

WORKERS WORLD NEWS



ALTERNATIVES TO GLOBALISATION

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GLEBELANDS AND THE DEVOLUTION OF DEMOCRACY – “WE JUST WANT SERVICE DELIVERY AND JOBS”



Photo: Vanessa Burger

Hostels were established under the apartheid system to house migrant labour close to urban industrial nodes. These vast, formerly single-sex, housing complexes became hubs of crime and violence, their communities marginalised and used as power blocs from which to wage wars – initially between the ANC and Inkatha, later, as election fodder. Side-lined from service delivery and neglected by political leaders; circumstances have changed little for hostel dwellers since the so called ‘dawn of democracy.’ At Glebelands Hostel in Umlazi, south of Durban - heart of the ANC’s powerful and contested eThekweni region - conditions have got a whole lot worse.

An historic stronghold of the ANC, Glebelands has become known as ‘the place of death.’ Whether you are a mayor or hostel dweller, if you are perceived as an impediment to a lucrative tender, sought after government position, or popular taxi route - you will end up dead.

Regarding the root causes of Glebelands violence, certain facts stand tall above a sea of politically-orchestrated disinformation.

It is fact that, in the 1990s, Glebelands residents never received the title deeds to the rooms of which they were promised ownership. Later, when the eThekweni Municipality took over hostel administration from the provincial

Department of Human Settlements – without consultation – a Hostel Policy was implemented that required residents to pay rent.

This lack of consultation brought traditional community structures – the hostel block committees – into direct conflict with the new administration, which proved increasingly remote, inflexible and unwilling to engage in constructive dialogue that could have resolved many of what have become intractable problems.

Rising unemployment caused by the advent of labour broking and the failure of former president Thabo Mbeki’s economic policies to ‘trickle down’ beyond the pockets of politically

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connected elites, put added financial stress on residents now struggling to pay rent. Attempts by Glebelands residents to counter unemployment, by establishing community cooperatives that could undertake basic hostel maintenance, failed to receive support from the municipality. Instead contracts were awarded from the municipality's 'preferred supplier' database – which usually favoured politically connected contractors.

The reason for the rent boycott that followed – and which remains largely in place across Durban's hostels – is visibly obvious in the poorly maintained buildings and service delivery failure that led to a R10m water wastage debt that residents refused to pay.

It has been proven in numerous audit reports that eThekweni suffers a more than 80-year backlog in the provision of affordable housing. Systemic corruption and incompetency is no secret within local government. Recent research has drawn clear parallels between municipalities where corruption is rife and assassinations. The eThekweni Municipality has the highest number of assassinations in South Africa and the Auditor General recently withdrew staff investigating corruption after they received death threats.

It can be no coincidence that the ANC's most contested regions – Moses Mabhida, Harry Gwala, Lower South Coast and eThekweni – have suffered the highest number of assassinations. Many branches within these regions – including Glebelands – were flagged in Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma's 2011 branch audit report as riddled with irregularities, intimidation and violence. The ANC, however, failed to put its house in order which has led to the assassination of around 100 party leaders – mostly from these contested regions.

Regional and provincial ANC structures failed to act when Glebelands ward 76 brought a vote of no confidence against their councillor, Robert Mzobe, and his branch executive committee. Complaints made via the requisite party channels were consistently ignored and when all else failed, the community burned down Mzobe's office. Immediately thereafter, council allocated Mzobe the most expensive private security detail of any government official of that level in the country.

WITHIN MONTHS THE KILLING BEGAN.

The vast majority of Glebelands murder victims and evictees were block committee members or community leaders who opposed Mzobe. In 2014 a group of Mzobe's supporters led by a notorious hostel warlord and known hijacker, handed a memorandum to government officials; accompanied by a list of names of those deemed 'unwanted at Glebelands'. Most names were of block committee members and their associates who had mobilised for improved service delivery and had accused Mzobe of corruption and nepotism since 2011. They were accused of 'selling beds' – the illicit sale or rental of room space.

While some block committees were undoubtedly 'selling beds,' as one community leader put it: "How come government is given a list of people 'not wanted' here, then all those people are killed? If you say you are not happy with the councillor, then you are killed, who killed them?"

After years of killings, several hitmen and a resident police officer, long accused of orchestrating the murders - allegations strongly refuted by politically tainted provincial police management - have finally been arrested and charged for conspiring to commit 19 murders, attempted murders and other crimes. According to court papers the accused's victims were "mostly persons who threatened to frustrate or interfere with their aim of assuming control... of payments made by dwellers of the hostel."

BUT THESE ARE JUST THE FOOT SOLDIERS.

While analysts and the media hype up Ramaphosa's 'clean deal,' KZN has devolved

into a cesspit of political intrigue, ethnic chauvinism and instability. Service delivery at Glebelands has all but ground to a halt. Buildings severely damaged in an October 2017 storm remain roofless, unrepaired and unliveable, compounding the overcrowding in undamaged blocks. A budget for critically needed repairs appears to have evaporated and a strike by cleaning staff remains unresolved after more than four months, leaving the hostel filthier than ever. Government departments are failing to implement remedial actions required by the Public Protector's 2016/7 intervention.

HOW COME GOVERNMENT IS GIVEN A LIST OF PEOPLE 'NOT WANTED' HERE, THEN ALL THOSE PEOPLE ARE KILLED?

