

Barbaric Treatment of Refugees Exposes Inhumanity of Capitalism

In the most recent of many horrific incidents, as many as 500 refugees from the Middle East and Africa drowned in the Mediterranean in mid-April, trying to reach Italy by boat. This was almost exactly one year after 800 refugees had perished off the Greek island of Crete. There have been other mass deaths on land as well as at sea, such as the 71 who suffocated while trapped in the back of a truck in Austria last year. And those atrocities cannot be allowed to obscure the plight of countless other victims who fall prey to thieves and violent racists, and the particular nightmare faced by women refugees who suffer rape and other forms of abuse as they try to escape wars and economic misery.

The massive refugee exodus was made far more dangerous by the closing of the Balkan route to central Europe by governments in the European Union, along with the deal between the EU and Turkey to send migrants back to Turkey from Greece. At a time when the world cries out for a humane solution to the plight of the millions of refugees fleeing violence and economic misery, capitalist ruling classes, led by the governments of some of the wealthiest imperialist countries, are actually stepping up their fight *against* migrants.

In Europe, the EU governments are shredding decades-old protections whose proclaimed purpose was to provide refugees with guaranteed democratic rights and protection. In the EU-Turkey deal this March brokered by German Chancellor Merkel, Turkey agreed to accept the forceful deportation of Syrian refugees from Greece in exchange for a financial payoff and political benefits. This deal blatantly violates the rights of refugees and will almost wipe out rights to asylum. It focuses explicitly only on Syrians but has a much wider impact.

In the U.S., attacks on migrants are standard for all capitalist politicians, Republican and Democratic. Republican presidential contender Trump calls for an impregnable wall on the border with Mexico and the exclusion of all Muslims, while his main rival, Ted Cruz, disagrees only on details. Democratic President Obama is responsible for more deportations than any other U.S. president. Both Democratic presidential candidates, Sanders and Clinton, suggest slightly fewer deportations and a “path to citizenship” for some undocumented immigrants: i.e., more hoops to jump through for a most uncertain payoff. As Secretary of State, Clinton backed the right-wing coup-makers who in 2009 overthrew the government of Honduras and unleashed a wave of murderous repression which is driving masses of Hondurans to flee for their lives to the U.S. Neither Clinton nor Sanders has protested the deportation of thousands of Hondurans to certain death.

The capitalist system as a whole is a deadly menace to the human race: not only does its economy require austerity for working-class and poor people, not only is its drive for profit above all other considerations gradually turning the Earth into an environmental hell-hole, but its rulers are demonstrating their monstrous callousness in the face of the most urgent human need. This system has to be uprooted and destroyed, and replaced by the only possible humane society: revolutionary working-class-led states forging international trust and cooperation on the road to socialism.



Kurdish refugees at Turkish border

CAPITALISM'S DEEPENING CRISIS

On May Day, the international holiday of the working class, we in the League for the Revolutionary Party say that the only political leadership that will fight for a genuine solution is one with an internationalist and revolutionary outlook, one that seeks to unify the exploited and oppressed peoples of the world in struggle against the capitalist system. That requires an international revolutionary party, dedicated to the goal of working-class socialist revolution.

The deepening economic crisis of the capitalist system means that the ruling classes of even the most powerful capitalist states cannot afford to offer the masses of refugees safe haven let alone support. Rather, as the crisis drives those ruling classes to try to implement ever worse austerity attacks against “their” working classes, they are erecting new barriers to the refugees.

The working class, the majority of the earth’s population, must fight for what we need, not for what the capitalists can afford. We must demand that the EU *take down the barriers* to the refugees and migrants. We must demand *full citizenship rights* for all, and *programs of social support and decent employment* for refugees and migrants, as well as for indigenous working-class and poor people in need. While mass militant struggles for such demands can force the richest nations to take in more migrants and win some other limited concessions, a real solution is impossible under capitalism.

Capitalism as an imperialist-dominated world system has long been unable to advance the needs of humanity as a whole. Instead it relies more and more on deepening exploitation and super-exploitation, and on increasing the divisions between peoples and nations, in order to reap the maximum possible profit and control over resources and labor. This year has proved that system’s criminal nature more than ever: the number of refugees across the globe struggling for just the right to exist is now at levels not seen since the World War II era.

The current level of turmoil is happening now for a reason. The threat of a global depression like that of the 1930's resurfaced with the economic meltdown of 2007-2008. Despite claims of recovery proclaimed by President Obama and other ruling-class mouthpieces, the underlying decay of the capitalist economy remains. Much of the world, even cities and regions in advanced imperialist countries like the U.S., are already in depression conditions; the system basically writes off regions like sub-Saharan Africa, where whole populations struggle to maintain a subsistence level of existence. Whatever recovery capitalists have enjoyed has come at the expense of the working class at home and in the oppressed nations, while worsening conditions have stimulated deepening civil and international strife.

