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THERE'S NO TIME LIKE NOW

FOR CONSISTENT, INCLUSIVE SOLIDARITY AND INTERNATIONALISM

by Dale T McKinley

'An injury to one is an injury to all'

– [Popular, global workers slogan]

This slogan originated in the early 1900s when it became the official motto of the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW). Several decades later it became widely used and known in South Africa after COSATU adopted it on their main logo when they were formed in 1983. Today it is used all over the world by progressives and anti-capitalists.



"An Injury To One is an Injury to All" – a 1993 mural by Mike Alewitz in Los Angeles, now destroyed.

The importance of the slogan relates directly to the core principle of internationalist human solidarity and dignity, as well as to the practice of diminishing the divisions the capitalist system has so deeply implanted in human consciousness and our political, economic and social relations. More specifically, it commits us to speaking out and mobilising against injustice, oppression, exploitation and the various forms of violence that go hand-in-hand with them, wherever they occur.

Consistent solidarity

When we help a woman neighbour who has been the victim of gender-based violence, when we join a picket at a business that is racist, when we march together to denounce xenophobic vigilantism, when we attend meetings and rallies to support struggles in other countries for democratic freedoms, we are putting those words into practice. However, if we only do so when it is easy and convenient, directed at those whom we know or like or when it serves a particular individual or organisational political or ideological interest, we are not really being true to either the words or the practice. That is exactly what the ANC and the South African government it has run has been doing for the last 30 years.

A history of hypocrisy

In 1993, Nelson Mandela, while waiting to become South Africa's first democratic President, told the world that the ANC-run government's 'engagement in international affairs' would be guided by several core principles. These included 'the centrality of human rights, the promotion of democracy and ... the peaceful resolution of disputes between states.' Yet, in the years just before and after 1994, Mandela showed clearly that those principles were already up for sale. Besides refusing to speak out in support of the centuries-old struggles of Aboriginal people

in Australia, Mandela accepted a humanitarian award and US\$10 million donation from the Indonesian military dictator Suharto and, warmly embraced the authoritarian, misogynist, monarchy of Saudi Arabia while again accepting more multi-million US\$ donations for the ANC.

In Africa, during the first decade of the 2000s, we found the governments of both Presidents Mbeki and Zuma going so far as to deny even the existence of the widespread injustice and violent repression meted out by the Mugabe regime in Zimbabwe on anyone who would dare oppose it. Similarly, there was a deafening silence when it came to the brutal and often murderous crackdowns on political opposition and critical grassroots activists carried out by the FRELIMO and MLPA governments in Mozambique and Angola respectively. There is also absolutely no concern for the human rights of the long-suffering Swazi people living under one of the last remaining absolute monarchs in the world. There is also little care for those from the LGBTIQ++ communities in neighbouring countries such as Uganda, Namibia and Tanzania.

The era of self-serving cherry-picking

Fast forward to the present Ramaphosa government-the lineage of selective, mostly self-serving application of moral outrage, concern for the violation of basic human-rights and support for freedom struggles has continued. It's impossible to list all the examples, including those related to the warm embrace of Putin's oligarchic, right-wing, authoritarian, proto-fascist and racist regime in Russia or to the widespread oppression of the LGBTIQ++ community across the African continent and the Middle East, but there are a few key ones.

In Burma (Myanmar), other than a couple of largely vacuous statements calling for a return to 'the rule of law' and a 'cessation of violence', the Ramaphosa government has not only completely ignored the genocidal actions against

the Rohingya minority but also the ongoing massacres of civilians and opposition activists by the proto-fascist military junta. Worse, last year it allowed the export of R47 million worth of electronic military equipment to the junta by state and/or private armament companies based in South Africa and yet, had the hypocritical temerity to cite (24 times) Gambia's genocide case at the ICJ against Burma (Myanmar), in support of its own genocide case against Israel at the ICJ earlier this year.

Over the last decade and more, the SA government has remained completely silent in the face of the Chinese government's systematic targeting of the Uyghurs and other Muslim ethnic groups in the country's northwest region. Such targeting has seen a campaign of mass internment of an estimated one million people in a relentless 're-education' drive, accompanied by constant and intrusive surveillance, political indoctrination and forced cultural assimilation.

In Türkiye over the last several years, there wasn't a peep from the SA government on authoritarian president Erdogan's attempts to crush all political opposition, the firing and jailing of tens of thousands of activists and public sector professionals, support for ultra-right-wing jihadists or the systematic bombing and ethnic cleansing of autonomous Kurdish Rojava in North-East Syria.

Ramaphosa's administration has actively supported the misogynist, theocratic dictatorship of Iran and expanded South Africa's dependence on Iranian oil. The Iranian regime has effectively banned all legitimate dissent, trampled on basic human rights and killed and jailed thousands of women for daring to speak out and demand equality and justice.

Continues on next page.

EDITORIAL

Welcome to the first edition, issue 127 of Workers World News for 2024. The theme for this issue was collectively agreed on as internationalism with a special focus on occupied Palestine. This has without doubt been a hell of a few months since the world seemed to implode on October 7th. While Apartheid Israel slowly starves Gazans to death, the profiteers of war gamble with lives and use international power structures rather than the voices of the people to decide on arbitrary yet simple things as labelling a war a genocide. The powers that be remain centred on neo-liberal, capitalist, fascist forces who are there to fill their coffers while tiny coffins line the streets of Gaza.