A longstanding Glebelands resident and religious minister summed up: "If your government forces you to live in conditions such as these – worse than animals – they cannot have respect for your life. How then can you respect the lives of others if no one respects yours? It therefore becomes easy for a young boy with no future and no hope to take a little money to take a life. They know they will not live long."

While the recent prosecution of hostel hitmen may herald a glimmer of light on the law enforcement front, President Cyril Ramaphosa's 'new dawn' is unlikely to bring about the radical structural shifts in governance, service delivery roll out and political accountability that is critically needed to enact the ANC's elusive promise of a 'better life for all' at Glebelands.

As one resident recently put it: "We are sick and tired of these politicians. We don't care who is president – we just want service delivery and jobs."



Photo: Vanessa Burger

GAZA AND THE WARSAW GHETTO

During the World War Two Nazi invasion and colonisation of Poland, 400 000 Jewish people dispossessed of their homes and land across the country were forced into a small area of Warsaw and fenced in by the occupying army. There they lived for almost three years, cramped onto a tiny piece of land – Warsaw Ghetto.

Warsaw Ghetto was an open air prison for the Jewish people of Poland – walls were built around it and manned by hated SS snipers. Anyone attempting to break out was shot, food rations were limited to daily calorie counts that ensured starvation and the German army used collaborators to brutally police the population internally. Accommodation consisted of bombed out buildings. Unemployment was rife and those ‘lucky’ enough to have jobs were employed inside German ruling class-owned factories as cheap labour, including slave labour. 100 000 people died of disease and starvation.

In 1943, the population rose up. In response the German military raised the Ghetto and sent the population to concentration camps, where the majority were gassed once no longer useful as labourers to the Reich. After the War, the world swore that atrocities like the Ghetto would not happen again and that poisonous nationalism, like Nazism, that looked to imprison and brutalise entire populations would be eradicated. The sad reality is such sentiments were soon forgotten or ignored by sections of the world’s ruling classes (capitalists, politicians and top state officials) and again today a population of almost 1.5 million people is being kept in what amounts to an open air prison based solely on their race/ethnicity – that prison is Gaza.

GAZA: TODAY’S OPEN AIR PRISON

While not exactly the same as Warsaw Ghetto, there are striking similarities. The Israeli ruling class has systematically used state violence to dispossess Palestinians of their homes and land since 1948. The vast majority of Palestinians in Gaza are descendants of families that were ethnically cleansed from their land by the Israeli ruling class as part of violently building the Israeli state in Palestine.

Consequently Gaza became one of the most densely populated areas in the world – over 1.5 million people are crammed into an area only 40 km long and 12 km wide at its widest point. Since 2007, the Israeli Defence Force has been besieging/blockading Gaza and the Israeli and Egyptian states have built an 11 meter high wall around the entire Gaza. The Israeli state has also cleared out another 300 metres and

erected a fence to stop any Palestinians being able to reach the wall, let alone breach it. Each day the Israeli military stations snipers and tanks at the fence, poised and willing to kill the ‘other’ in the name of the Israeli state.

The only people allowed to exit Gaza are a handful of merchants and people with life-threatening medical conditions – even they require permission from the Israeli state, which is often denied. In 2017, 1920 people applied to exit Gaza for life-saving medical treatment; only 951 were given permission.

The Israeli state controls what goods can enter or leave Gaza. It set a daily calorie count for each person in Gaza – just enough to ensure there is no starvation – and only that amount of food is allowed in. No fuel or spare parts for vehicles are allowed in and even vital medicines are limited. To smuggle goods in people have built tunnels under the Egyptian border, but these are routinely bombed by Israeli jets or tear gassed by the Egyptian army.

The Israeli state controls Gaza’s water and access to electricity. To subjugate Palestinians further, the Israeli state created a situation whereby only 4% of water in Gaza is fit for human consumption. Worse the Israeli army conducted two full-scale wars against Gaza, in 2009 and 2014. Almost all infrastructure was destroyed – with over 90% of buildings hit by bombs or shells at some point. The death tolls of these operations were high; in 2009, 1417 Palestinians were killed and another 2104 in 2014 – most civilians. More recently, over 100 unarmed people were killed by Israeli army snipers for demonstrating for the right to return to the land they have been dispossessed of by the Israeli state since 1948. As many as 10 000 people have been killed by the Israeli army in Gaza since 2007 when the blockade began.

The blockade has destroyed Gaza’s economy. Before, the Israeli ruling class used workers from Gaza for cheap labour – much like the apartheid ruling class exploited the black population as extremely cheap labour. Under the blockade even this has largely ended and unemployment is a massive problem.

WHY IS THE ISRAELI RULING CLASS DOING THIS?

The Israeli ruling class is driven by a rabid form of nationalism – Zionism. Since 1948 the Israeli ruling class, through the state it created, has dispossessed the Palestinians of land as part of its colonialism. Since 1948, when the Israeli state was established through intense violence against Palestinians, its expansion has been backed by the US and European states – largely because of the horrors of the holocaust. The US state allows the Israeli state’s atrocities because it furthers US imperialism in the Middle East. The US state desires control and influence over the Middle East’s oil resources and Israel is a willing partner.

