawin: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V3cYG2vORYc>
- "Legend of the Storm" from Roxann Whitebean, a member of Kahnawake who six years was old during the uprising at Kanehsatà:ke / Oka Crisis: <https://vimeo.com/120371557>



A mob of angry white people threw stones and debris at Mohawk people as a convoy of 75 cars, mostly women, children and the elderly left the Kahnawake to cross the Mercier Bridge on August 28, 1990. Taken from the documentary "Rocks At Whisky Trench."



UPCOMING SOCIAL JUSTICE WEBINARS



THURSDAY DECEMBER 10, 2020
Cuba & Fidel Castro's Contribution to the African People's
Operation Carlota 45 yrs. Afterwards
1pm Pacific Time / 4pm Eastern Time
National Network on Cuba & Alliance for Global Justice
www.nnoc.info

MONDAY DECEMBER 14, 2020
The National and Regional Impact of Parliamentary Elections in Venezuela
5pm Pacific Time / 8pm Eastern Time
Council on Hemispheric Affairs (COHA)
www.coha.org

THURSDAY DECEMBER 17, 2020
End the U.S. Blockade on Cuba!
24 Hour Global Virtual Picket
Starts - 12:00am Pacific Time
Canadian Network on Cuba (CNC)
www.canadiannetworkoncuba.ca
>> This action is being organized with the full support of many individuals and organizations including: Instituto Cubano de Amistad con los Pueblos (ICAP), El Movimiento Colombiano de Solidaridad con Cuba (MCSC), The Ukrainian Committee "Stop the blockade of Cuba", The U.S.-Cuba Normalization Conference Organizing Committee, Australia-Cuba Friendship Society WA, Table de concertation et de solidarité Québec - Cuba, Associazione Nazionale di Amicizia Italia-Cuba, & The National Network on Cuba (NNOC) - U.S.

TUESDAY DECEMBER 22, 2020
What's Next in the Fight to Stop the TMX Pipeline?
7pm Pacific Time / 10pm Eastern Time
Climate Convergence
www.climateconvergence.org

SATURDAY DECEMBER 31, 2020
Starts - 12:00am Pacific Time
Continental Twitter Storm for Cuba marking the 62nd anniversary of the triumph of the Cuban Revolution!
Post messages in support of Cuba and the Cuban Revolution on social media
Use hashtags: #ElMundoAbrazaACuba
<https://twitter.com/CubaPlataforma>

SUNDAY JANUARY 17, 2021
Virtual Picket Action to End the U.S. Blockade on Cuba Now!
4pm Pacific Time / 7pm Eastern Time
Canadian Network on Cuba (CNC)
www.canadiannetworkoncuba.ca

MONDAY JANUARY 25, 2021
The World Says: No to War on Yemen!
Global Day of Action - Webinar
11am Pacific Time / 2pm Eastern Time
www.facebook.com/YACofCalifornia/

THURSDAY JANUARY 28, 2021
Jose Marti - Revolutionary, Visionary, Leader
4pm Pacific Time / 7pm Eastern Time
Che Guevara Volunteer Work Brigade
www.canadiannetworkoncuba.ca



A documentary about childhood and adolescence in Cuba, a debut feature by young Cuban filmmakers Syara Salado Massip and Víctor Villalba, produced by Resumen Latinoamericano.

Scan the QR code to watch:



Or watch at:

<https://youtu.be/ArEEx8jFgGQ>

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firethistimecanada@yandex.com

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Political Editor:

Ali Yerevani - editorftt@mail.com @aliyerevani

Editor: Tamara Hansen @thans01

Editorial Board:

Tamara Hansen, Alison Bodine, Janine Solanki, Azza Rojbi, Thomas Davies, Ali Yerevani

Layout & Design:

Azza Rojbi, Tamara Hansen

Contributors:

Raul Antonio Capote

Copy Editors:

Tamara Hansen & Alison Bodine

Publicity & Distribution Coordinator:

Thomas Davies

Production Manager:

Azza Rojbi

Contact:

Phone (778) 938-1557

Email infoftt@mail.com

Mail PO Box 21607 Vancouver BC, V5L 5G3

Subscriptions

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Send to: PO Box 21607 Vancouver BC, V5L 5G3

Distribution

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Phone x (778) 889-7664

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By Janine Solanki

On August 23, 1960, the Cuban Federation of Women (FMC) held its founding meeting led by Vilma Espín Guillois, a leader of the Cuban revolution and the eternal president of the Federation of Cuban Women. 60 years later the FMC has become one of the world's largest feminist organizations. With 4 million members and the involvement of over 90% of Cuban women over the age of 14. The FMC continues to develop policies and programs aimed at achieving full equality for women in all spheres of Cuban society.