At a time when patriarchy, misogyny, neo-liberal capitalism and the plague of gender-based violence and femicide globally, especially amongst marginalised LGBTIQ++/Queer communities, the various struggles of the proletariat intersect and continue in old, new and imaginative ways. In this country, activists are calling 2024 the new 1994. But do we really want another 1994, or do we want something new?

The lead article by ILRIG's Dale McKinley, delves into the realities of this concept, of the sell-outs in the ANC Government, that brought hope back in 1994, but it seems the father of democracy, and those who came after him sold South Africa to the elite and for the working class here, and in fact, wherever you look, you will find some sort of cop out by politicians, Nobuhle Ajiti from Kopanang Africa Against Xenophobia, (KAAX) writes about the effects of xenophobia on voting and comes with a stern warning to not vote for politicians who preach xenophobic rhetoric.

In our lead in the international section, Roshad Dadoo from BDS-SA, paints a context of the ongoing Nakba inflicted upon the Palestinian people by Apartheid Israel, and Boycott, Divest and Sanctions as a means of direct action against those corporations and industries that support it. Nikita Ramkissoon a student of Gender and Journalism, explains how Apartheid Israel uses pinkwashing to write a fairytale of how their society is accepting and egalitarian, while the contrary is true. On the same wave, Noah Lubinsky, a sociologist and member of SA Jews for a Free Palestine and Queers for Palestine renders an ironic story of a forest named after South Africa in Occupied Palestine being paid for by the south African taxpayer through the JNF.

In our Educational Series, ILRIG's Shawn Hattingh examines the international union open to wage and salary workers in all industries, that left an indelible effect on the values and ethos of international working-class solidarity. In November last year, ILRIG celebrated 40 years of rendering popular political education to activists and movements in South Africa and beyond and ILRIG's Mthetho Xhali gives a comprehensive summary of the festival.

ILRIG also plays tribute to Ayanda Kota, (UPM), who recently passed away with a heart-felt poem from Mazibuko K. Jara. The centre-fold poster designed by ILRIG's Anastasia Eli immortalises the words of Palestinian poet Refaat Alameer, who was killed by the IDF last year soon after he wrote the touching request in his poem "When I die". Climate justice and PSA activist Sunny Morgan's poem "Flat Bread" speaks to the capricious and cruel nature of dying in Gaza.

The lead poem selected is from the original The Internationale- but a shorter, more catchy song version by Billy Brag. If you are someone who considers themselves on the political left, anarchists, communists, socialists or even social democrats, you probably know the hymn The Internationale, the most widely translated and adapted ballad in the world, sung in over 115 languages in the spirit of global, working-class solidarity and remains the de-facto anthem of the global socialist movement to this day, spreading the same message of international unity in the struggle waged by the toiling masses of the Earth. There is no time like the present times that this song is more relevant to practice to "unite the human race".

For comments to the Editor, letters, or articles, or artwork, contact Lara Reddy lara@ilrig.org.za

Pull-out poster

ON PAGE 7

'Kites'

by Anastasya Eliseeva, 2024

GENDER NEWS by Nikita Ramkissoon

QUEERING PALESTINE: FEARING MISSILES MORE THAN HOMOPHOBIA

Nowhere and nobody is safe in Gaza. More than 5 months after October 7th when what Hamas termed “The Al Aqsa Flood” tried to resist the more than 78 years of Israeli illegal occupation of Palestinian lands, and several wars and deaths and imprisonments and Nakba’s in between till this fateful day. Gaza is now a haunted place of death, despair and ghosts of genocide. As Israel’s aim to wipe out Palestinians continue, Palestinian histories and culture is being erased brick by brick. Olive trees are being uprooted and scorched and entire human family trees. Collective history and the ability to pass down knowledge are being destroyed and it is meant not only to erase Palestine off the map but to erase all memory of Palestine, all their lands and homes. And with Israel’s pinkwashing narrative, the lives and stories of queer Palestinians are dying with them too.

Being gay is the least of our worries

Same-sex sexual activity is prohibited in Gaza under the British Mandate Criminal Code Ordinance 1936. The relevant provision carries a maximum penalty of ten years of imprisonment. Only men are criminalised under this law. The law was inherited from the British and while it is somewhat observed in Gaza, it is not enforced in Palestine as we know it today.

“Gaza is a place lost in time,” said Laila*, a 21-year-old lesbian woman from Khan Younis, who spoke to me in 2017. “We have been denied the opportunity to grow as a society, not just in development but in society as well. Our earlier generations are still stuck in a time that the world has moved on from, including some of the Arab world, when you are suffering as the people of Palestine are, someone being gay is the least of their worries.

I wish to be free, but my freedom is beyond being out, it's being Palestinian first and foremost.
– Anonymous, Palestine

Pinkwashing Palestine

A recent article in the right-wing publication Haartz, demonstrates Israel’s pinkwashing narrative where L. Rozovsky’ portrays a queer Palestinian youth as helpless and in need of saving. The predictable story paints LGBTQI+ Palestinians as victims, stripped of having their own voice. Israelis exploit this to push Israel’s image around the world as a haven for the queer community, giving Israelis a saviour complex while simultaneously diminishing Palestinian livelihoods. Little attention is paid to

that its foreign policy and international relations are, and always have been, guided by concern for human rights, peace and democratic freedoms. More specifically, they must be applied against its recent attempts to deny these realities in offering reasons why it took the case against Apartheid Israel to the ICJ.