THE NEED TO RESIST ZIONIST NATIONALISM

To fight this rabid nationalism, Zionism, and the brutal state it has spawned (headed by a ruling class that exploits both Palestinian and Jewish working classes) is not anti-Semitic. It is rather the task of anyone that believes in human decency and egalitarianism over toxic nationalism and its hatred based on race, ethnicity or religion.

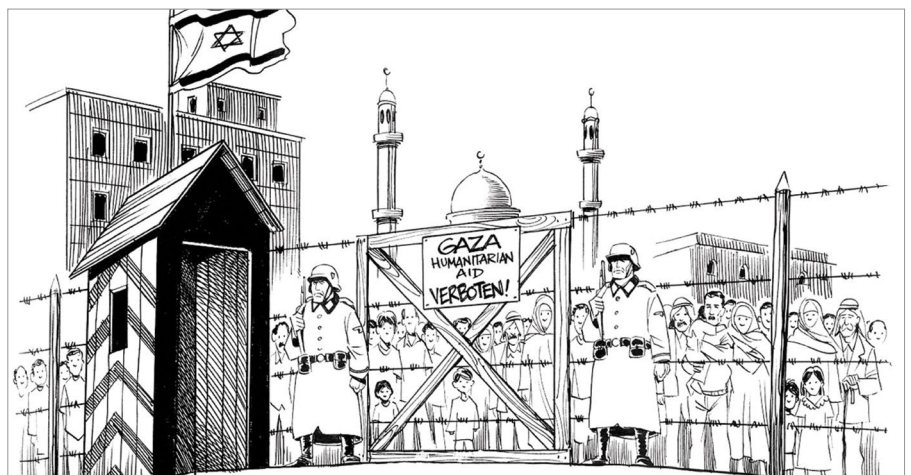


Photo: “The Gaza Ghetto”, by Carlos Latuff

BOYCOTT, DIVESTMENT, SANCTIONS (BDS)



Photo: "Free Palestine Protest in Whitehall London against Netanyahu's visit February 6 2017", <https://www.flickr.com/photos/zongo/>

Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions (BDS) is a Palestinian-led movement for freedom, justice and equality. BDS upholds the simple principle that Palestinians are entitled to the same rights as the rest of humanity.

Israel is occupying and colonising Palestinian land, discriminating against Palestinian citizens of Israel and denying Palestinian refugees the right to return to their homes. Inspired by the South African anti-apartheid movement, the BDS call urges action to pressure Israel to comply with international law.

BDS is now a vibrant global movement made up of unions, academic associations, churches and grassroots movements across the world. Eleven years since its launch, BDS is having a major impact and is effectively challenging international support for Israeli apartheid and settler-colonialism.

BDS is an inclusive, anti-racist human rights movement that is opposed on principle to all forms of discrimination, including anti-semitism and Islamophobia.

ONGOING INJUSTICE

For nearly seventy years, Israel has denied Palestinians their fundamental rights and has refused to comply with international law.

Israel maintains a regime of settler colonialism, apartheid and occupation over the Palestinian people. This is only possible because of

international support. Governments fail to hold Israel to account, while corporations and institutions across the world help Israel to oppress Palestinians.

Because those in power refuse to act to stop this injustice, Palestinian civil society has called for a global citizens' response of solidarity with the Palestinian struggle for freedom, justice and equality.

WHAT ARE BOYCOTTS, DIVESTMENT AND SANCTIONS?

BOYCOTTS involve withdrawing support for Israel and Israeli and international companies that are involved in the violation of Palestinian human rights, as well as complicit Israeli sporting, cultural and academic institutions.



DIVESTMENT campaigns urge banks, local councils, churches, pension funds and universities to withdraw investments from all Israeli companies and from international companies involved in violating Palestinian rights.

SANCTIONS campaigns pressure governments to fulfil their legal obligation to hold Israel to account including by ending military trade, free-trade agreements and expelling Israel from international forums such as the UN and FIFA.

THE CALL FOR BOYCOTT, DIVESTMENT AND SANCTIONS

In 2005, Palestinian civil society organisations called for boycotts, divestment and sanctions (BDS) as a form of non-violent pressure on Israel.

The BDS movement was launched by 170 Palestinian unions, political parties, refugee networks, women's organisations, professional associations, popular resistance committees and other Palestinian civil society bodies.

Inspired by the South African anti-apartheid movement, the Palestinian BDS call urges nonviolent pressure on Israel until it complies with international law by meeting three demands:

1. Ending its occupation and colonization of all Arab lands and dismantling the Wall

International law recognises the West Bank including East Jerusalem, Gaza and the Syrian Golan Heights as occupied by Israel. As part of its military occupation, Israel steals land and forces Palestinians into ghettos, surrounded by checkpoints, settlements and watchtowers and an illegal apartheid Wall. Israel has imposed a medieval siege on Gaza, turning it into the largest open air prison in the world. Israel also regularly carries out large-scale assaults on Gaza that are widely condemned as constituting war crimes and crimes against humanity.

2. Recognizing the fundamental rights of the Arab-Palestinian citizens of Israel to full equality

One-fifth of Israel's citizens are Palestinians who remained inside the armistice lines after

1948. They are subjected to a system of racial discrimination enshrined in more than 50 laws that impact every aspect of their lives. The Israeli government continues to forcibly displace Palestinian communities in Israel from their land. Israeli leaders routinely and openly incite racial violence against them.