This significant anniversary has been celebrated in Cuba with the FMC and by solidarity organizations around the world. Vancouver Communities in Solidarity with Cuba (VCSC) participated in many of these events, and also brought people together online for a webinar of inspiring speakers, music and poetry to celebrate 60 years of the FMC on August 20.

The event host Tamara Hansen, coordinator of VCSC, started the event in both English and Spanish, and introduced Coast Salish Elder and long time Indigenous activist Kelly White, and Jackie Hans of the Haida nation.

Tamara then explained how the FMC was a vital part of what Comandante Fidel Castro famously called "A revolution within the revolution" led by Cuban women. The program continued with Azza Rojbi, coordinator of Friends of Cuba Against the US Blockade – Vancouver, who read a poem by Nancy Morejon, a renowned Afro-Cuban poet.

Participants then heard video greetings direct from Cuba, from Teresa Amarelle Boué, General Secretary of the FMC; Sandra Ramirez Rodriguez, Director of the North America Desk of the Cuban Institute of Friendship with the Peoples (ICAP); and Gretel Marante Roset, the International Foreign Affairs representative at the national office of the FMC. Teresa, Sandra and Gretel spoke to the importance of the FMC and the role of women in the Cuban revolution and today.

The next speaker was Janine Solanki, national coordinator of the Che Guevara Volunteer Work Brigade to Cuba, who read from an interview with Vilma Espín, and then invited people to join the 27th Che Brigade in 2021. Participants then were treated to the music of Cuban rapper and poet Magia López Cabrera, who is half of the phenomenal duo Obsesion de Cuba. Her lyrics were then translated to English by Alison Bodine from Friends of Cuba Against the US Blockade – Vancouver, so that all could fully appreciate Magia's poetry.

The featured speaker was Her Excellency Josefina Vidal, Cuban Ambassador to Canada. Josefina Vidal shared details on how Cuban women are leading the future of Cuba throughout Cuban society, and later answered many questions from participants.

The program continued with Stephany Mazuera Vargas. Stephany is originally from Columbia and became a doctor after studying at the Latin American School of Medicine (ELAM) in Havana, Cuba. Through her poetry she shared the impact Cuba had on her as a medical student.

This event was a beautiful celebration, and also an opportunity to learn about the inspiring example Cuba and the FMC provides to struggles for equality and justice in Canada and around the world.

To find out about upcoming events with VCSC visit www.vancubasolidarity.com, find VCSC on Facebook @VanCubaSolidarity or Twitter and Instagram @VanCuba_VCSC

The Cuban Federation of Women Celebrates 60 Years of Inspiring the World

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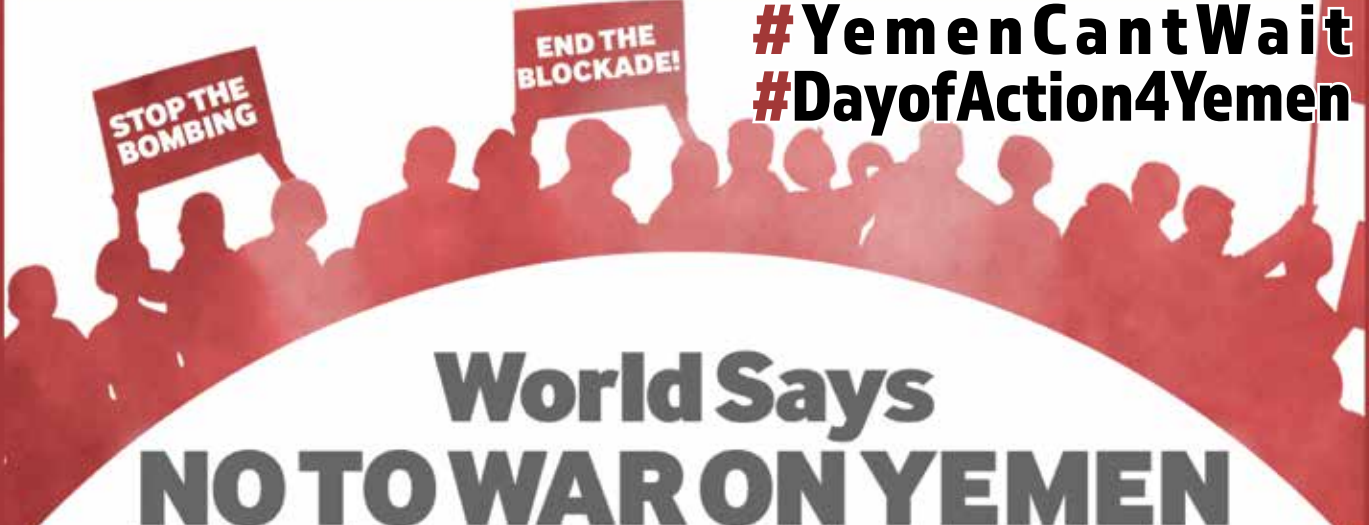
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