Unpacking the claims of Pandor

Here is how SA Minister of International Relations and Cooperation, Naledi Pandor put it (speaking to the media at the ICJ hearing): ‘South Africa really has a moral responsibility to always stand with the oppressed because we come from a history of struggle, a history of striving for freedom, a history of believing that everybody deserves human dignity, justice and freedom; this is the only reason that we have taken this major step as South Africa.’

Arms sales to African conflict zones

According to the latest figures from the National Conventional Arms Control Committee (NCACC), and in direct contravention of the NCACC legal mandate, South Africa exported hundreds of millions worth of arms to conflict zones on the African continent where there have been systemic violation of human rights and lack of basic democratic freedoms. Examples include ‘warships’ and unspecific ‘weapons’ worth R308 million to Djibouti and tens of millions worth of armoured vehicles and ‘dual-use’ items to Cameroon, Mali and Somalia.

Nice words, false claims

It is these realities that must be weighed against the claims of the ANC-run government,



Queers for Palestine. Photograph: Lara Reddy

the many queer youths who wish to leave Gaza, not because of their sexual orientation but due to the misery inflicted upon them by apartheid Israel which makes living in occupied Gaza impossible for everyone. In a particularly shameless show of the power imbalance between occupier and occupied, Palestinian feelings toward Israeli soldiers is exhibited as that of erotic power where IDF’s “drop-dead gorgeous” soldiers are glamourised, many a tone-deaf idea that ignores the devastation the Israeli army “officers” are inflicting upon the Palestinians. Israel’s pinkwashing not only implies that there are no queer Palestinians but also that they cannot possibly be accepted as they are, where they are. In other words, they must flee to a more supposedly “civilised” society - in their view, a “democratic European one, that being apartheid Israel in their warped minds which is a becoming a neo-Nazi like occupying state that kills and occupies and displaces in savage ways.

Homophobia still exists

It’s unhelpful to deny the realities of homophobia within Palestinian society, as well as the need to resist it. Many people in the Palestinian liberation movement are connecting the struggles for queer liberation and the Palestinian liberation struggle as inextricably linked - as queer liberation is inextricably linked to the global fight for liberation from capitalism and colonialism. Our lived realities show that, despite increasingly progressive laws, our society is still conservative, homophobic, and transphobic, and certain societies criminalise LGBTQI++ people. Living an openly queer authentic life not only in Palestine but countries like Uganda, Türkiye, Iran becomes deadly for poor, black, lesbian or transgender people who are in constant danger of

being discriminated against, harassed, attacked, murdered, raped, mutilated and even beheaded; we fear not only public spaces but even the safety of our own homes. It’s safer for those in an affluent society, especially privileged queer folk, who are often protected by privilege, class and race. Still, living as a queer femme of colour in South Africa for example, is less deadly than living as a queer person in Palestine who are at risk of being killed by the IDF every day, be it in Gaza or the West Bank.

The Israeli army boasting that the first time the Pride flag being flown in Gaza was by them in 2023’s invasion is ignorant at best and a dangerous narrative at worst, assuming that queer people inside Palestine are only at risk from their own. Pegging homophobia on Palestinian society alone is a portrayal of a skewed reality - one in which queer Palestinians are whitewashed and pinkwashed to the point of erasure. It’s as if Israeli missiles only target straight people.

Palestinian queer politics decolonises

We must address Israel’s pinkwashing and human rights within the context of Palestinian daily life. Zionist settler colonialism and occupation are intrinsically linked to the West’s hegemonic global schemes of Islamophobia, anti-Arab hatred, and gay imperialism - that includes colonisation feminism and saviourism. Queer activism in and outside of Palestine needs to engage with counter-hegemonies, dismantling the pinkwashing project, and shifting the narrative that Israel and the West so desperately cling to, to justify their brutal genocide and occupation on the Palestinian people - regardless of their gender.

If those claims are applied to the actual realities, past and present, then the gap between word and deed becomes ever-wider. Just ask any political and social activist in Zimbabwe, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, or Angola, any young women activist in Iran, any member of the LGBTQI++ community in Uganda or Ghana, or any member of minority ethnic groups in Burma, China and Turkey. Or, just as revealingly, ask any long-suffering political/economic refugee or asylum seeker in South Africa from across the African continent.

Weak-kneed rationalisations for ANC Foreign Policy

The arguments of those who say that the ANC and government’s foreign policy approach is simply ‘pragmatic’, and full of ‘complexity’ and that international relations necessarily have to be guided by what is in the ‘national