3. Respecting, protecting and promoting the rights of Palestinian refugees to return to their homes and properties as stipulated in UN Resolution 194

Since its violent establishment in 1948 through the ethnic cleansing of more than half of the indigenous people of Palestine, Israel has set out to control as much land and uproot as many Palestinians as it can. As a result of this systematic forced displacement, there are now more than 7.25 million Palestinian refugees. They are denied their right to return to their homes simply because they are not Jewish.

A GLOBAL MOVEMENT

The BDS movement is supported by unions, churches, NGOs and movements representing millions across every continent and there are vibrant BDS campaigns in communities across the world. Progressive Jewish groups play an important role in the movement.

GROWING IMPACT

BDS aims to end international support for Israeli violations of international law by forcing companies, institutions and governments to

INSPIRED BY THE SOUTH AFRICAN ANTI-APARTHEID MOVEMENT, THE BDS CALL URGES ACTION TO PRESSURE ISRAEL TO COMPLY WITH INTERNATIONAL LAW.

change their policies. As Israeli companies and institutions become isolated, Israel will find it more difficult to oppress Palestinians.

BDS campaigns also raise awareness about how Israel oppresses the Palestinian people.

The growth and success of the BDS movement sends a clear message to Palestinians and to world governments that people around the world are increasingly unwilling to accept Israel's oppression of Palestinians.

To contribute to the growing impact of the global BDS movement in the struggle for Palestinian freedom, justice and equality, contact BDS South Africa:

 [facebook.com/bdssouthafrica](https://www.facebook.com/bdssouthafrica)