The root cause of the inhumane treatment of refugees from the Middle East and Africa is the same that has led to the rise of Trumpism in the U.S., encouraging open racism, especially against immigrants and Muslims. With the deepening of the global capitalist crisis, the reactionary capitalist system needs to keep ever-growing numbers of human beings oppressed and repressed, locked out behind bordered walls, fences and barbed wire – or if they make it to the West, locked into refugee camps or prisons. “Collateral damage” is also acceptable: if people drown, starve or otherwise don't survive the perils of forced migration, that is really okay with capitalism's ruling classes. Those migrants who manage to find some work will by design become subjects for super-exploitation within imperialist borders.

REVOLUTION AND COUNTERREVOLUTION

Little more than five years ago, the worsening economic and social conditions drove millions of oppressed and working-class people to rise up in the wave of popular revolutions that swept the Middle East and North Africa demanding “Bread, Freedom and Social Justice.” The regional ruling classes, backed alternately by U.S., European and Russian imperialism, turned to counterrevolution. This is what lies behind the great waves of refugees trying to reach Europe.

Nowhere has this counterrevolution been more bloody and brutal than in Syria. The Assad dictatorship responded to mass peaceful protests with murderous gunfire, mass arrests, torture and disappearances. And it responded to armed resistance with an all-out war. While the uprising drew support from all the country's religious, ethnic and national groupings, the Assad regime did all it could to encourage sectarian bloodletting by releasing al-Qaeda and other jihadists from its prisons in order to slander the uprising as a Sunni-fundamentalist revolt. It also welcomed the Shiite-sectarian military forces of the Iranian state, Lebanon's Hezbollah and Iraqi militia to join its counterrevolutionary savagery.

Throughout all this the Assad dictatorship has relied on the support of Russian imperialism, first in the form of armaments and

logistical support and later with Russia's direct military intervention. But U.S. imperialism and its regional allies have done their share to contribute to the carnage. The U.S. enforced a blockade that stopped rebel groups from getting the anti-aircraft weapons they needed to defeat the regime; simultaneously it allowed regional allies like the Gulf monarchies and Turkey to supply light weapons to counterrevolutionary sectarian militias on the anti-Assad side, in a move that succeeded in furthering sectarian divisions and marginalizing the mass struggle for democratic freedoms. This intervention failed to force the Assad regime to agree to a negotiated transfer of power to forces more friendly to U.S. interests.

It is no wonder then that the largest numbers of refugees attempting to reach Europe have come from Syria, but many have also fled Iraq and Afghanistan, where U.S. imperialism has been overwhelmingly responsible for the catastrophic situation facing the masses.

The rise of the self-described “Islamic State” (ISIS or *Daesh*) in Iraq and its subsequent invasion of Syria and its spread to other countries has been pointed to as a major reason for the current refugee crisis. ISIS's reign of terror has certainly played its part, though in Syria its contribution has been far less than the Assad regime's. The case of ISIS does, however, point to the overall responsibility of imperialism for the current crisis. ISIS had its origins during the U.S. sanctions on Iraq, when Saddam Hussein turned to encouraging Islam and thus the unintended growth of ultra-reactionary Sunni-Islamist trends within the state apparatus. The U.S. overthrow of Saddam freed them to prey on the disenfranchisement of the Sunni minority in Iraq and to fight for a share of power for itself in both Iraq and Syria. Imperialist-led bombing campaigns by the U.S. and Russia supposedly targeting ISIS have further worsened the situation.

THE REVOLUTIONARY ANSWER

The capitalist economy is now a potentially integrated world system which has developed the productive forces enough to feed all and end scarcity. But as long as the capitalists rule, this huge productive capacity will benefit profit, not satisfying basic human need or developing a higher level of human culture. Likewise, capital moves freely across the world seeking cheap labor and supplies, but workers' migration is restricted, leaving millions to either starve at home or risk death and imprisonment for trying to survive and feed their families.

For this reason revolutionaries emphasize the fundamental need to unify workers and oppressed people of the world internationally and build an authentic revolutionary international party that seeks to lead the overthrow of imperialism. Revolutionaries, though small in number today, stand for a vision of a new socialist world of abundance for all, a world which is actually materially achievable. As revolutionaries we fight for united action whenever possible to carry out practical measures that are realizable under the present system, including defense of immigrant communities. We also strive to convince our fellow workers and youth to take up the cause of international refugees and immigrants as their own.

The economic concentration and potential consciousness that the working class uniquely holds to lead revolutions against capitalism makes this focus on our own class, the working class, a strategic necessity. The working class as a whole is the key to the production process of capitalism, while sections of our class have special potential as revolutionary forces. Those workers who suffer under class exploitation as well as special oppression will be a crucial part of the upheavals and rebellions ahead against capitalist imperialist attacks, and a vital part of forging the revolutionary international that is so desperately needed.

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