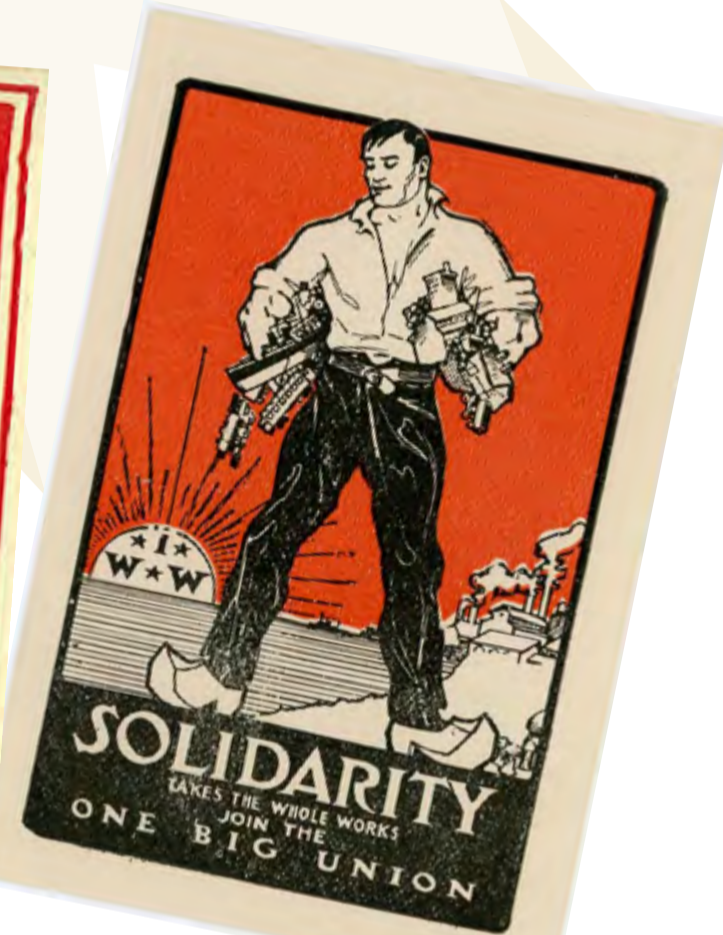
interest’ (whatever that might be), are little more than weak-kneed rationalisations for bending to the interests of those who hold political and economic power. They are similar to the rationalisations provided to embrace right-wing nationalist and ethnic politics, while excusing the repression of dissent and opposition, all in the name of ‘anti-imperialism’ or the so-called attempts to forge an ‘alternative world order’.

The thing about core principles and values is that once they start being selectively applied regularly or are outright abandoned, the rationalisations become believable, and the associated behaviour and discourse becomes normalised. We can see the consequences of this on so many fronts (for example, gender-based violence and criminality) here in South Africa as well as across our continent and globe.

That makes it all the more important for us to try and do all we can to be more consistent and inclusive - our individual and collective futures depend on it.

ONE BIG UNION

THE INDUSTRIAL WORKERS OF THE WORLD (IWW)



Old IWW posters, courtesy of Western Illinois University

In this series, we are looking at examples of movements that have built structures that aimed to become alternatives to the state and capitalism; not just as part of a revolution but as part of building towards one. As such, these movements-built organisations of self-governance as part of daily resistance so that people involved could develop the skills to collectively run society during and after a revolution without the need for politicians and bosses. In this too, they demonstrated that there was and is an alternative to electoral politics.

The IWW

In this educational series, the focus is on a revolutionary union called the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW). The IWW was founded in 1905 and from the beginning it rejected electoral politics; it aimed for workers to organize across borders with the goal to end capitalism through workers seizing the means of production and implementing worker self-management. IWW aimed for a socialism based on direct democracy without states. To do so, the union itself was based on direct democracy, and a training ground for workers whereby running their own organisation through direct democracy was seen as consciously preparing them to be able to run society without bosses and politicians. A printed pamphlet from the General Organising Committee in Leicester, it reads:

"The IWW is unique...it is international with 34 industrial unions covering all aspects of working life, including the unemployed and homemakers... independent of political parties, practices real democracy, decisions are made by members and branches have full autonomy on matters such as negotiations, tactics and demands."

One Big Union

The IWW was a truly internationalist organization that had sections in almost a dozen countries. The IWW explicitly aimed to build an internationalist working class politics that was opposed to racism, xenophobia, and nationalism. Indeed, the IWW

aimed to build one big union across the world to fight to overthrow capitalism through direct action. At its height in the 1920s, the IWW had over 120 000 members in countries such as Mexico, the United States (US), Chile, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand. Although its numbers looked small, it was part of a much larger global revolutionary unionist movement that was anti-state and anti-electoral politics that peaked in 1930 before declining. In fact, despite its relatively small numbers, the IWW had a major impact on the broader workers' movements globally – its industrial unionism was adopted by almost all unions who were still based on crafts - and its slogan "An injury to one is an injury to all" is still used by unions today, including in South Africa.

The IWW was remarkable

The IWW was founded in the United States and what made it remarkable is that it was the first union in that country that organized all workers despite race or gender. Thus, the IWW organized black workers alongside white workers, immigrant and precarious workers including agricultural, timber, textile, shipping, and dock workers who were often employed as contract workers. These were workers that the mainstream unions in the United States said were unorganisable.

Due to its international character, it also drew in many immigrants who were involved in the wider libertarian socialist or anarchist-communist movements who had arrived in the United States from Latin America, Europe and India. These workers still had links to activists back in their countries of origin and soon the IWW had sections in Latin American

countries such as Chile and Mexico. The dock workers and sailors that belonged to the IWW also spread the union into other countries.

The IWW undertook many important strikes in countries such as the United States, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand. They would not only fight for wages and better working conditions, but also around issues such as opposing World War One, women's reproductive rights, rent boycotts and the right to free speech. Their pamphlet continues boldly: "Instead of the conservative motto, 'a fair day's wage for a fair day's work,' we must inscribe on our banner the revolutionary watchword, 'Abolition of the Wage System.'"

The IWW, rebellion and revolution

Activists from the IWW were also often involved in other political organisations with similar goals and were often at the forefront of rebellions and even revolutions. Many IWW members in Mexico and the United States were also members of the Anarchist-Communist Liberal Party of Mexico (PLM). In 1911, the PLM attempted uprisings across Mexico to overthrow the state and capitalism and to implement a form of socialism based on direct democracy. In most parts of the country the uprising was crushed, but in one province, Baja California, it succeeded and a commune without the state was implemented for a few months. The IWW members were directly involved in the commune and many members travelled to defend the commune from across North America. Eventually, however, the commune was defeated by the military intervention of the Mexican and US states.