 administrator@bdssouthafrica.com

 www.bdssouthafrica.com



Photo: "Flag dripping blood", <https://www.flickr.com/photos/mikecogh/>



THE ZIONIST THEFT

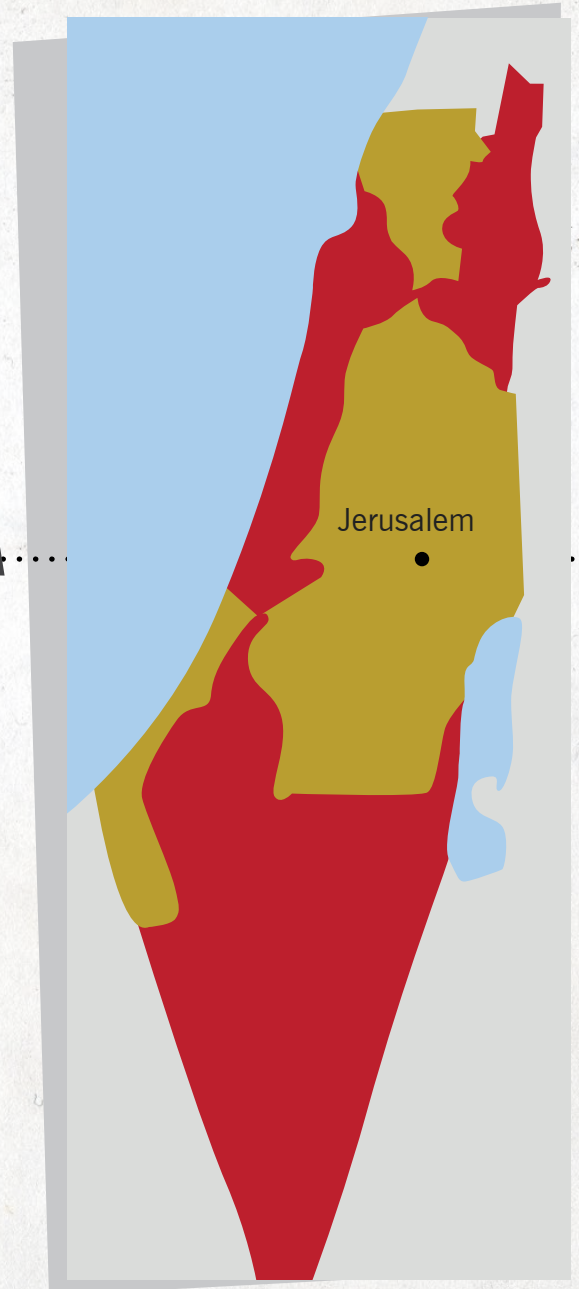
1946

World War 2 ends,
Zionist settlement
begins



1947

The United Nations
Partition Plan divides
Palestine



KEY

 Zionist land  Palestinian land

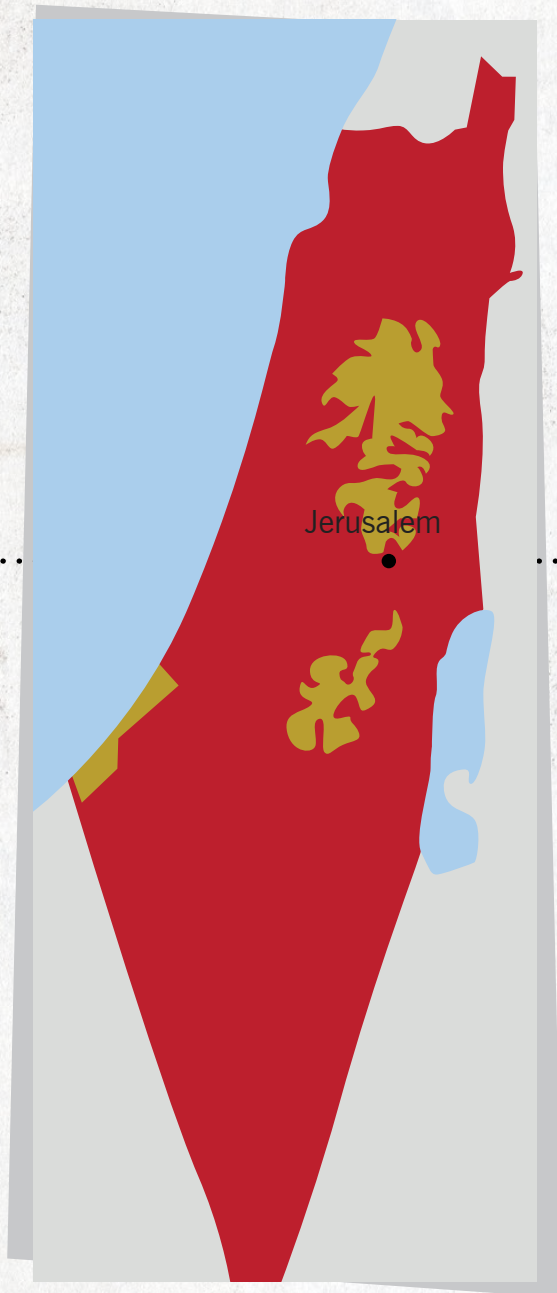
OF PALESTINIAN LAND

1948/9

Israel is formed, occupies 77% of the land and declares Independence

2012

Israel launches massive air attacks on Gaza



KEY

-  Israeli land
-  Palestinian land



RESIST-OCCUPY-PRODUCE: LESSONS FROM FACTORY TAKE-OVERS AND WORKER COOPERATIVES IN ARGENTINA

In Argentina economic crisis saw a collapse in working class conditions. High unemployment, low wages, attacks on social services: familiar things in South Africa. But in Argentina, from the 1990s, something very different started happening.

RESIST-OCCUPY-PRODUCE

The “recovered factories” movement saw hundreds of closed factories reopened by the workers, run democratically, creating jobs and helping working class communities. For example, the former Zanon tile factory was reopened under workers’ control. It created jobs, restored dignity and helped build a community clinic. Many of these worker-run sites are still running; linked together through two national networks.

This experience shows the limitations of protest – and the need to discuss alternative production sites. To move beyond saying what we do not want, and making limited demands, to creating something new. Workers in Argentina helped show an alternative from below. They rewrote the economics textbook. The experience shows the immense role and creativity of the productive classes. That it is possible to produce for need, not profit. Something totally different to the two false choices we are given today: top-down exploitative wage labour under private companies (and privatisation) or state companies (and nationalisation).

SELF-ACTIVITY NOT ELECTIONS

It represents a profound challenge to the system that leaves factories closed, while people need the goods, jobs and services they produce; that closes brickyards and hotels while people are homeless. It shows how democratic discussion and assemblies, choices based on meeting needs rather than profiting can work – better than the current system’s mess.

BEING EMBEDDED

The “recovered factory movement” also shows such alternative production sites must form alliances with working class and poor movements, including unions, community movements, unemployed movements, and popular struggles. They must be embedded in the popular classes’ movements, for protection and for building struggles. In 2003, community protests plus a strike by a union federation prevented Zanon being evicted. And in 2007, Zanon workers joined mass protests after police killed a demonstrator.

Embedded like this, alternative production sites can also be somewhat protected from the logic of capitalism, which forces wages down and imposes authoritarian management systems. But “recovered factories” still exist within capitalism. They face ongoing pressures: for example, the Argentinean government refuses to provide contracts and bans bank loans; cheaper tiles can be sourced elsewhere. Unless they have support from movements that creates breathing space to operate differently to capitalist and state firms, they can either collapse, degenerate into worker-run capitalist firms, or get captured by states, and forced to operate on business lines.

SOLIDARITY PRICING

Such embeddedness enables a situation where customers – especially larger organisations, like unions – can pay “solidarity” prices. This mean paying above market prices, to protect them from capitalist market pressures, and state regulations, that otherwise force alternative production sites to cut wages and jobs, and replace democracy with authoritarian management.

Embedding alternative production sites within mass movements also helps avoid a situation where their survival rests upon support from wealthy strata, who can afford higher prices, and pay them as a matter of conscience – while the masses, who cannot pay these premiums, rather choose cheaper products made in capitalist sweatshops. In this situation alternative production depends on class inequalities to survive – on ethical “middle class” consumerism – rather than on class struggle.

AFRICAN EXAMPLES

We have wonderful examples of such solidarity in 1980s South Africa. The National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) set up cooperatives among retrenched workers, while the National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa (NUMSA) did the same among workers fired during a major strike. These cooperatives were given contracts to supply union t-shirts and similar goods. The Food and Canning Workers Union (FCWU) ran its own medical aid in the 1970s and 1980s, using this to set up a workers’ clinic. Union aid kept these afloat, and showed workers an alternative.



Today, sadly, unions generally use the cheapest products, usually from union-bashing, worker-repressing capitalist sweatshops; and, for commissions, sell members medical aid and insurance funds, which are invested in capitalist firms.

Developing and demonstrating real alternatives is possible, but requires class-struggle politics. Union investment funds should stop being invested in profit-making firms – a recipe for corruption and a loss of vision. They should prioritise spending on worker-run clinics, worker cooperatives, working class mass media, large-scale popular education and mass organising.

PREFIGURE EVERYWHERE

It is essential to prefigure a better future everywhere, not just in “recovered factories,” cooperatives, social centres etc., but in mass formations of struggle, like unions, and protest movements in communities and schools. This means radically democratic organising, solidarity ethics and mass education against the ideas, attitudes and behaviours of the existing order.

NOT ENOUGH

We cannot escape capitalism by creating a few sites of alternative production, even occupied “recovered factories,” nor through “ethical” consumerism. Building a “solidarity economy” cannot defeat the existing system. Most means of production remain in the hands of private corporations and states, representing ruling classes backed by armies, police and massive bureaucracies that will crush any significant threat.

Capitalism and state will never be suffocated by a proliferation of alternative sites. Even a massive amount of collectives and land occupations is inadequate. While capital and state command the heights of production, coercion and administration, the system will capture or crush alternatives.

THE NEED FOR RUPTURE

The aim is not to choose between capitalists: “Buy South Africa” or “Buy Black”.

It is to link alternatives to capitalism and states together, coordinate them, with a mass revolutionary front of unions, social movements, people’s media and education and other bottom-up social services.

It is to build this in mass struggle. It is to institute complete socialisation of the economy and administration – a new system based on assemblies, federations of community and workers’ councils, and serious, coordinated defence of the new system.

This means a final showdown: a radical rupture, abolition of state and capitalism, complete socialisation. Otherwise the ongoing pressures of state and capitalism, and the ruling classes they represent, will corrupt, kill off or crush what is different, better, democratic. And the old world of suffering will grind on.

NO EXIT: RIDE THROUGH

The solution is not to “exit” the system, through refusal to consume or work, which is impossible. It is confrontation, building a massive, unified counter-power based on radically democratic structures, direct action, and a revolutionary counter-culture based on widespread acceptance of a revolutionary worldview.

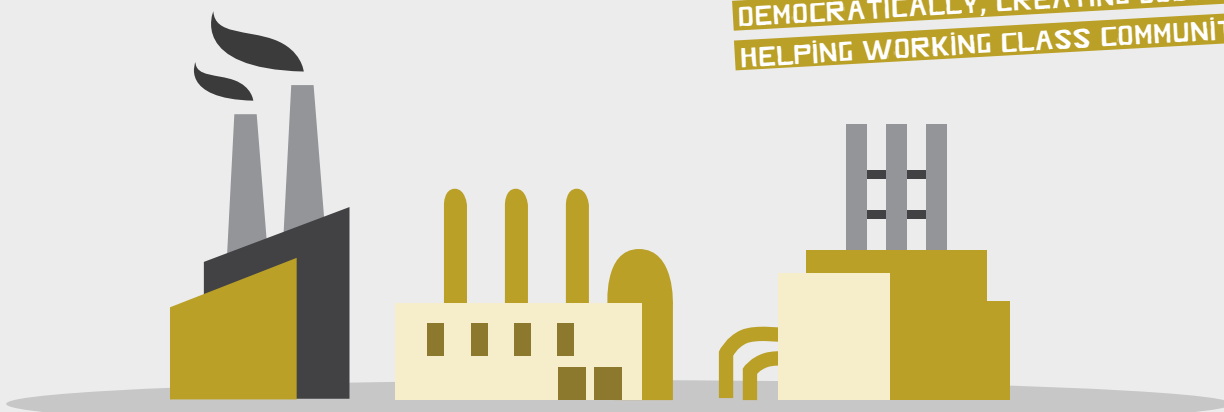
Alternative production sites, and bottom-up education, media and services, can play an important role. As part of a larger movement, such alternatives are shielded, assume enormous symbolic power and help inspire fundamental change. But the system will never slowly and quietly disintegrate because of a few cooperatives, “recovered factories” and worker-clinics.

An alternative must mean something new, from roots to branches, a new society that replaces the old. It is no change if we keep relying on the system’s leaders, its institutions, its elections, its stress on what divides us like colour and country, and its aims: power and profit for a few.

As anarchist luminary Mikhail Bakunin argued:

“The various forms of co-operation are incontestably one of the most equitable and rational ways of organizing the future system of production. But before it can realize its aim of emancipating the labouring masses so that they will receive the full product of their labour, ... land and all forms of capital must be converted into collective property. As long as this is not accomplished... co-operatives will be overwhelmed by the all-powerful competition of monopoly capital and vast landed property;... even in the unlikely event that a small group of co-operatives should somehow surmount the competition, their success would only beget a new class of prosperous co-operators in the midst of a poverty-stricken mass of proletarians”.

HUNDREDS OF CLOSED FACTORIES WERE REOPENED BY THE WORKERS, RUN DEMOCRATICALLY, CREATING JOBS AND HELPING WORKING CLASS COMMUNITIES



AGAINST THE ABUSE OF POWER BY MEN IN OUR MOVEMENTS

A set of allegations of sexual harassment, described as the #metoo movement, have sparked debate about the issue of the abuse of power by men in the workplace and in organisations in order to gain sexual favours from younger and less powerful women and men. This has been met in some quarters by positive engagement on the issue of abuses of power in our movements, and in some quarters by a reluctance to concede to or entertain what are seen as identity politics.