Another example of an international rebellion involving IWW members comes from India. A movement arose in the 1900s amongst immigrants from India to North America called the Ghadarite Movement. Their aim was to end British colonialism in India and build socialism based on direct

democracy. It had strong roots in north India, but its leading cadres were mainly in North America, and many were members of the IWW – including influential leaders Har Dayal and Sohan Bhakna - and played an active role in the IWW especially on the East Coast of the United States. The Ghadarite movement perhaps reached its height when it attempted a rebellion, (ghadar) in India in 1914. In preparation, 8 000 Ghadarites (mutineers), many IWW members returned to India to co-ordinate the rebellion. The British Empire, unfortunately, defeated the uprising and over 40 leading activists were sentenced to death. Sohan Bhakna was amongst those arrested too. He was initially sentenced to death, but it was later commuted to life imprisonment.

Decline of the IWW

The IWW was subjected to intense state repression. In many countries laws were passed to make it illegal to belong to the IWW. Many IWW members who were immigrants in the United States were deported from the country with the aim of destroying the union. This, along with the rise in the popularity of Stalinism, saw the IWW decline in the 1930s – the organisation still exists, but it never became a major force again internationally.

Conclusion

Despite the decline of the IWW, there are many lessons that can be drawn for today's struggles. At its height the IWW demonstrated that there was a viable alternative to electoral politics based on internationalism and direct democracy. It also demonstrated how a union can be built by precarious workers despite their gender, nationality or race. Indeed, it shows an alternative to the rising nationalism, xenophobia, ethnic and race-based politics we see today is possible.

INTERNATIONAL NEWS by Roshan Dadoo

BDS OR BUST

Since 7th October the documented number of Palestinians murdered by the Apartheid Israeli occupation forces stands at more than 31,699 of which 75% are women and children. Many more bodies remain buried under the rubble of Gaza, with starvation and disease now threatening to take the lives of thousands more. 5,245 Palestinians have been killed in the 45 days since the International Court of Justice confirmed the plausibility of Apartheid Israel's genocide against 2.3 million Palestinians in the occupied and besieged Gaza Strip and ordered it to stop and prevent all genocidal acts.

The world watches a genocide unfolding, each day bringing new atrocities committed by the Israeli occupation forces. We recently witnessed the absolute horror of Israeli occupation forces massacring people desperately trying to reach trucks carrying food supplies - a 'drop in the ocean' of essential supplies needed - while convoys carrying humanitarian aid are stuck at the Rafah crossing into Gaza, blocked from entering. The Zionist project of ethnic cleansing is not only being ramped up in Gaza. The ongoing Nakba continues in the West Bank. Israeli settlers have committed 984 assaults, 2,858 homes have been stormed and there have been 6,176 incursions of the occupation forces into Palestinian towns and refugee camps.

International solidarity in the face of helplessness

It is impossible not to feel impotent in the face of such barbarism and the absolute impunity of the Apartheid Israeli Regime, backed by billions of dollars of US military assistance wielding its veto in the UN Security Council against resolutions calling for a ceasefire. We wonder what can we do to stop the bombing, the shooting, the total destruction of Palestinian life as everything is purposefully obliterated?

Yet we are also bearing witness to the most extraordinary outpouring of solidarity for the Palestinian people. Millions around the world continue to take to the streets. On social media we can see that across Africa, Asia and Latin America people in the global south are coming together in solidarity with the Palestinian people and calling for a ceasefire now.

From anti-Zionist American Jews taking over major train stations and the statue of Liberty to the residents of Guernica in the Spanish Basque Country creating a massive human Palestinian flag as air raid sirens wailed, connecting the bombardment of Gaza with the second world war massacre that the Nazis inflicted on their town - ordinary people in the imperialist heartland are defying their governments, and calling out international corporate complicity in the genocide.

Boycotts, Divestment and Sanctions is a weapon of international solidarity

The Palestinian people made this call on BDS international community, in 2005. It is the very same call that we made to the world in support of our own liberation struggle. Millions acted against governments and companies supporting Apartheid South Africa, leading to international sanctions and an oil and trade embargo., international isolation in support of resistance within the country. The power of targeted boycotts against Apartheid Israel and those corporations that are supporting the genocide is beginning to bite.

Direct Action Gets Satisfaction

Since the Palestinian call for an international boycott of McDonalds, the company is reporting a drop in profits. McDonalds South Africa was so sensitive to boycott action that they immediately issued a statement attempting to distance itself from its Israeli franchise which has been giving free meals to occupation force soldiers. We are continuing the boycott, calling on the South African franchise to demand their Israeli partner stops directly supporting the Israeli genocidaires. Following a global boycott of PUMA, it is no longer renewing its sponsorship of the Israeli national soccer team. Trade unions in Belgium, Italy, Greece, Spain and India are refusing to handle Israeli weapons and other shipments. Malaysia is refusing to allow docking for Israeli ships. Palestinian unions have written to the South African port unions calling on them to act in solidarity by refusing to handle Zim lines cargo, an Israeli shipping company that has previously

been blocked from offloading in Durban in 2001 and 2009. Today, App-based worker unions representing over 100K Uber drivers & other app-based drivers across 20 countries have united to boycott Chevron-branded gas stations, including Texaco & Caltex. This global BDS campaign targets international companies that have been awarded drilling licences by Apartheid Israel for the exploration of oil and gas off the coast of Gaza.

The SA BDS Coalition is calling on SAFA to take a lead in kicking Apartheid Israel out of FIFA and for our government to declare a sports and cultural boycott. African Artists Against Apartheid staged a protest inside the Investec Art Fair and artists pulled out as our cultural workers are refusing to work with companies complicit in the genocidal Israeli regime. Around the country academics and university staff are tabling resolutions calling for an academic boycott. This week the University of Western Cape (UWC) unanimously passed a motion in Senate calling to end any form of complicity. We demand a sports and cultural boycott and a full trade embargo from the SA State.

As consumers, as workers and as the voices of humanity we can, and we are impacting upon our governments and corporations through Boycotts, Divestments and Sanctions, and every other possible means we have left as people globally to hold the powers that be accountable. They know there can be no business as usual until there is a permanent ceasefire, an end to the occupation, the dismantling of the apartheid system of settler colonialism, the right for all Palestinians to return home and for justice and equality for all from the river to the sea.

FROM THE ILRIG RESOURCE CENTRE by Mthetho Xhali

ILRIG'S 40TH ANNIVERSARY POLITICAL FESTIVAL

In 2023 ILRIG successfully celebrated its 40th anniversary through a festival over three days from 2nd to 5th November. The festival comprised of seminars, parallel workshops, music, poetry, theatre, and films. The festival examined current and historical attempts to build a people's power through popular education, organising and resistance. It also looked at the alternatives to neoliberalism and patriarchy that were and are based on direct democracy, self-organisation, working class control and feminism. It allowed for the sharing and learning from struggles internationally and locally for a better, just, democratic, and feminist world.

A diverse gathering of movements and activists

Activists from a range of organisations attended the festival. From the community based organisations there were activists from Abahlali baseMjondolo, Electricity Action Group, Housing Assembly, Thembelihle Crisis Committee, Intlungu YaseMatyotombeni, African Reclaimers Organisation, #PayTheGrants, Qandu-Qandu Informal Settlement, Cissie Gool House Occupation, People's Health Movement, Kopanang Africa Against Xenophobia, Congolese Civil Society South Africa, South African Refugee Led Network/Ambazonian Community in Cape Town, Kurdish Movement, Iranian Women's Movement and the Libertarian Socialist Organisation(OSL).

There were activists from trade unions such as the Agricultural Food and Allied Democratic Workers Union, Commercial, Stevedoring, Agricultural and Allied Workers Union, Workers United, Congress of South African Trade Unions

(Western Cape), General Industry Workers Union of South Africa, National Association of Artisanal Miners, Simunye Workers Forum, and the Press Union of Buenos Aires (SipreBA). Resistance artists were represented by Soundz of the South, Tears of the Oppressed Womb, Kujenga band and Kim Blanche Adonis who performed a multi sketch produced by Mike van Graan, and Lara Redd who performed radical slam poetry. From the NGOs there was the Orange Farm Human Rights Advice Centre, Church Land Project, Ndifuna Ukwazi, Trust for Community Outreach and Education, Workers World Media Production, Inside Out, Commons Project, Labour Research Service, Kurdish Human Rights Action Group, Surplus Peoples Project, Ntirhisano Centre, Human Rights Media Centre, Institute for African Alternatives and Open Secrets.

Key SA and International Struggles Since 1983

Topics were based on presentations by a range of speakers who provided overviews of key struggles

over the 40-year period since 1983 when ILRIG was born. Themes included internationalism and building working class democracy and movements in the 1980s in South Africa, the transition to neoliberalism with a specific focus on South Africa and Brazil, resistance to neoliberalism from working class formations in the early 2000s as well as alternatives to neoliberal capitalism in the form of factory take-overs in Argentina. Other focus group areas were working-class alternatives to Neoliberalism, such as the Iranian women's movement, feminism, and the recent uprising-its principles, practices, vision, and lessons in building working class democracy, along with Abahlali baseMjondolo, #FeesMustFall Movement, the Kurdish (Rojava) Movement, Simunye Workers Forum.

The festival concluded with song and dance, as is tradition, and left activists with a fuller sense of international organising and movement building. Some of the above presentations will appear in the 40th anniversary festival booklet that ILRIG is publishing.



Photograph: Kai Lai (SHF)

THE SOUTH AFRICAN FOREST IN OCCUPIED PALESTINE AND THE NAKBA FOREST IN SOUTH AFRICA

An Ongoing Genocide & Ecocide

Professor Haidar Eid said the most feared word in Gaza has become *ramad* or ashes, speaking at a 'Shabbos Against Genocide' at the Nelson Mandela Foundation. In the midst of the ongoing genocide in Gaza, not only did Apartheid Israel destroy lives but they reduced the entire Palestinian homeland to rubble. Along with the Genocide, the IDF is enacting an ongoing Ecocide - the deliberate destruction of the natural environment so that even if there is a ceasefire, there is no Beit Hanoon, no Gaza City, no Deir El-Balah and no Khan Younis for Palestinians to go back to.

A Dodgy Environmental Strategy- It's Apartheid Israel Off Course

Following the ethnic cleansing of between 750,000 and one million Palestinians and the systematic destruction of more than 400 Palestinian towns and villages by Apartheid Israel before its establishment in 1948-49, the Jewish National Fund (Keren Kayemet Lelsrael or JNF) planted forests in many areas covering the ruins and evidence of the Palestinian Arab society that much of Apartheid Israel is built over. The JNF raised money abroad with its "Blue Box" campaign, taking in huge sums in the US and other countries from its earlier days. The JNF owns over 80% of the land in Apartheid Israel and exclusively for Jewish peoples use. Armed Israelis systematically terrorise Palestinian villages, often killing hundreds of people or just firing bullets over villager's heads, driving hundred of thousands of Palestinians out of their homes.