A recent issue of the journal *Historical Materialism* focuses on Marxist interventions into contemporary debates on identity politics. The editors suggest that:

In this sense, identity politics is positioned in a variety of Marxist frameworks as ineffectual; as a politics founded on difference, it is inherently incapable of building the broad-based movement needed to destabilise capitalism.¹

A categorising of harassment as being identity politics is not correct. Harassment is an abuse of power, and does not necessarily happen only in terms of men harassing women. It is not entirely a function of patriarchy, although that is certainly an important part of why so much harassment is of women by men. Younger men being harassed by older more powerful men is a feature of the #metoo phenomenon, and is a significant issue.

Speaking out about sexual harassment is hard. It is particularly hard when in doing it you risk your position. It is even harder when you can see that such a report might result in the kind of conflict that will destabilise and potentially destroy the organisation you work for. Of course, the same can be said about reporting corruption, misuse of funds, or any of the other abuses which we know to be part of the framework of institutions in South Africa, and internationally.

It is very important for organisations to think about how they are going to tackle power imbalances among their members. These can result in abuses of power that are not just sexual harassment. Bullying and abusive behaviour is not absent from organisations that have social justice as their aim.

People inside an organisation are often the first to realise that something seriously wrong may be happening in the organisation. However, they may not express their concerns for fear of being disloyal to their colleagues or because they fear harassment or victimisation. In such circumstances, it is normally easier to ignore

the concern than to report what may be just a suspicion of malpractice.

It's very important that people who make a disclosure in the above mentioned circumstances will not suffer any detriment for doing so. Organisations should not tolerate the harassment or victimisation of anyone raising a genuine concern.

In organisations which are democratic and flat in their structure, and rely on working in collectives to resolve problems, a number of issues will arise in dealing with sexual harassment. The first is the need for swift action. Suspending the person who is accused of harassment is often needed to allow the complainant to speak out, but may be contentious. If it is subject to a vote, a type of popularity contest can result, which paralyses the organisation.

Men often express fear of being unjustly accused of sexual harassment and say that automatic suspension following an accusation is too dangerous. It is described as being too easy for women and younger men to make such allegations, and 'playing the gender card.' The same concerns are raised around rape charges, where the rule in some societies is that you need to have a certain number of witnesses to the crime before a charge can be laid, because it is too easy to lay a false charge.

This is generally contradicted by those who lay such complaints. The person who raises such a concern is often described as in fact being at fault, asking for it, or in some way triggering the behaviour. This stigmatisation alone is a barrier to reporting. The enquiry that ensues is also often the cause of secondary trauma, where the complainant must repeat the description of the behaviour, and persuade people that his or her version of the truth is correct.

Obviously sexual harassment is not just an issue to be dealt with in terms of organisational policy and practice. The Harassment Act permits any person who alleges that he or she (termed a complainant) is being subjected to harassment to apply to a Magistrate's Court for a protection order against the harassment. The Promotion of Equality and Prevention of Unfair Discrimination Act (PEPUDA) provides that no person may subject any person to harassment, and the complainant can approach an Equality Court for a remedy. Of course the Protected Disclosures Act describes unfair discrimination as contemplated in the PEPUDA can be the subject of a protected disclosure in the workplace. The Employment Equity Act provides that harassment of an employee is a form of unfair discrimination and is prohibited on any one, or a combination of grounds of unfair discrimination. The Labour Relations Act prohibits harassment as well.

The debate about the abuse of power by men in the workplace and in organisations should be acknowledged as overdue, and necessary.



Photo: "#MeToo Women's March 2018, Philadelphia, USA", <https://www.flickr.com/photos/10814044@N06/>

¹ <https://www.versobooks.com/blogs/3853-marxism-and-identity-politics>



KURDISH HUMAN RIGHTS ACTION GROUP (KHRAG)



Photo: KHRAG picket in solidarity with the Kurdish struggle, Cape Town, 21 March. 2018, Mandy Moussouris

Turkey finds itself in a dilemma. While it wants to court the Kurds in Syria, it is at war with PKK which represents the majority of the Kurds in Turkey. The Kurdish people have established a defence unit under the umbrella of PYD (Democratic Union Party) which is closely allied to PKK, to protect the Kurdish areas from incursions either by Syrian or rebel forces.

KURDS' IMPORTANCE AS ROLE PLAYERS FOR PEACE

The Kurds as minorities in Turkey, Iraq, Syria and Iran are important role-players in any peace endeavours in the Middle East. Without their involvement there can be no peace in the Middle East.

SIMILARITIES BETWEEN THE KURDISH AND SOUTH AFRICAN STRUGGLE

Both peoples were deprived of their fundamental freedoms and basic human rights in the country of their origin and resisted the violation of their rights through peaceful means but the regimes banned their legitimate organisations and their legitimate leaders. Both the South African oppressed people through the ANC and PAC and the Kurdish people through the PKK embarked on armed struggles for their peoples' liberation.

Nelson Mandela, who had gone underground to lead the armed struggle, was betrayed by the American secret services, while Abdullah Ocalan was betrayed by the secret services of America, Britain and Israel. Both Mandela and Ocalan were charged with treason and sentenced to life imprisonment and both were imprisoned on an Island – Mandela on Robben Island and Ocalan on Imrali island. Both leaders initiated talks with their respective regimes from their prison cells for the resolution of the conflict through peaceful political means. Mandela was subsequently freed while Ocalan still languishes in prison.