In South Africa, JNF was registered as a charity, meaning South African taxpayers are subsidising its activities in Occupied Palestine. Between 1948 and 1967, Israel expropriated approximately 172,973 acres of land belonging to Palestinian citizens of the state. The Palestinian village of Luby, now destroyed and re-named, ironically "The South African Forest" are part of the confiscated lands. Palestinians emanating from Luby are not allowed to live on their own land. To this day, Apartheid Israel forbids Palestinians from Luby to look after their ancestors' cemetery or put fences around them or erect tombstones in the "South African Forest." In South Africa, on the contrary, death and burial sites are a very important constitutional, religious and humane right. In fact, the only cemeteries that would bury a human who died undocumented, for example, are Muslim cemeteries. The contradictions that Apartheid Israel punches the face of the international world with defies even words.

We understand the importance of rooting our collective action in the land itself, a land which has been hollowed out and is continually eroded in the name of colonialism and imperialism. It is with this in mind that the South African Jews for a Free Palestine (SAJFP) created the Nakba Memorial Forest at Constitution Hill - linking struggles of dispossession in Palestine to dispossession in South Africa. SAJFP have planted olive trees on Constitution Hill as a reminder of those whose homes were destroyed in the name of Eco fascism.

Unlike the JNF's pine trees, the olive trees planted at Constitution Hill are indigenous to South Africa. Being planted on land that was once a women's prison, the trees represent the ways we create fertile land out of a place that once

represented division and destruction. While the trees memorialise the dispossession of the people of Luby, they also represent dispossessed people and the insidious ways indigenous land has been used by imperial forces everywhere. On 24 January 2024, SAJFP held a *Tu B'Shvat* (Jewish New Year of the Trees) Action at the Nakba Forest, recommitting ourselves in the struggle against Ecocide and Eco fascism. In working towards decolonisation, we work with the land, regrowing what has been stolen and committing ourselves to tending and caring for the land

Why are trees such social beings?

Why do they share food with their own species and sometimes even go so far as to nourish their competitors? The reasons are the same as for human communities: there are advantages to working together. A tree is not a forest. On its own, a tree cannot establish a consistent local climate. It is at the mercy of the wind and weather. But together, many trees create an ecosystem that moderates extremes of heat and cold, stores a great deal of water, and generates a great deal of humidity. And in this protected environment, trees can live to be very old. The tree community must remain intact no matter what. If every tree were looking out only for itself, then quite a few of them would never reach old age. Like Johannesburg in South Africa, which is the largest human-made forest in the world, there is something in nature that connects and sustains us all- and as humans are an integral part of nature, we should follow in the ways of the trees and the forests, not with capitalist industrialisation and war that destroys and conquers us all.



Photograph: Lara Reddy

REJECT XENOPHOBIA EMBRACE UBUNTU TO NURTURE A UNITED SOUTH AFRICA

In the diverse community of South Africa, where the echoes of apartheid still reverberate, the upcoming elections serve as a crucial moment for citizens to shape the future of their nation. Sadly, in the run-up to this election, we have seen a proliferation of several right-wing political parties, which seek to gain political capital through fomenting hate for fellow Africans living, working and seeking political and economic refuge in this country. My solemn plea and call to action to you is this: Don't Vote for Them.

Xenophobia found fertile ground in politics. We need to enlighten ourselves to the dangers of supporting political entities that seek to build their careers on xenophobia, perpetuating hate against black Africans, and propagating harmful generalizations, myths, and stereotypes. As you prepare to cast your ballots, my plea is for you to reject parties that exploit xenophobia for political gain because that hate is an indication that they have very little to offer you in terms of service delivery and good governance. Embracing Ubuntu, the essence of interconnectedness and shared humanity, should be at the forefront of political decision-making, not

spreading hate against fellow brothers and sisters. One of the most pervasive myths being spread by these right-wing politicians is the notion that migrants, particularly fellow and poor blacks from other African countries, are inherently criminals or job stealers.

It is essential to challenge these stereotypes

It is important to recognize the multitude of contributions migrants make to the South African society. Beyond economic contributions, migrants enrich the cultural fabric, bringing diversity that fosters innovation and understanding. Contrary to the divisive rhetoric, African migrants are not a drain on resources; we are also active participants in South Africa's economic growth. It is crucial for voters to acknowledge these positive contributions when making their electoral decisions, lest you might make decisions which will come back to haunt and isolate this country in future.

Practice Ubuntu

At the heart of Ubuntu lies the principle of shared responsibility and as you head to the polls, you need to reflect on the profound meaning of "I am my brother's keeper." This principle extends beyond national borders, embracing the idea that the well-being of one African nation is intricately tied to the well-being of its neighbours. Voting for parties that prioritise unity over division is a true embodiment of Ubuntu in action. Instead of erecting walls of distrust and hostility, South Africa must focus on building bridges of understanding and collaboration.

"Contrary to the divisive rhetoric, African migrants are not a drain on resources"



Illustration: Anastasya Eliseeva, 2022

Tribute to Ayanda Kota

The passing of Ayanda Kota from Unemployed Peoples Movement shook South Africa, especially those from his hometown in the Eastern Cape, where he was involved in various mobilisations and organising of movements within the broader working-class. A loud voice for the poor and marginalised, Makanda's most-loved activist, son, husband and father is mourned by all who have been able to grasp his mind and appreciate his influence on many lives, young and old. His soft heart and gentle nature, yet revolutionary spirit will be remembered by us all, and here at ILRIG. To comrade Babalwa, a wife, lover and friend left behind with their children, love and solidarity from us all, and Aluta Continua.

Rest in Power Comrade Ayanda Kota- 1976-2024.

Ayanda Kota the Tower Has Fallen Mazibuko K Jara

What a fire has stopped warming our hearts
What a torch of reason ceased to burn
What a heart stopped to beat
Ubuya kuhlala unathi phi ungumntu nje,
Ungumntu nje, int' ehlah' ihlah' igoduke,
Ungumntu nje int' ehlah' ihlah' ihambele
Ungumntu nje int' ethe yagoduka lakufika ilixa
Ungumntu nje int' ebihambele kweli limagad' ahlabayo
For how long you would be with us still,
Given that you are only human,
Who indeed returned home when the time came
Linzulu inxeba
Lutsho kabuhlungu ulwamvila lwakho kufandini
The wound is deep
Death, the bite of your sting is sore
Umhlab' uyagula, ubuhlungu, uyancwina
Umhlab' unxaniwe, uyail' ukhamisile
The earth is sick, pained and groaning
The earth is thirsty, crying agape
Ilanga liqumbile, ligijima ligqatsile;
Lihlaba ngenxa zonke, livutha njengomlilo;
Lishushu njengentsimbi, litshisa njengelahle;
The sun is grim-faced, speeding past as it blisters
Burning hot as if a fire on the mountain
Hot as burning steel, burning as cinderling embers
Umhlab' uqhekekile, uneentanda, uneemfanta;
Uthuli luyaqhuma, iindlela zingcolile;
The earth is broken open, with cracks and crannies
Dust bowls flying, roads and pathways sullied
Iintaba kwaneenduli, bona zikhedamile;
Sezikhangele phantsi, ziqondele ezantsi;
Mountains and hills, look they are forlorn
Looking down, ashamed and sunken
Mathambeka namathafa, mithombo nemifula
Nithe cwaka anithethi, sekuphela niyalila
Hillocks, velds, fountains and streams
You have gone silent, not uttering a word
All we do is weep the fall of our comrade
Zityalo kwanemithi, ziintaka kwanezilo
Niqondele phantsi, nikhangele ezantsi
Plants and trees, birds and animals
You are drooping and sapped
Zizonke zidakumbile, zibharhile
Kukunduluka kweqhawe lethu uTower
All are dour, withered by
The departure of our hero: the Tower

The Internationale Song Lyrics

Songwriters: Stephen William Bragg / Petrus De Geyter / Pottier Eugene

Stand up, all victims of oppression
For the tyrants fear your might
Don't cling so hard to your possessions
For you have nothing, if you have no rights
Let racist ignorance be ended
For respect makes the empires fall
Freedom is merely privilege extended
Unless enjoyed by one and all

Chorus:
So come brothers and sisters
For the struggle carries on
The Internationale
Unites the world in song
So comrades come rally
For this is the time and place
The international ideal
Unites the human race

Let no one build walls to divide us
Walls of hatred nor walls of stone
Come greet the dawn and stand beside us
We'll live together or we'll die alone
In our world poisoned by exploitation
Those who have taken, now they must give
And end the vanity of nations
We've but one Earth on which to live

Chorus

And so begins the final drama
In the streets and in the fields
We stand unbowed before their armour
We defy their guns and shields
When we fight, provoked by their aggression
Let us be inspired by like and love
For though they offer us concessions
Change will not come from above\

Chorus

Source: Musixmatch

Flatbread Sunny Morgan

she went to buy bread
the flat type that we like
made with flour and olive oil
and baked on a hot stove
she waited in line
almost her turn
heard a buzz above
familiar sound of a drone
He quickly packed the bread
she paid and rushed out
someone shouted "YALLA YALLA"
she hardly heard
the bomb fall from the sky,
from the drone, from the F16X
it cracked so loud it shook the structure
till it sunk to the ground
she was killed holding hot bread
that gravied with her warm blood
it oozed out the side of her head
Waiting for her bread
She was eaten, dead

WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU

Are you involved in progressive struggles or grassroots workplace/community organising that needs solidarity or that you think more activists should be made aware of? Do you have an analysis of or insights into a struggle or social/political/economic issue or development – whether local, regional or international – that is of interest or relevance to progressive/working class activists and struggles in South Africa that you would like to share? Do you have questions/comments about or disagreements with something published in Workers' World News?

Send us your article (max. 600 words) by email or Facebook private message and we will consider publishing it in a future issue.



CALLING ALL CULTURAL ACTIVISTS

We would love to feature your artwork advocating for alternatives to capitalism, fascism and patriarchy. Please help us make this an inspiring publication by sending us your poetry & songs, photography & graphic design, paintings & drawings, reports & manifestos of cultural activist interventions etc.



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IF I MUST DIE

- Refaat Alareer

If I must die,
you must live
to tell my story
to sell my things
to buy a piece of cloth
and some strings,
(make it white with a long tail)
so that a child, somewhere in Gaza
while looking heaven in the eye
awaiting his dad who left in a blaze—
and bid no one farewell.
not even to his flesh
not even to himself—
sees the kite, my kite you made, flying up above
and thinks for a moment an angel is there
bringing back love
If I must die
let it bring hope
let it be a tale

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