BACKGROUND

KHRAG is an independent, non-party political organization established in Cape Town on 14 February, 1997. It strives for the protection of human rights of all Kurdish people, regardless of religion, belief, opinion, political persuasion, race or nationality. It is committed to the peaceful resolution of the Kurdish problem in the Middle East, particularly Turkey.

In 1997 KHRAG met a delegation from the Kurdish Workers Party (PKK). They approached KHRAG in connection with obtaining political asylum for Abdullah Ocalan, who was being persecuted in the Middle East and Europe. After consulting members of the South African cabinet, it was agreed in principle that he would be granted political asylum if he found his way to South Africa. We then formed a Welcome Committee to welcome Ocalan in South Africa and facilitate his application for political asylum.

In February 1999, while on his way from Europe to South Africa and landed in Kenya, he was abducted in a clandestine operation by the secret services of Britain, America and Israel. He was handed over to Turkey's secret services, charged with treason and sentenced to death. The sentence was later commuted to life imprisonment.

After Ocalan's arrest, we converted our Welcome Committee into KHRAG to monitor the human rights abuses of Kurdish people in Turkey and Ocalan's conditions of imprisonment.

FOCUS

Awareness of the Kurdish struggle for recognition of their basic human rights and the right to practice their culture, language, customs and the protection of such rights. Awareness of the right to freedom of association – particularly to form their own cultural, social and political organizations – and to freedom of expression – particularly the right to be taught in their mother-tongue, to establish written and electronic media in the Kurdish language. Awareness of human right abuses perpetrated against the Kurds, particularly in Turkey, and to strive to end such violations through peaceful means. Additionally, resolution of the Kurdish question in Turkey through dialogue with the legitimate leaders of the Kurdish people and their legitimate organizations. The importance of peace and reconciliation in Kurdish and Turkish society on the basis of recognition for the political and cultural identity of Kurdish people. These aims and objectives are achieved through solidarity and joint action with progressive civic and political organisations.

TURKISH DILEMMA AT HOME AND IN SYRIA

The situation in Syria has compounded the problem for Turkey because there is a large Kurdish minority in Syria which borders on Turkey. Turkey is directly involved in trying to topple the Syrian regime. The Kurdish minority in Syria is neutral in the conflict.



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UMGODI OWESIFAZANE

BY TSHEPISO MASHININI

Taken from Afrows: Words of subversion
Our country shakes every day, crying and convulsing.

Our country shakes every day,
crying and convulsing.
And the sources of these quakes
is the mining of little girls and grown womxn –
Mama Nature and her daughters
blown open
and feasted upon,
thighs quivering
like tectonic plates
under the forceful weight
of the shovels of men
that dig and dig and dig.

Mining is in this country's DNA:
"She is mine"
"They are mine"
And that is why the treatment of black
womxn is not a mystery.
But I am here to tell you
so put your shovel
and dynamite sticks away.

They hyper-sexualise our bodies,
animalise them to justify our exploitation,
as if womxn are cash crops.
As I walk down the street,
They look with appraising eyes.
There is an assumption
that my body is always on exhibition,
without my own violation,
a piece of land to be conquered:
another valley,

another river,
another body to be laid waste.

It's got a funny way of working, this
misorgyny – trying to shroud our systemic
exploitation,
our modern-day slavery
and the fact that in today's society,
the black womxn isn't given enough
opportunity.
Don't tell me the place for black womxn
Is a bedroom
and not the boardroom.
Listen, reclaiming our bodies
is about occupying the space we've been
denied.

And Mother Nature, she has suffered the
greatest betrayal –
her veins ruptured,
her hair shaved
her organs extracted
and turned into ornaments
for the fingers of the rich.
Her fate and our fate
are one,
her abusers and ours
are one –
Mankind.
So I sing my praises to Queen Modjadji –
send us rain to cleanse this earth
for we are ready for our rebirth.
And I plant seeds of hope like Mama Mathaai –
may our bent knees grow into unbreakable
trees.

The pillage must end,
of womxn and the land.
I, for one, am done,
Toeing patriarchy's line.
For I am a black womxn –
neither a sector of your economy,

nor the gatekeeper of masculinity!
I'm not your chattel –
do not touch me!
I am a black womxn –
not a blank womxn –
I don't need you to complete me.
We are black womxn,
not gatekeepers of masculinity!
We birth you,
we nurse you,
we carry you,
and yet all you do
it take us,
freak us
and forsake us.
Can you not see the carnage you're causing
to the daughters and their mother –
to this ravaged womb of our planet?
The land is not your whore –
we are not your whores!
So put your drills
and shovels
and dynamite sticks away.
The mining – the mine-ing – must end!
For what's mine is mine.
Rise, black womxn –
Our restoration starts now.

**WE WANT
TO HEAR
FROM
YOU**

Our vision is to interact with our readers on the shape of things to come.


This is an appeal to you to join discussions on **Facebook: ILRIGSA** and Workers World News – as well as **Twitter: #ILRIG**.


You can also write to the editors on info@ilrig.org.za.

We have also set aside a page for poetry, songs, reviews and readers' comments. Please help us make this an inspiring space by sending us your contributions and views.


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